

Western University
Department of Political Science



Political Science 2144a
Politico-tainment
& Political (Con)Science



This course is fully online through UWO's OWL Learning Management System (LMS).

Course Description

Electronic election tampering to elect a US President? 2012's *Scandal's* opening plot thread. President Trump? *The Simpsons'* predicted it 18 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 Hour has 22 Minutes*, *The Simpsons*, *Scandal*, *Designated Survivor*, *The Good Wife*, *Veep*, *Parks & Rec*, *Blackstone*, etc., are the contemp(t)orary *Mirror Television* to politicians and their activities (Trump's tweets about shows like *Saturday Night* or *Blackish*, for example) and society in general. Furthermore, television is one of the means by which the pulse of politics and society is measured by political actors, and television can push changing & challenging of beliefs, values, traditions, prejudices, policies, laws, etc., while also forcing action by political actors, especially 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 categories of political shows: political satire, political comedy, and political drama. It will also generally overview Indigenous TV and politics.

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





Learning Outcomes

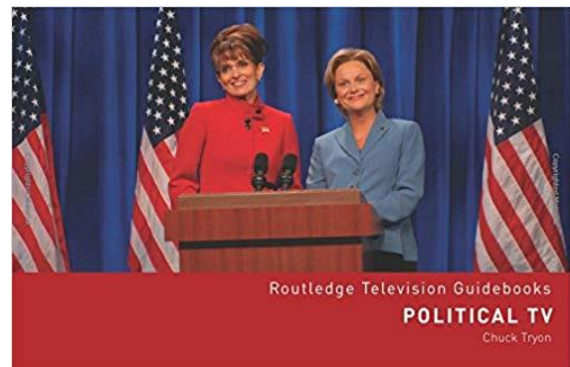
- Recognize political messaging on television
- Characterize & explain political content in television shows
- Analyze, critique & evaluate political analysis presented on television

Requisite & Anti-Requisites

- Pre-requisites: none.
- Anti-requisites: Political Science 2144a/b and Political Science 2192a/b (*only if it was 2192a/b Special Topics: Politicotainment course/version*)
- "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

Our textbook is Chuck Tryon's *Political TV* and you can get it from the class OWL site, and other readings will also be posted on OWL. Suggestions for particular episodes or shows will be made as appropriate, but you are encouraged to explore the shows listed in the Course Outline at your leisure.



Evaluation



- All Exams are completed online via the OWL site
- Mid-Term Exam (October): 50%
- Final Exam (December): 50%
- Exams cover Readings and Lecture videos for the weeks designated for that particular exam

Course Schedule

0. Sep 7-9: Introduction to the Course
1. Sep 11-15: Understanding the Relationship between Politics & TV
 - Tryon "Introduction: Political TV and Mediated Citizenship", 1-22 [21]
2. Sep 18-22: Political News: Conventions & Advertising
 - Tryon, "1: Selling Politics: Advertising after Citizens United", 25-39 [24]
 - McKinney, Mitchell S. & Matthew L. Spialek, "Political Debates", *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, Sage, 2017, 1-8 [7]
 - Consider: recent political conventions & ads
3. Sep 25-29: Political News or Shows with Politics?
 - Tryon, "2: Political News in the Post-Network Era", 40-69 [29]
 - 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 [8]
 - Consider: network news outlets, online news sources, Newsroom
4. Oct 2-6: Political Satire: Most Watched not-so-Fake News?
 - Tryon, "3: Fake News and Political Satire", 71-106 [35]
 - 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 [19]
 - Consider: The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, Real-time with Bill Maher, The Nightly Show Royal Canadian Air Farce, This Hour has 22 Minutes, Rick Mercer Report, BeavertonTV
5. Oct 9-13: Political Satire: Sketchy Comedy?
 - Tryon, "4: Comedy and the Political Spectacle", 107-121 [14]



- Consider: Saturday Night Live, Key & Peele, Inside Amy Schumer, Baron VonSketch Show

6. Oct 16-20: Political Satire: Situation Comedies
- Tryon, "4: Comedy and the Political Spectacle", 121-134 [13]
 - Consider: Parks & Recreation, Veep, SpinCity, Dan for Mayor, The Mayor

**Mid-Term Exam – Sunday October 22 2-4pm: 2 hours
Covers Weeks 1-6; 120 multiple-choice questions**

7. Oct 23-27: Political Drama: Principled Leaders
- Tryon, "Political Process Melodramas and Serial Narrative", 137-146, 154-163 [18]
 - Consider: The West Wing, Designated Survivor, The Good Wife, Madam Secretary, Borgen

