

REEL POLITICS Winter 2020

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Course Description

This course will examine International Relations through popular film. We will assess a selection of the major theories of International Relations and examine some of the key concepts and issues in the field through lectures, readings, class discussions, and film presentations. Some of the issues and concepts discussed in the course include nuclear proliferation, identity, and migration.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should:

- Have a broad knowledge of the theories of International Relations
- Have developed knowledge of important issues or cases studied in International Relations
- Be able critique the relevant theories that scholars employ to understand International Relations
- Be able to identify and critically discuss some of the important ethical problems, cases and concepts studied in International Relations
- Have developed an understanding of the interplay between popular culture and International Relations
- Have refined their written communication and critical analysis skills.

Required Materials and Texts

- All journal articles are available online via e-Journals from the McMaster library website or via the address provided.
- The required readings not available online will be available on Avenue to Learn.

Class Format

Lecture and discussion format with film. The initial part of each class (15-30 minutes) will be a mix of lecture and/ or class discussion on the reading and topic for that class. The film will then be shown in class. Following the film students will participate in a discussion (either in groups or led by the professor) about the themes that were represented or challenged by the film.

The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage with difficult topics and these topics may be present in some of the films. The syllabus will flag especially graphic or intense content under the headings Tags in the Notes sections under each week.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. In class test (25%), due February 13

2. Film Analysis Essay (35%), due April 2
3. Final Exam (40%), as scheduled by the registrar in April

Course Evaluation – Details

1: In class test (25%), due February 13

2: Film Analysis (35%), due April 2

In this 10-12 page paper, the student should choose a movie that is not on the syllabus and discuss its relevance to international relations through the examination of a core concept as we have done in the course. Students are instructed to create their own analogy, to decide which readings would support the lesson, and to discuss the implications of the movie chosen for IR instruction. Students are discouraged from choosing a film that is focused on war making. The paper should use either the MLA or Chicago reference style. The paper should have four sections as well as an Introduction, Conclusion, and Bibliography. These are:

- 1) A description of the movie and its context. As well as a description of the plot, this section may include, but is not limited to, the time period it was made in, whether it is a Hollywood movie, the relevance, if any, of the individuals involved in making the movie etc. (this section should be no longer than 2 pages)
- 2) A description of the concept or IR theory that is represented in the film. You may use one of the topics we have already covered or come up with a different concept or theory from the IR literature (environmentalism, development, polarity, misperception etc.)
- 3) Draw direct connections between the concept or theory under review and the material in the movie, paying attention to how the movie both represents the concept or theory and ways it might offer a critique of some element within the concept or theory.
- 4) Describe what article or book chapter you would include to go along with the film and why you picked that reading (this section should be less than one page in length)

Sections 2 and 3 should be the largest sections in the essay.

3: Final Exam: (40%), to be held in the official examination period in April

The April exam will cover material from the lectures, discussions, films, and required readings.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 9)

Course Introduction

Course syllabus; readings; assignments; weekly schedule; and expectations of students.

Week 2 (January 16)

Theories Through Film: Realism (Lord of the Flies)

Readings:

Dodds, Klaus. "'Have you seen any good films lately?': Geopolitics, international relations and film." *Geography compass* 2.2 (2008): 476-494.

[Political Realism in International Relations](#): Section 1 (The roots of the realist tradition) and Section 2 (Twentieth Century Classical Realism).

Notes: Tags: violence and death, bullying, animal killing

Week 3 (January 23)

Theories Through Film: Idealism/Neoliberalism (Independence Day)

Readings:

Kegley, CW, Jr., ed. (1995) "The Neoliberal Challenge to Realist Theories of World Politics: An Introduction." In *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge*, edited by CW Kegley, Jr., pp. 1–24. (New York: St. Martin's Press).

Notes: Tags: violence, gore, death, mild sexual content/ nudity

Week 4 (January 30)

Theories Through Film: Constructivism (Wag the Dog)

Readings:

K. M. Fierke, "Constructivism" (Chapter 9) In Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith (2016) *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford University Press).

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics." *International Organization* 46.2 (1992): 391-425.

