

## **POLS185: Global Politics and Film**

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Class Meets in Olin B1 9:15-10:15 and 12:15 to 2:30

### **Course Description:**

This course uses the medium of film to explore important topics in global politics. The first thing to acknowledge about films is that while they may sometimes portray real-world events, they are always told using the filmmaker's point of view. In this class we will analyze 14 movies depicting certain aspects of global politics paying special attention to the historical/ideological/theoretical background surrounding each film and the social constructions portrayed and/or reinforced by the film. At the end of the class students should be able to critically analyze a film (**in the political sense**, not in the film critic sense), understand the reasons behind why these films are influential, and understand more about global politics.

### **Academic Misconduct**

When a student turns in a paper or exam, s/he is bound to the Luther Honor Code. If I suspect a student of plagiarism, whether it comes from another student or the internet, I will immediately turn that paper in to Luther's Honor Council. The student will have to defend the paper's integrity to that council. If the Honor Council finds a plagiarism violation, the typical recommendation is to give a 0 on that assignment and a letter grade drop for the entire course. Typically, this results in an overall failing grade for the student. Given the severity of plagiarism, if you have any questions on correct citations, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### **Services for Students with Disabilities and/or Medical Conditions**

Any student needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition must register for services with the Disability Services office in the Student Academic Support Center (SASC). The office will verify the need for accommodations and develop a plan to be distributed to appropriate instructors. Students who use accommodations should also contact the instructor privately and in a timely manner to discuss the most effective methods to implement the approved accommodations. The SASC office is located in Room 108, Preus Library, and can be reached at (563) 387-1270.

## Electronic Devices and Twitter:

I am going to try something new in this class. Let's tweet during movies and see how that works out. If it gets annoying and seems counterproductive then I reserve the right to kill the experiment. Kill sound on all devices, just like at the movies. No laptops on during movies unless you are on Twitter. I expect you to take notes (with a pen on a paper) as the movies are being shown.

## Grading:

- Attendance and Participation: **20 percent**
  - You are expected to be present in all class sections (both in the morning and during the movie showing). I will allow for one unexcused absence, after that any unexcused absence will result in a 1 point deduction on your attendance and participation grade.
  - You are required to do the readings **before class**. To assure that students are doing the reading, each of you must **add to the Google Document named "Discussion Questions" by 8:00 am** at least one of the following every day before class:
    - A quote from one of the readings that caught your attention and why.
    - A discussion question about something you read and you want to hear what other students think.
    - A question about the reading on something you didn't fully understand or want me to talk more about in class.
  - During the movie, Twitter discussion (directly related to the political aspects of the movie) is encouraged.
  - After each movie showing we will also have a brief discussion about the movie. During the discussion I want students to focus on the political aspects of the movie and relate it to our previous discussions.
- Weekly Class Review Essay: 15 percent each (**45 percent total**)
  - Due January 14, January 21, and January 25 (in class, **stapled**).
    - In this 2.5-4 pages (double spaced) essay I want you to pick a recurring theme from the movies we watched during that week, describing some commonalities between the movies but also emphasizing some of the key differences between them in regards to the political issues discussed in class. I expect you to cite assigned readings and, if possible, quote movie lines that can help you make a concise argument about these movies. Proper grammar, punctuation, and citation are expected.
    - Some recurring themes in movies: The futility of war; race and class issues; the role of the U.S. in world politics; the construction of the hero and villains in movies (and what they say about filmmakers); the unintended consequences of conflict; portrayal of "natives" and "outsiders" in movies; the

unlikely hero/heroine; the politics of religious and/or ethnic differences.

- **Class Leadership: 20 Percent**
  - There are 10 assigned days for class leadership. Students are expected to pick one of those days and, working in pairs, prepare a half-hour lecture/discussion about the topic of the movie. This lecture/discussion should go beyond the assigned readings and should include facts/events that the two students preparing the class think are important to explain the historical event/ideological aspect/policy discussed in the yet-to-be-seen movie. Students should contact me before they start working on their assignment.
- **Final Presentation: 15 Percent**
  - Students should pick one of the “topics” discussed in each class and prepare a 10-12 minutes presentation going in more detail about this topic. Topics will be chosen on a first-come first-serve basis. I expect you to come talk to me sometime throughout the J-Term to work on your presentation. Presentation must have at least five “library sources” (books or journal articles) and it must include a discussion about at least one movie watched during class.

