

**REEL POLITICS**  
**POLSCI 2MN3**  
**Winter 2022, Term 2**

**Instructor:** Lana Wylie  
**Email:** wyliel@mcmaster.ca  
**Lecture:** Tuesdays 12:30 PM – 2:20 PM; Wednesdays 12:30PM - 1:20PM  
**Room:** CNH B107

**Virtual Classroom (on weeks indicated):** See A2L for zoom link

**Office:** Virtual (on weeks indicated) see A2L for zoom link. Otherwise, KTH 511  
**Office Hour:** Tuesdays 11:30- 12:20 PM

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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.

## **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 to 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 presentation, 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 the film viewing class will be a short lecture on the topic for that week. The film will then be shown in class. In the following class, depending on the length of the film, the rest of the film will be viewed, and 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 (20%), due February 15
2. Film Analysis Presentation (30%), due dates vary
3. Group Work Reflection (10%), due on A2L one week following your group presentation
4. Final Exam (40%), as scheduled by the registrar in April

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

### **1: In Class Test (20%), February 15**

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

### **2: Film Analysis Presentation (30%), March 8- April 6, due dates vary**

In this group presentation, the students should choose a movie that is not on the syllabus and discuss its relevance to international relations through the examination of a core concept or theory as we have done in the course. Students, working in groups, are instructed to create their own analogy, to decide which reading would support the lesson, and to discuss the implications of the movie chosen for IR instruction. **The chosen reading is to be posted on Avenue to Learn one week prior to their presentation in class.**

The presentation should cover:

- 1) A brief description of the movie's context. This section may include, but is not limited to, the time period the film was made in, whether it is a Hollywood movie, the relevance, if any, of the individuals involved in making the movie, whether it was based on a book, etc.
- 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) Relate the article or book chapter your group selected to go along with the film and why you selected that reading.

Sections 2 and 3 should take most of the time in the presentation.

Following the film, the group will then take questions from the class and lead a discussion about the content from the presentation, reading, and film.

**3: Group Work Reflection Paper (10%), due one week following presentation by 11:59PM.**

In this short (1250 words maximum, 4-5 page, double spaced) individual assignment students will reflect on what they learned from the film analysis assignment and explain what they contributed to the group effort. Each student should reflect on:

- 1) what you learned about international relations and film analysis in this assignment;
- 2) what benefits and/or challenges your group faced and how they were handled (describe the team dynamic);
- 3) what you did as part of the group project (identifying your contribution to the project);
- 4) what you learned about how you work collaboratively; and
- 5) what you would do differently the next time you are asked to engage in a collaborative assignment.

**4: 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: (Jan 11 & 12) Introduction and Watching Films in IR/ Finding Films in the Library (Virtual week- see zoom link on A2L)**

**January 11, Tu 12:30- 2:20**

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

**January 12, Wed 12:30- 1:20**

Readings:

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

**Week 2: (Jan 18 & 19) Theories Through Film: Realism (Virtual week- see zoom link on A2L)**

**January 18, Tu, 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing (Lord of the Flies) (1963)**

Readings:

[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

**January 19, Wed 12:30- 1:20**

**Lecture and Discussion**

**Week 3: (Jan 25 & 26) Theories Through Film: Idealism/Neoliberalism (Virtual week- see zoom link on A2L)**

**January 25 Tu, 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing (Independence Day)**

Readings:

Russett, Bruce, "Liberalism," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, pp 68-88 (Oxford University Press, 2021).

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

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

**January 26, Wed 12:30- 1:20**

**Lecture and Discussion**

**Week 4: (Feb 1 & 2) Theories Through Film: Constructivism (Virtual week- see zoom link on A2L)**

**February 1, Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing (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

**February 2, Wed 12:30- 1:20**

**Lecture and Discussion**

### **Week 5 (Feb 8 & 9) Theories Through Film: Feminism**

**February 8, Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing (In a World)**

Readings:

Tickner, J. Ann. "You just don't understand: troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists." *International Studies Quarterly* 41.4 (1997): 611-632.

And

Tickner, Ann and L. Sjoberg, "Chapter Ten: Feminism" in Dunne, Tim, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds. *International relations theories*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Notes: Tags: sexism, language, sexual references

**February 9, Wed 12:30- 1:20**

**Lecture and Discussion**

## **Week 6: (Feb 15 &16) Test and Group Meetings**

**February 15, Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**In Class Test**

**February 16, Wed 12:30- 1:20**

**Group meetings**

Note: **Choice of film due by March 1** (email the professor with your choice). Be sure to check that your film can be borrowed through the library system before finalizing the choice.

The reading to go along with the film should be provided on Avenue to Learn one week prior to your group's film presentation.

## **Week 7 (Feb 22 & 23) Reading Week**

No classes. Use this week to prepare for your group film presentation.

## **Week 8 (March 1 & 2) Cases and Issues: The Language of Nuclear Deterrence**

**March 1, Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing (Dr. Strangelove) (1964)**

Readings:

Cohn, Carol. "Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals." *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 12.4 (1987): 687-718.

Cohn, Carol. "The Perils of Mixing Masculinity and Missiles," Jan. 5, 2018 *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/opinion/security-masculinity-nuclear-weapons.html>

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

Film choice due March 1 (email the professor with your group's choice)

**March 2, Wed 12:30- 1:20**

**Lecture and Discussion**

## **Week 9 (Mar 8 & 9) Group 1**

**March 8 Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing**

Readings: TBA



**March 9, Wed 12:30- 1:20**  
**Presentation and Discussion**

**Week 10 (Mar 15 & 16) Group 2**

**March 15 Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing**

Readings: TBA

**March 16, Wed 12:30- 1:20**  
**Presentation and Discussion**

**Week 11 (Mar 22 & 23) Group 3**

**March 22 Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing**

Readings: TBA

**March 23, Wed 12:30- 1:20**  
**Presentation and Discussion**

**Week 12 (Mar 29 & 30) No Classes**

**Week 13 (April 5 & 6) Group 4**

**April 5, Tu 12:30- 2:20**

**Film Viewing**

Readings: TBA

**April 6, Wed 12:30- 1:20**  
**Presentation and Discussion**

**Week 14 (April 12) Exam Review**

**Course Policies**

**Submission of Assignments**

Assignments should be submitted on Avenue to Learn by the due dates. See Avenue to Learn for more information on evaluation criteria.

## 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:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
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-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

## Late Assignments

Every student has a seven-day grace period for submitting written assignments. Students who cannot submit their written assignments on time are automatically allowed up to seven days past the deadline to submit their work without penalty (and without needing to email their instructor). After seven days, late assignments will be subject to a five percent per day penalty. After fourteen 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 may be graded without feedback.

## 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, usernames 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 Registrars 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](mailto: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.