

Western University
2017-18
Political Science 2142A, Section 001:
POLITICS AND POP CULTURE

Instructor: Professor Nandita, Biswas Mellamphy

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

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Class location and times: Mondays 11:30am-1:20pm, NCB 117

Requisites/Anti-requisites: N/A

Course Description:

This course critically explores politics and popular culture through (and in) film, television, as well as digital and print media (advertisements, blogs etc.). As Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan once famously argued in the mid-20th century, the *medium is the message*: *perception* influences *communication*; likewise, communication influences *what* and *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 and around popular culture. As the recent American presidential election has demonstrated, today the roles of citizen and of consumer are blurred, and the main aim of this course will be to ask whether the convergence between 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 practices of political and cultural control? Throughout the course, we will examine selected representations of capitalism, consumerism, orientalism, surveillance and security, techno-science, and transhumanism, as well as critically acquaint students with some major political theories such as realism, idealism, constructivism, feminism, neo-marxism and postmodernism. Topics will include:

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

Course Objectives:

- Identify and recognize diverse political concepts, problems and ideologies in relation to popular culture, world affairs, and current events.
- Critically explore the complex interrelationships between political, social, cultural and historical ideas.
- 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* or YouTube. It is your responsibility to come to class having viewed the assigned materials.

Evaluation: Full instructions for each assignment are available in the 'Appendices' section of this course outline and will also be posted on the course website.

- **In-class Test** on **October 2, 2017**: Short Answer format= **20%** covering course materials from September 11-25, 2017.
- **Film Analysis (worth 35%), due November 6, 2017 no later than 5pm**, to be submitted by electronic upload to course website.
- **Final Take-Home Exam** (critical book analysis of Scott Bakker's thriller *Neuropath* (2010) /long answer format) = **45%**; exam will be distributed in class on November 27th, 2017 and will be due on **DECEMBER 4, 2017 by 5 PM**.

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

Western Medical Accommodation Policy (Medical Notes): In May, 2008, The University of Western Ontario's Senate approved a medical note policy, which affects all students. 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 counsellor will make a recommendation to me regarding whether or not to grant an extension without penalty. For detailed information and forms, please visit <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>, and for further policy information please

visit http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf Only in cases in which the student has presented appropriate documentation to their Academic Counseling Officer will any extensions without penalty be considered.

Accommodation for Special Needs: If you are a student with special needs, please visit Western's *Student Development Services* (SDC)'s Learning Skills Services to access the resources available to you. LS counsellors 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. SDC's Learning Skills Services, Rm 4100 WSS, www.sdc.uwo.ca/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).

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: "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/handbook/appeals/choloff.pdf>." The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic format for plagiarism checking. (UWO Senate 2002-03)."

Policies: To discuss these policies further, please feel free to meet with me.

- Make-up tests will only be considered with appropriate medical or other official documentation (first go to Academic Counselling to provide your documentation; they will contact me to make a recommendation).
- *Assignment Deadlines:* Please consider these deadlines 'sacred'! Only in cases in which the student has presented appropriate documentation to their Academic Counseling Officer will any extensions without penalty be considered.
- You are free to use your lap-tops to take notes, but no digital taping (either voice or image) of the lectures is allowed.
- Problems with accessibility to the course website cannot be used as a basis for missing deadlines or appealing your grades. This means that if you are having problems accessing the course website, **you must notify your instructor as soon as possible** and you will be directed to a computer technician.

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 lass.

Date	Required and Recommended Readings	Lecture Themes
Sept. 11	<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>	<p><i>Introduction to Politics and Pop Culture: Why John Oliver Matters</i></p>
Sept. 18	<p>Required: *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: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFG5c1ITkYQ http://www.slideshare.net/mczamora/exploring-dystopian-characteristics-through-film?next_slideshow=1</p>	<p><i>Dystopian Utopias: The 'Ideal' vs. the 'Real'</i></p>
Sept. 25	<p>Required: *Van Belle, "Classifying Ideologies".</p> <p>*Ilan Kapoor, <i>Celebrity Humanitarianism</i>, p.1-11</p>	<p><i>-Ologies and -Isms: Ideologies, Perceptions, and Framing</i></p>