## **Schedule**

Thursday, January 3

NO READINGS

Introduction.

Watch a movie if we have time

Friday, January 4

### **Readings:**

- The Melian Dialogue (link to article [here](#))
- Alchemy for a New World Order: Overselling 'Preventive Diplomacy'
- One World, Many Theories

**Movie:** *Star Trek VI: the Undiscovered Country* (1991). 113 min.

**Main Topic:** Trust in International Relations

## Wars, Conflicts, and Destruction

Monday, January 7

### **Readings:**

- Check out the World War I timeline on this [PBS website](#)
- Read the segments of this [BBC account of the war](#)
  - We will especially discuss [The Descent into War](#) and [Shellshock](#)
- World War I accounts:
  - [Capt: Stewart](#)
  - [Ernst Jünger](#)

**Movie:** *All Quiet in the Western Front (1930)*. 145 min.

### **Main Topics:**

- The roots of World War I
- Anti-war movements during World War I and/or World War II

Tuesday, January 8

### **Readings:**

- Postwar Forced Internment and International Law (pages 747 to 755)
- Red Cross Document on the Geneva Convention

**Movie:** *Grand Illusion (1938)*. 114 min.

### **Main Topics:**

- The Geneva Convention Today
- Class Differences versus National Identity

Wednesday, January 9

### **Readings:**

- [History of World War II](#)
- [Casablanca: the Romance of Propaganda](#)

**Movie:** *Casablanca (1942)*. 102 min.

### **Main Topics:**

- Movies as Propaganda
- The roots of World War II

Thursday, January 10

### **Readings:**

- Security Dilemma
- Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?

**Movie:** *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)*. 95 min.

**Main Topic:** Cold War and M.A.D.

Friday, January 11

**Readings:**

- The US Invasion of Iraq: The American Way of War and the Dilemmas of Counterinsurgency
- The Bush Doctrine: The Foreign Policy of Republican Empire

**Movie:** *In the Loop* (2009). 109 min.

**Main Topic:** Pre-emptive Strike and International Law

Foreign Policy

Monday, January 14

**Readings:**

- President's Kennedy Decision to Support the Bay of Pigs Invasion
- The Cuban Missile Crisis in Context

**Movie:** *Thirteen Days* (2000). 145 min.

**Main Topic:** Leadership Styles and Foreign Policy

Tuesday, January 15

**Readings:**

- The United States and the Soviet Union in Chile
- The Coup in Chile

**Movie:** *Missing* (1982). 122 min.

**Main Topics:**

- Proxy Wars and the Cold War
- The 1973 Chilean Coup

Wednesday, January 16

**Readings:**

- Beyond Charlie Wilson: The Soviet Afghan War

**Movie:** *Charlie Wilson's War* (2007). 102 min.

**Main Topics:**

- Afghanistan: The Soviet Years
- Afghanistan: The American Years

Foreign People

Thursday, January 17

**Readings:**

- International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia
- Europe's Shifting Immigration Dynamic

**Movie:** *Bread and Chocolate* (1974). 100 Min.

**Main Topics:**

- Immigration in Europe
- Xenophobia and anti-immigration movements throughout the world

Friday, January 18

**Readings:**

- Colonialism and the African Experience
- The Battle for Algerian Independence

**Movie:** *Battle of Algiers (1966)*. 121 min.

**Main Topics:**

- The Algerian Independence
- Independence movements in Africa

Monday, January 21

**Readings:**

- On the Origins of the Cuban Revolution
- What the Cuban Revolution Means to Older Cubans

**Movie:** *Memories of Underdevelopment (1968)*. 97 min.

**Main Topics:**

- The Communist Revolution in Cuba
- The United States and Cuba

Tuesday, January 22

**Readings:**

- Macedonia: Country Background and Recent Conflict
- The Balkan Dilemma

**Movie:** *Before the Rain (1994)*. 103 Min.

**Main Topics:**

- Yugoslavia
- Ethnic conflicts around the world

Wednesday, January 23

**Readings:**

- Apartheid
- "I Saw a Nightmare"

**Movie:** *A Dry White Season (1989)*. 97 min.

**Main Topic:** International Response to Apartheid

Thursday, January 24

**Presentations**

Friday, January 25

**Presentations**