

Western University
Department of Political Science

Political Science 2192b

**'In-Yo-Face' Politico-tainment:
Television & Political (Con)Science**

Course Description

Electronic election tampering to elect a US President? 2012's *Scandal's* opening plot thread. President Trump? *The Simpsons'* predicted it 17 years ago in an episode in which Lisa Simpson takes over as US president after "inheriting a budget crunch from President Trump". While comedian Groucho Marx supposedly said, "I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book", this has long been replaced with Homer Simpson's triumphant pronouncement: "When will I learn? The answers to life's problems ... They're on TV!" Arguably, where Machiavelli's Prince was in the vein of Mirror Writings to Great Leaders, undoubtedly, shows like *House of Cards*, *This Hours has 22 Minutes*, *The Simpsons*, *Scandal*, *Designated Survivor*, *The Good Wife*, *Veep*, *Parks & Rec*, *Blackstone*, etc., are the Mirror Television to politicians and their' activities (Trump's tweets about shows like *Saturday Night* or *Blackish*, for example) and society in general. Further, television is one of the means by which the pulse of politics and society is measured by political actors, *and it* also can push change & challenge prejudice by society, while also forcing action & overcoming challenge by politicians, through imagining political possibilities in fiction not found in reality as yet. This course will critically examine politics and television, focussed on Canada and the US politics-focussed shows. It will primarily consider three main types of political shows: political satire, political comedy, and political drama.

NOTE: as per the advisories in all the Source motion picture & sound materials for this course, shows may involve graphic language, situations, violence, and other cautionary aspects.

Contact Info

- Professor: **Nigmendra Narain**
- Email: nnarain@uwo.ca
- Office Room: SSC 4149
- Office Phone: 519-661-2111, extension 85108
- Cell-/text-phone: 519-860-3290 (preferred over office phone)
- For office hours, please contact me as needed

Learning Outcomes

- Recognize political messaging on television
- Characterize & explain political content in television shows
- Analyze, critique & evaluate political analysis presented on television

Requisite & Anti-Requisites

- There are no pre-requisites or anti-requisites for this course
- “Please Note: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis for an appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed. If you find that you do not have the course prerequisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.” – *Office of the Dean*
- "Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, and does not have written special permission from his or her Dean to enroll in the course, the University reserves the right to cancel the student's registration in the course. [The University may also choose not to adjust your fees, such as not providing you a refund for the course.] This decision may not be appealed." (Western University Academic Calendar)

Course Materials

- Textbook: Chuck Tryon, *Political TV*, Routledge, 2016 ← available as **free download** from Weldon's website as a downloadable PDF (see OWL site under "Textbook" page for more details)
- Other readings will be posted on OWL
- Suggestions for particular episodes or shows will be made as appropriate, but you are encouraged to explore the shows listed below at your leisure

Evaluation

- Online Quizzes: 20% (based on readings)
- Online Discussions: 30%
- Final Exam: 50%

Course Schedule

1. Jan 8: *Introduction to the Course*
 2. Jan 15: *Understanding the Relationship between Politics & TV*
 - Reading: Tryon “Introduction: Political TV and Mediated Citizenship”, 1-22
 3. Jan 22: *Political News: Conventions & Advertising*
 - Tryon, “1: Selling Politics: Advertising after Citizens United”, 29-37
 - McKinney, Mitchell S. & Matthew L. Spialek, “Political Debates”, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, Sage, 2017, 1-8
 - Consider: recent political conventions & ads
 4. Jan 29: *Political News or Shows with Politics?*
 - Tryon, “2: Political News in the Post-Network Era”, 47-67
 - Mattheiß, Tamara, et al. "Political Learning through Entertainment – Only an Illusion?: How Motivations for Watching TV Political Talk shows Influence Viewers’ Experiences." *Journal of Media Psychology*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2013, pp. 171-179
 - Consider: network news outlets, online news sources, *Newsroom*
 5. Feb 5: *Political Satire: Most Watched not-so-Fake News?*
 - Tryon, “3: Fake News and Political Satire”, 71-104
 - Consider: *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, *Real-time with Bill Maher*, *The Nightly Show*
 6. Feb 12: *Political Satire: Sketchy Comedy?*
 - Tryon, “4: Comedy and the Political Spectacle”, 107-121
 - Consider: *Saturday Night Live*, *Key & Peele*, *Inside Amy Schumer*
- Feb 19-23: Reading Week
7. Feb 26: *Political Satire: Situation Comedies*
 - Tryon, “4: Comedy and the Political Spectacle”, 121-134
 - Consider: *Parks & Recreation*, *Veep*, *SpinCity*, *Dan for Mayor*, *The Mayor*
 8. Mar 5: *Political Satire: Canadeh?*
 - Tinic, Serra, “Speaking ‘Truth’ to Power? Television Satire, *Rick Mercer Report*, and the Politics of Place and Space”, *Satire TV*, Eds. Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey Jones & Ethan Thompson, New York University Press, 2009, 167-186
 - Fraiman, Michael. “The Beaverton: How much further can comedic satire go

