

Department of Political Science
POLITICS AND POP CULTURE
2142A, Section 001
2018-19

Day/Hours/Location of Lecture: Mondays 11:30am-1:20pm, SSC 2036

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Instructor: Professor Nandita, Biswas Mellamphy

Office hours: Mondays 1:30-2:30 PM; or by appointment, SSC 4133

Contact Information: by email nbiswasm@uwo.ca ; or by telephone only: 519-661-2111 ext. 81161 (texting will not be used). Please allow up to two days for responses.

Course Description:

This course critically explores politics and popular culture through (and in) film, television, as well as digital and print media (social media, ads, blogs etc.). As Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan famously argued, the *medium is the message*: perception influences communication; likewise, communication influences *how* we perceive politics and its potentials (both positive and negative). With the increasing popularity of digital culture, television news shows and reality programming, as well as new social media and networks, it is apparent that various forms of political consciousness are taking shape in popular culture. Today the roles of citizen and consumer are blurred, and the main aim of this course will be to ask whether the convergence of entertainment and politics is a good or a bad thing: can popular cultural forms create new utopian visions that fuel political change, or conversely, do they only lead to manipulation of perceptions and cultural control? A second aim of this course is to introduce you to critical theories of consumerism, humanitarianism, orientalism, surveillance and security, techno-science, and transhumanism, as well as acquaint you with some major political theories such as realism, idealism, constructivism, feminism, neo-marxism and postmodernism.

Topics include:

- the politics of utopia and dystopia
- the politics of celebrity humanitarianism and ‘decaf capitalism’
- the politics of fear and authority
- the politics of surveillance and (in)security
- the politics of digital culture and social media
- the politics of money, consumption and desire
- the politics of techno-science and techno-culture

Learning Objectives:

- To identify and recognize diverse political concepts, problems and ideologies in relation to popular culture, world affairs, and current events.
- To critically explore the complex interrelationships between political, social, cultural and historical ideas.
- To improve your ability to interpret and effectively communicate your interpretations in writing.

Course Materials: As indicated by the Weekly Reading Schedule below, online and print articles have been assigned to accompany in-class lectures. Some readings can be accessed as hyperlinks and all other readings are available on the course website.

Film Materials: Each week, you will be assigned one or more films/shows to view as an accompaniment to the required readings. Most of these materials are available on services such as Netflix, iTunes, Hulu, Amazon Prime, YouTube etc. It is your responsibility to come to class having viewed the assigned materials.

Course Website (OWL site): All the course administration, including required readings and announcements will be found on the course website. *The website has not been developed to be a replacement for attending class.*

Methods of Evaluation:

- **In-class Multiple Choice Test on OCTOBER 15, 2018:** worth **35%** covering course materials from September 17 to October 1, 2018.
- **In-class Multiple Choice Test on NOVEMBER 12, 2018:** worth **35%** covering course materials from October 22 to November 5, 2018.
- **In-class Multiple Choice Test on DECEMBER 3, 2018:** worth **30%** covering course materials from November 19 to November 26, 2018.

Please note that computer-marked multiple-choice tests may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Medical and Non-medical Accommodations: Please follow the procedures as set out by the University which includes **presenting your official documentation to your Academic Counseling office (not to me)** after which an academic counselor will make a recommendation to me regarding whether or not to grant an extension without penalty. Only in cases in which the student has presented appropriate documentation to their Academic Counseling Officer will any extensions without penalty be considered. For more information, see http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Accommodation for Special Needs: If you are a student with special needs, please visit Western's *Learning Skills Services* to access the resources available to you. LS counselors are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counseling. SDC's Learning Skills Services, Rm 4100 Western Student Services Building, <https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>
If you are seeking academic accommodation, please see me as soon as possible, ideally at the beginning of the course (for pre-established conditions, accommodation will not be considered for those who wait till the end of classes to discuss their issues with me).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices: Electronic devices will not be allowed during tests. All students will be required to turn off their mobile devices during lectures and tests. During lectures, voice or image recording of the lecture is strictly prohibited: you are free to use your lap-tops to take notes, but NO digital recording (either voice or image) of the lectures is allowed.

Statement on 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 http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

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

Weekly Reading Schedule: Subject to modification

* Available in 'Resources' folder of the course website. Unless indicated otherwise, all films/shows should be viewed prior to class.