	<p>Film: The Pervert's Guide to Cinema (2006);</p> <p>In class: "Ocean 2.0", http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE7KcF3MphU</p>	
Oct. 2	<p>ASSIGNMENT 1: IN CLASS TEST (worth 20%) TODAY!!</p> <p>Ilan Kapoor, <i>Celebrity Humanitarianism</i>, p. 12-43.</p> <p>"Exploring Orientalism in Disney" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLdzx9-H8Wg</p> <p>"Richard Gere Goes to Tibet" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITVn31L3e8g&index=2&list=PL8B49EB977D027C66</p>	<i>The Ideology of Global Humanitarianism: Orientalism</i>
Oct. 9	CLASS CANCELLED	<i>Happy Thanksgiving</i>
Oct. 16	<p>Ilan Kapoor, <i>Celebrity Humanitarianism</i>, p. 47-82.</p> <p>Film: <i>Fight Club</i> (1999)</p>	<i>The Contents of your Wallet: 'Decaf Capitalism'</i>
Oct. 23	<p>Required: Jensen and Draffan, <i>Welcome to the Machine</i>, p. 1-56.</p> <p>Lord of the Flies (1990)</p> <p>"Tendency to Fear is a Strong Political Influence", http://news.brown.edu/pressreleases/2013/02/fear</p> <p>Recommended: The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear</p>	<i>Who Rules and Over Whom? Governance, Leadership and the Politics of Fear</i>
Oct. 30	<p>Required: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/06/cyber-insecurity-hackers-data-theft-protection</p> <p>"'State of Surveillance' with Edward Snowden and Shane Smith" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucRWyGKBVzo</p> <p>Films: <i>Enemy of the State</i> (1990); <i>Minority Report</i> (2002)</p>	<i>The Power of an All Seeing Eye: Surveillance and the Politics of InSecurity</i>

Nov. 6	<p>ASSIGNMENT 2: FILM ANALYSIS (worth 35%) due TODAY by electronic upload to course website</p> <p>http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/06/08/how-trump-used-facebook-to-win/</p> <p>http://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-russias-fake-news-playbook</p> <p><i>The Truman Show</i> (1998); <i>Terms and Conditions May Apply</i> (2013)</p>	<i>Surveillance Capitalism and Information Warfare</i>
Nov. 13	<p>Required:</p> <p>“Welcome to the era of transhumanism”</p> <p>http://newatlas.com/transhumanism-mainstream-era-popular/47941/</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/feb/22/robots-google-ray-kurzweil-terminator-singularity-artificial-intelligence</p> <p>Film: <i>Her</i> (2013); <i>Ex Machina</i> (2015)</p>	<i>The Politics of Transhumanism: Is the Mind Just a Machine?</i>
Nov. 20	<p>Required: Scott Bakker’s <i>Neuropath</i></p> <p>“MIT Scientists Plant False Memory in Mouse’s Mind”</p> <p>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/neuropolitics-where-campaigns-try-to-read-your-mind.html</p> <p>GUEST LECTURER: SCOTT BAKKER</p>	<i>The Neuropolitics of Control: Neuropath</i>
Nov. 27	<p>Last Class</p> <p>Exam Review and Distribution of Take-Home Exam</p>	<i>Take Home Exam</i>
Dec. 4	<p>ASSIGNMENT 3: TAKE-HOME EXAM (worth 45%) is due TODAY by electronic upload to course website</p>	<i>HAPPY HOLIDAYS! NO LECTURE</i>

APPENDICES: Details of the Assignments

ASSIGNMENT 1: In-class Test on **October 2, 2017: Short Answer format= 20% covering course materials from September 11-25, 2017.**

The test will be divided into 2 **parts**:

Part 1: Definitions (10 questions worth 1% each)

This section evaluates your overall knowledge of the key terms covered in the course materials up till the test date (i.e. from readings and lecture slides). Definitions of these terms can be found on the class lecture slides (on your course website). On the test, you will be provided with a definition, and you must identify the correct term to which the definition applies.

E.g. A term that is used to describe those characteristics of women and men which are socially constructed, as opposed to 'sex', a term that refers to those characteristics that are biologically determined.

Answer? *Gender*

Part 2: Identify the Political Ideology (10 questions worth 1 % each)

This section evaluates your basic comprehension of the political ideologies discussed in the course materials (drawn from the reading from Douglas Van Belle, p. 19-27). You will be given a short clue and you will have to identify which political ideology corresponds to the clue.

