

Western University
2013-14
Political Science 2194a: Politics and Pop Culture

Instructor: Professor Nandita, Biswas Mellamphy

Office hours: Mondays 1:30-2:30 PM in SSC 4095; or by appointment

nbiswasm@uwo.ca or 519-661-2111 ext. 81161

Class location and times: Mondays 11:30am-1:20pm, KB 106

Requisites/Anti-requisites:

Course Description:

This course 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*. 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. 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 globalization, capitalism, urbanism, consumerism, war, terrorism, transhumanism, technology, science, as well as critically acquaint students with some major political theories of liberalism, such as realism, idealism, constructivism, feminism, neo-Marxism and postmodernism. Topics will include:

- the politics of fear and authority
- the politics of war and (in)security
- the politics of cyberspace and social media
- the politics of money, consumption and desire
- the politics of science and technology
- the politics of memory

Course Materials:

Van Belle, Douglas. *A Novel Approach to Politics: Introducing Political Science through Books, Movies, and Popular Culture*, 3rd Edition. California: CQ Press, 2013.

Bakker, Scott. *Neuropath*. Penguin: 2008.

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*. It is your responsibility to come to class having viewed the assigned materials.

Other Required Course Material: As indicated by the Weekly Reading Schedule below, other articles have been assigned to accompany your reading of the primary texts. All articles not found in the course textbooks are available on the course website.

Evaluation: Full instructions for each assignment will be posted on the course website.

10 in-class writing exercises (2% each)= 20%; these exercises will be completed in class and cannot be submitted after the fact (this assignment also counts your attendance, so no substitution assignments will be available).

Construct your own Sim-Government Assignment (based on steps in Van Belle Chapter 5)=
30% DUE NOVEMBER 4, 2013 AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Final Exam (short and long answer questions)= 50%

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.

NEW: Western Medical Accommodation Policy (Medical Notes): In May, 2008, The University of Western Ontario's Senate approved a new medical note policy, which affects all students. Please follow the procedures as set out by the University and see your Academic Counseling office to present your case and documentation **before** asking me for an extension without penalty. For more 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

Policy: *All assignments must be printed (excluding in class exercises and scheduled exams) and submitted in person on the deadline* (email submissions will not be accepted unless prior permission has been given by the professor). It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his/her assignment has been officially received (for example, if you slip your paper under my

door without notifying me, I am not responsible for a ‘lost’ paper and this cannot be used as a grounds for appeal).

Late essay submissions may be subject to a penalty deduction of **5% a day** (from the due date until the day that the assignment is received by the instructor, including weekends and holidays).

To discuss these policies further, please feel free to meet with me as early as possible.

Policy: You are free to use your lap-tops to take notes, but no digital taping (either voice or image) of the lectures is allowed.

Course Website (OWL site): All the course administration, including required readings, announcements, and detailed explanation of assignments will be found on the course website.

Note: The website has not been developed to be a replacement for attending class.

Policy: 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.

Special Needs: If you are a student with special needs, or you simply want to discuss the course materials in more depth, *please feel free to discuss with me in person as soon as possible (the earlier the better)*. Visit Western’s Student Development Services (<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>) to access the resources available to you.

Support Services: 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.

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

“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).”

While this course will not require you to use TURN IT IN, DO NOT CHEAT OR PLAGIARIZE! It is not worth it!

Weekly Reading Schedule: Subject to modification

* All films/shows should be viewed prior to class.