Date	Required and Recommended Readings	Lecture Themes
Sept. 10	CLASS CANCELLED	
Sept. 17	<p>Introduction to course themes and syllabus</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2014/jun/15/john-oliver-started-a-revolution-in-us-tv-political-satire</p> <p>http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/news/watch-john-oliver-slam-donald-trump-for-twisting-faith-and-facts-w466679</p> <p>http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/politics/article/the-john-oliver-effect-and-the-french-elections.html</p> <p>http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/lists/10-times-jon-stewart-outdid-journalism-20150805</p>	<i>Introduction to Politics and Pop Culture in the Age of Spin</i>
Sept. 24	<p>Required:</p> <p>*Douglas Van Belle, "Introducing the Ancient Debate".</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/26/1984-dystopias-reflect-trumps-us-orwell</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/25/dystopian-dreams-how-feminist-science-fiction-predicted-the-future</p> <p>Film: <i>Pleasantville</i> (1998) and <i>The Matrix</i> (1999)</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFG5c1ITkYQ</p> <p>http://www.slideshare.net/mczamora/exploring-dystopian-characteristics-through-film?next_slideshow=1</p>	<i>Dystopian Utopias: The 'Ideal' vs. the 'Real'</i>
Oct. 1	<p>Required:</p> <p>*Van Belle, "Classifying Ideologies".</p> <p>*Ilan Kapoor, <i>Celebrity Humanitarianism</i>, p.1-11</p> <p>Film:</p> <p><i>The Pervert's Guide to Cinema</i> (2006);</p>	<i>-Ologies and -isms: Ideologies, Perceptions, and Framing</i>

	In class: "Ocean 2.0", http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE7KcF3MphU	
Oct. 8	NO CLASS	<i>Happy Thanksgiving and Fall Reading Week</i>
Oct. 15	<u>IN CLASS TEST (worth 35%) TODAY!!</u>	
Oct. 22	Required: Ilan Kapoor, <i>Celebrity Humanitarianism</i> , pp. 12-43; 47-82 "Richard Gere Goes to Tibet" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITVn31L3e8g&index=2&list=PL8B49EB977D027C66 Film: <i>Fight Club</i> (1999)	<i>The Ideology of Humanitarianism: Orientalism and 'Decaf Capitalism'</i>
Oct. 29	Required: Jensen and Draffan, <i>Welcome to the Machine</i> , p. 1-56. <u>Lord of the Flies</u> (1990) "Tendency to Fear is a Strong Political Influence", http://news.brown.edu/pressreleases/2013/02/fear Recommended: <u>The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear</u>	<i>Who Rules and Over Whom? Governance, Leadership and the Politics of Fear</i>
Nov. 5	Required: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/06/cyber-insecurity-hackers-data-theft-protection "'State of Surveillance' with Edward Snowden and Shane Smith" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucRWyGKBVzo Films: <i>Enemy of the State</i> (1990); <i>Minority Report</i> (2002); <i>The Truman Show</i> (1998)	<i>The Power of an All Seeing Eye: Surveillance and the Politics of Insecurity</i>
Nov. 12	<u>IN CLASS TEST (worth 35%) TODAY!!</u>	
Nov. 19	Required: "Welcome to the era of transhumanism" http://newatlas.com/transhumanism-mainstream-era-popular/47941/ https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/feb/22/robots-google-ray-kurzweil-terminator-singularity-artificial-intelligence Film: <i>Her</i> (2013); <i>Ex Machina</i> (2015); <i>Upgrade</i> (2018)	<i>The Politics of Transhumanism: Is the Mind Just a Machine?</i>

Nov. 26	<p>Required: Scott Bakker's <i>Neuropath</i></p> <p>"MIT Scientists Plant False Memory in Mouse's Mind" https://www.boston.com/news/science/2013/07/25/mit-scientists-plant-false-memory-in-mouses-mind</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/04/world/americas/neuro-politics-where-campaigns-try-to-read-your-mind.html</p>	<i>The Neuropolitics of Control: Neuropath</i>
Dec. 3	<u>IN CLASS TEST (worth 30%) TODAY!!</u>	LAST CLASS

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://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?PolicyCategoryID=1&Command=showCategory&Keywords=scholastic&SubHeadingID=189&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading189>

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:

A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.

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/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.

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SUPPORT SERVICES

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