READING WEEK Oct 30 – Nov 5



8. Nov 6-10: Political Drama: Tortured Leaders
- Tryon, "Political Process Melodramas and Serial Narrative", 146-154 [9]
 - Consider: Scandal, House of Cards, Blackstone
9. Nov 13-17: Political Drama: National Security
- Tryon, "Surveillance Culture: Melodramas of National Security", 165-183 [18]
 - Consider: 24, Homeland, The Americans, The Blacklist, Berlin Station, The Night Manager, Jack Ryan
10. Nov 20-24: Political Drama: Crime & Legal Dramas
- Quinn, Laura. "The Politics of Law and Order." *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures*, vol. 25, no. 1-2, 2002, pp. 130-133 [4]
 - Tasker, Yvonne, "Television Crime Drama and Homeland Security: From *Law & Order* to "Terror TV"", *Cinema Journal*, vol 51, no. 4, Summer 2012, pp. 44-65 [21]
 - Consider: Law & Order series, The Wire, Chicago PD
11. Nov 27-Dec 1: Political Cartoons & Superhero Shows & Conclusion
- Greene, Doyle, "Fair and Balanced Satire: Against The Simpsons", *Politics and the American Television Comedy*, 200-211 [10]
 - Curtis, David & Gerald Erion, "South Park and the Open Society", *South Park & Philosophy*, Ed. Robert Arp, 112-120 [8]

- Costello, Matthew J; Worcester, Kent. "The Politics of the Superhero: Introduction", *PS: Political Science & Politics*; Washington Vol. 47, Issue 1, (Jan 2014): 85-89 [4]
- Williams, Kevin D. "(R)Evolution of the Television Superhero: Comparing Superfriends and Justice League in Terms of Foreign Relations." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2011, pp. 1333-1352 [19]
- i) Consider: The Simpsons, Family Guy, South Park, American Dad, The Flash, The Green Arrow, Supergirl, Black Lightning, Legends of Tomorrow

12. Dec 4-7:

- Government of Canada, "Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: Media and reconciliation" August 2021 [1] <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524505692599/1557513408573>
- Horton, Adrian. 'It's a completely new day': the rise of Indigenous films and TV shows", *The Guardian*, Sep 03, 2022. [17] <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/sep/02/its-a-completely-new-day-the-rise-of-indigenous-films-and-tv-shows>
- Harris, Kirby "The history of Indigenous representation in film and television", *The Queens-University Journal*, November 13, 2020. [5]
- Knopf, Kerstin. 2010. "Sharing Our Stories with All Canadians: Decolonizing Aboriginal Media and Aboriginal Media Politics in Canada." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 34 (1): 89-120. [31]
- Hearne, Joanna. 2017. "'I Am Not a Fairy Tale': Indigenous Storytelling on Canadian Television." *Marvels & Tales* 31 (1): 126-46.[20]
- Tryon, "Conclusion"
- Consider: North of 60, Blackstone, Arctic Air, Reservation Dogs, Total Control, Alaska Daily, Tribal, Acting Good, Rutherford Falls, Mohawk Girls

**Final Exam – 2 hours, as scheduled by Registrar's Office
Covers Weeks 7-12; 120 multiple-choice questions**

General Notes about the Class

1. Read the Course Outline fully and carefully
2. Check the OWL site regularly for updates, details, etc.
3. Emails: please use your UWO email account for class-related emails
4. As this is an online course and everything is done through OWL
5. There are no regular office hours, just on Zoom by appointment.
6. Exams are not reviewable. If you have a query about a question during the exam, you can email your query and I will review the matter and update you accordingly. However, individual exams cannot be individually reviewed.
7. If you have computer or other problems during an Exam:
 - If you have any problems/issues, you need to contact OWL support for help



- If you have Internet or other issues, while completing an Exam, you need to provide documentation verifying the problem and its impact, such as an OWL WTS statement verifying the problem, verification from your Internet service provider, screenshot of the issue to be assessed, etc.; if you don't have a documented verification for the problem/issue, accommodation will not be provided
8. Conduct yourself according to 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>
 9. "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
 10. For assignments worth less than 10%: "For work worth less than 10% of the total course grade, the instructor is empowered to grant academic considerations without referring the student to their academic counsellors. If an instructor chooses to do so, the mechanism for dealing with missed work (e.g., an extension, make-up opportunity, or reweighting) must be specified on the course outline to ensure fair treatment for all students. Note: No accommodations are provided for missed quizzes as students top score in only 90% of all posted regular quizzes (not bonus) will be used for the grade assessments.
 11. For assignments worth 10% or more: Students should check out the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>) and other matters, e.g., passing in the family, major accident, etc. Documentation must be submitted by the student directly to *their* appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the Instructor, and the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.
 12. Support Services:
Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: Academic Counselling - Western University (uwo.ca).
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.
To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Please contact Accessible Education at

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Learning-skills counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) 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 counselling.

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>. Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC,

<https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

13. **Respectful conduct and engagement:** Note conduct should accord with the University of Western Ontario Student Code of Conduct, which can be accessed as a PDF from: http://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_experience/studentconduct.html.
14. **Grade concerns:** talk to me at your earliest convenience
15. **Unacceptable Use of AI:** The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) are not permitted in this class; therefore, any use of AI tools for work in this class may be considered a violation of the University of Western Ontario's [Academic Misconduct](#) which may constitute a [Scholastic Offence](#). The use of unauthorized AI tools will result in: a failure to receive full grades, the need to resubmit the assignment, need to orally present the assignment in office hours, or a failure to complete the requirements of the course.
16. *Please also read the Appendices also provided.*
17. **NOTE:** if changes to the Course Outline are necessitated, we work to let you know as soon as possible, so please check the OWL site and your emails regularly

Thank you for taking my class and Hope you enjoy it!