E.g. Which political ideology believes in strong military rule headed by a charismatic dictator?

Answer? *Fascism*

ASSIGNMENT 2. Film Analysis (worth 35%), due November 6, 2017 no later than 5pm, to be submitted by electronic upload to course website by each student (instructions on how to submit electronically follows).

Objectives:

- To draw as many strong parallels and connections between the content of a film (e.g. its themes, characters, plot, messages), and the course/lecture materials (e.g. concepts, definitions, events, theories, etc.).
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Instructions:

- Go to <https://www.pastemagazine.com/blogs/lists/2012/09/ten-of-the-most-terrifying-pop-culture-dystopias.html>
- Pick ONE of the films from list provided and watch it (be sure to take notes).
- Write a short and critical analysis focusing on answering the following questions:

How does this film depict utopian or dystopian themes? Which political ideologies can you identify in it? Discuss your answers with examples from the film and the course materials.

Note: This is **not** a film review focusing on whether you like or dislike the film. Instead, you must focus on how the film reflects the themes and concepts covered in the course readings and lectures. So, the more you draw strong and persuasive parallels and connections between the movie and the course materials, the better your score will be. In addition, your answer will also be assessed technically for effective organization and selection of information, authorial credibility (e.g. no spelling or grammatical errors), and presentation/communication of ideas).

This is not a collaborative assignment (you are not permitted to consult with anyone other than the course instructor) and Western University's Academic Dishonesty policy will apply throughout the take-home exam period. No hard copy is required at this time.

Format: Please provide a typed document, 12-point font; 1 inch margins all around; double spaced between 650-750 words (not including bibliography). You need not consult any sources other than the course materials. All submissions must include a bibliography section (Lecture notes should be cited as: Biswas Mellamphy, Nandita. "Title of Lecture", Politics and Pop Culture, Western University, Date of Lecture). Please use Chicago Style for citations:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Submission Instructions: You must electronically submit your exam through the course website. No other method of submission will be accepted. Go to the course website and click on the 'Assignments' link in Menubar (left side of screen). Go to the 'film analysis' link to upload

your electronic copy. Please SUBMIT EITHER AS A *WORD* OR *PDF* DOCUMENT ONLY (OWL DOES NOT ACCEPT PAGES OR ANY OTHER FORMAT).

3. Take-Home Exam= 45%; Long Answer format

Objectives: You will be evaluated on your ability to accurately identify and persuasively discuss the main concepts in this course in relation to the novel *Neuropath* (2010) by Scott Bakker. The purpose of this final assignment is to show how well you can connect your analysis of the book content with the course content (e.g. the readings and films viewed as part of the course). In addition, your answer will also be assessed technically for effective organization and selection of information, authorial credibility (e.g. no spelling or grammatical errors), and presentation/communication of ideas.

Deadline: You will receive your take-home exam question sheet at the end of lecture class on November 27, 2017 (you must show valid student ID in order to get your exam). You have ONE WEEK to complete this take home exam. **Your exam is due no later than December 4, 2017 by 5 PM.** You must electronically submit your exam through the course website. No other method of submission will be accepted. **This is not a collaborative assignment** (you are not permitted to consult with anyone other than the course instructor) and Western University's Academic Dishonesty policy will apply throughout the take-home exam period. No hard copy is required at this time.

Format: Please provide a typed document, 12-point font; 1 inch margins all around; paginated; double spaced copy with your name and student number. Submissions must be between 750-1000 words (not including the bibliography). All submissions must include a bibliography section (Lecture notes should be cited as: Biswas Mellamphy, Nandita. "Title of Lecture", Politics and Pop Culture, Western University, Date of Lecture). Please use Chicago Style for citations: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Submission Instructions: All take-home exams must be submitted electronically through the OWL course website (TURNITIN is built into the OWL system, so you do not need to do anything other than electronically submit the paper through the course website). Go to the course website and click on the 'Assignments' link in Menubar (left side of screen). Go to the 'take-home exam' link to upload your electronic copy. Please SUBMIT EITHER AS A *WORD* OR *PDF* DOCUMENT ONLY (OWL DOES NOT ACCEPT PAGES OR ANY OTHER FORMAT).

The link will open as of December 1, 2017 and will close at 5:01 PM on December 4, 2017; before and after these dates, the link will not appear).

**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.