- in Canada?”, *Globe & Mail*, Aug 21, 2015 / June 5, 2017
- Consider: *Royal Canadian Air Farce, This Hour has 22 Minutes, Rick Mercer Report, BeavertonTV*
9. Mar 12: Political Comedy: *Is Politics Cartoonish?*
 - Greene, Doyle, “Fair and Balanced Satire: Against *The Simpsons*”, *Politics and the American Television Comedy*, 200-211
 - Curtis, David & Gerald Erion, “*South Park* and the Open Society”, *South Park & Philosophy*, Ed. Robert Arp, 112-120
 - Consider: *The Simpsons, Family Guy, South Park, American Dad*
 10. Mar 19: Political Drama: *Principled Leaders*
 - Tryon, “Political Process Melodramas and Serial Narrative”, 137-146, 154-163
 - Consider: *The West Wing, Designated Survivor, The Good Wife, Madam Secretary*
 11. Mar 26: Political Drama: *Tortured Leaders*
 - Tryon, “Political Process Melodramas and Serial Narrative”, 146-154
 - Consider: *Scandal, House of Cards, Blackstone*
 12. Apr 2: Political Drama: *National Security*
 - Tryon, “Surveillance Culture: Melodramas of National Security”, 165-183
 - Consider: *24, Homeland, The Americans, The Blacklist*
 13. Apr 9: Conclusion ... *but* did we miss some ‘must see [political] TV’?
 - Tryon, “Conclusion”

General Notes about the Class

- *Learning is a multi-lane, interconnected roadway: we are all encouraged to share, discuss and learn from each other*
- Check the OWL site regularly OWL site regularly for updates, details, etc.
- Emails: please use your UWO email account for class-related emails
- Conduct yourself according the University of Western Ontario Student Code of Conduct, which can be accessed as a PDF from: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board/code.pdf>.
- “Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as, footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Please refer to Scholastic Discipline under the Senate Policy

on Academic Rights and Responsibilities at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/> (university regulation)

- Non-Medical and Medical Absences:
 - If you know you will be absent, please email me *ahead of time* to let me know why and when, and I will try to accommodate you as reasonably possible
 - If you have medical or other documentation, you **must** take it to the Dean's Office or Academic Counsellor, who will then confirm your accommodation; the STUDENT MEDICAL CERTIFICATE (SMC) is available at:
<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>
 - If I am unable to grant you fair and reasonable accommodation, the *whole percentage weight* for that assignment may be added to the value of the exam for that term
- Religious Accommodation: "Notice: Please be advised that students must give proper written notice for such an accommodation in accordance with the directives in the 2014-15 UWO Academic Calendar (page 18-19): <http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2014/pg119.html>" ← You can email me your notice of accommodation
- Grade concerns: come talk to me at your earliest convenience
- Read the Course Outline fully and *do ask questions*
- Course Outline changes: due to certain circumstances and/or situations, changes to this course outline and other course documents are necessary; in such cases, you will be informed through all available channels of communication as soon as possible

**APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Essay course requirements

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning.

Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

Security and Confidentiality of Student Work (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>))

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

Duplication of work

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

Grade adjustments

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

Academic Offences

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Submission of Course Requirements

ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS MUST BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.

THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

EXAMINATIONS/ATTENDANCE (Sen. Min. Feb.4/49, May 23/58, S.94, S.3538, S.3632, S.04-097) A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations: 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year. 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Medical Policy, Late Assignments, etc.

Students registered in Social Science should refer to

http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having_problems/index.html for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

University Policy on Cheating and Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Multiple-choice tests/exams: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html

PLAGIARISM*

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

*Reprinted by permission of the Department of History

Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991

Accessibility at Western: Please contact poliscie@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The Registrar's office can be accessed for Student Support Services at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here) can be reached at:
<http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Services can be reached at: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.