Notes: Tags: sexual content, sexual assault (off camera), war, violence

Week 5 (February 6)

Theories Through Film: Feminism (Film TBA)

Readings:

Jacqui True, "Feminism," in Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, eds., *Theories of International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's 1996).

Katherine Allison (2013) [Feminism and the war on terror](#), *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 6:2, 320-322.

Notes: Tags: TBA

Week 6 (February 13) In Class Test

Week 7 (February 20)

Reading Week

Week 8 (February 27)

Cases and Issues: Identity, Culture and Difference (East is East)

Readings:

Fazal Rizvi (2011) [Beyond the Social Imaginary of 'Clash of Civilizations'?](#), *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43:3, 225-235.

Notes: Tags: racism, violence, some sexual content

Week 9 (March 5)

Cases and Issues: Nuclear Deterrence (Dr. Strangelove)

Readings:

Waltz, Kenneth N. 1990. "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities." *The American Political Science Review*. 84/3:731-745.

Notes: Tags: mild sexual content, suicide (off camera), violence (nuclear war)

Week 10 (March 12)

Cases and Issues: Narrative myths in nuclear history: The Cuban Missile Crisis and Beyond (Thirteen Days)

Readings:

Blight, James, *Dark Beyond Darkness: The Cuban Missile Crisis as History, Warning, and Catalyst*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017). chapter 3.

Notes: Tags: mild violence

Week 11 (March 19)

Cases and Issues: Empire, Race, and Migration (Mississippi Masala)

Readings:

Ray, Radharani. "Interrogating Race in Mississippi Masala." *Race, Gender & Class* (2001): 155-175.

Notes: Tags: racist and classist dialogue

Week 12 (March 26)

Cases and Issues: Women's Labour in International Relations (On the Basis of Sex)

Readings:

Enloe, Cynthia H. 2014. *Bananas, beaches and bases: making feminist sense of international politics*. Second edition, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Chapter 7: "Women's Labor is Never Cheap: Gendering Global Blue Jeans and Bankers."

Notes: Tags: sexism

Week 13 (April 2)

Conclusion and Exam Preparation

Readings: TBA

Notes: Final paper due

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignments should be turned in as a hard copy. Emailed copies will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the professor.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate written assignments:

Research and Analysis

Papers based on research that go beyond the course readings will receive higher grades. Likewise, papers that include analysis rather than simple description will be graded higher.

Thesis Statement and Development of an Argument

A clear thesis and a logical argument that supports the thesis are key to achieving a higher grade on your film analysis paper.

The Writing: Organization, Grammar and Spelling

Clear and accurate writing is crucially important to convincing your reader of your argument. The ideas in the paper should be well organized. Ask yourself: Do the sections/paragraphs clearly relate to the thesis statement? Do ideas follow logically? Are paragraph transitions clear?

A paper with many grammatical and spelling mistakes is difficult to comprehend. Most people cannot see their own mistakes right away so it is best to take time between drafts (for example, go for a walk, or if time permits, take a couple of days away from the paper). When you return to the paper it will be much easier to see your own errors, especially if you read it out loud, slowly to yourself. It is also okay to have a friend also read your paper for you, to tell you if your writing or ideas are unclear or if you have made spelling or grammatical errors. In addition to having them point out obvious spelling or grammatical mistakes ask them, "What is the main point in this section and is it convincing?"

Referencing

Develop a system to keep track of your sources so you can cite them and construct a bibliography. Use either the MLA or Chicago Manual of Style. Review what constitutes plagiarism. Remember to single space and indent long quotes (over 4 sentences long) and avoid excessive quotations ([only quote when the quotation adds obvious value](#))

Final Advice

Consider consulting online resources such as The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) or McMaster's [Student Success Centre](#). The Student Success Centre is an excellent resource and everyone (including strong writers) are encouraged to make an appointment with them to review your written work.

Turn your work in on time and meet the other requirements of the paper assignment. Remember to include a title page, add page numbers, use a standard 12-point font and one inch margins, and to double space the lines.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-

MARK	GRADE
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be accepted, but will be subject to a five per cent per day penalty. After seven days the assignments will no longer be accepted and students will receive a grade of zero on that assignment. In addition, papers submitted after the deadlines will be graded without comments.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.