Date	Required and Recommended Readings	Lecture Themes
Sept. 9	Introduction to course themes and syllabus	<i>Comedy, Politics and The Culture Industry: Introduction to Politics and Pop Culture</i>
Sept. 16	<p>Required:</p> <p>Van Belle, chapter 1, pp. 1-18.</p> <p>HBO's series, <i>The Wire</i> (Season 4, any episode); "Dystopian Worlds", http://www.slideshare.net/cinbarsley/dystopian-worlds</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <p>David Simon and Wendell Peirce discuss Art and Urban Drama, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krMQg4cEuOU</p>	<i>Dystopian Utopias: Greek Tragedy for a New Millennium</i>
Sept. 23	<p>Required:</p> <p>Van Belle, chapter 1, pp. 19-39.</p> <p>The Pervert's Guide to Cinema (2006); "Ocean 2.0", http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE7KcF3MphU</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <p>"Robot Historian in the Ruins," http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/010636.html</p>	<i>-Ologies and -Isms: Perception, Representation, Transmission</i>
Sept. 30	<p>Required:</p> <p>Van Belle, chapter 2, pp. 40-67.</p> <p>Lord of the Flies (1990); "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. 7	Required:	<i>The Power of an All Seeing Eye: The</i>

	<p>Van Belle, chapter 3, pp. 68-91.</p> <p>Films: <i>Enemy of the State</i> (1990); “<u>So You’re Living in a Police State</u>”;</p> <p>“Facial Scanning is Making Gains in Surveillance”, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/21/us/facial-scanning-is-making-gains-in-surveillance.html?hp&r=2&</p> <p>Recommended: “Theatres of War: The Military Entertainment Complex” http://www.stanford.edu/class/sts145/Library/Lenoir-Lowood%20TheatersOfWar.pdf</p>	<i>Politics of InSecurity</i>
Oct. 14	<p>Required:</p> <p>Van Belle, ch. 13, pp. 351-352.</p> <p>Trevor Paglen, “Turnkey, Tyranny, Surveillance and the Terror State” http://www.guernicamag.com/daily/trevor-paglen-turnkey-tyranny-surveillance-and-the-terror-state/</p> <p>Dan Tynan, “In the 21st century surveillance state we are all terrorists”, http://www.itworld.com/it-management/369776/21st-century-surveillance-state-we-are-all-terrorists</p> <p>Films: <u>A Scanner Darkly</u> (2006)</p> <p>Recommended: <i>The Truman Show</i> (1998)</p>	<i>Societies of Control and the Politics of Self-Surveillance</i>
Oct. 21	<p>Required:</p> <p>Van Belle, chapter 4, pp. 93-117.</p> <p>Films: <u>Fight Club</u> (1999)</p> <p>Recommended: <u>The Corporation</u> (2003); “<u>Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep</u>”</p>	<i>The Contents of your Wallet: Politics and Capitalism</i>
Oct. 28	Class Cancelled	

Nov. 4	Required: “Humans Think Like Quantum Particles”, <i>Scientific American</i> <u>The Century of the Self</u> (2002) “The Military Industrial Media Entertainment Network”, http://thevisionmachine.com/2013/03/mime-net/	<i>The New ‘PR’: The Politics of Advertising War</i> Assignment Due In Class
Nov. 11	Required: Van Belle, ch. 11 Film: <i>Bladerunner</i> (1982) Recommended: “ <u>Cyborgs: Introduction</u> ” and “ <u>Anatomy of the Posthuman Body</u> ”; “ <u>Do Clones Dream of Uncopyrighted Sheep?</u> ”.	<i>Of Cyborgs and Simians: Do Androids Dream?</i>
Nov. 18	Required: <i>Inception</i> (2010); <i>Memento</i> (2000); <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i> (2004) “ <u>MIT Scientists Plant False Memory in Mouse’s Mind</u> ” “ <u>Is it Inception?</u> ”	<i>We Can Remember It for You Wholesale: The Politics of Memory</i>
Nov. 25	Required: <i>Neuropath</i> , Scott Bakker. Guest speaker: Scott Bakker	<i>Neuropolitics: The Pathology of Mind-Control</i>
Dec. 2	Last Class	Wrap Up and Exam Review

**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*
[\(http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/\)](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/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf."](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.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.

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

Students registered in Social Science should refer to <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/> <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp> 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.

Plagiarism

"**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/handbook/>

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

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.