

Department of Political Science
POLITICS AND POP
CULTURE 2142B, Section 001
2020-21

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Instructor: Professor Biswas Mellamphy

Contact Information: by email nbiswasm@uwo.ca ; please allow up to two days for responses.

Course Description:

This course critically explores politics and popular culture through 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. Increasingly, 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 satire and fake news
- 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.

Course Requirements: This course is "asynchronous," which means that we will not be meeting as a group in a physical space together. Nonetheless, I would recommend that you manage your time for this class as if we were meeting in person. Ideally, this involves setting out a regular 2-3 hour chunk of dedicated time each week to go through that week's content. Also, there is no need to 'binge' on the course content: do one week at a time, and do not do more than one week at a time. The course has been designed to be completed on a weekly basis, so try to follow along with the suggested order and schedule.

All course materials are available on the course OWL website. On the left-hand side of your course homepage, you will find a menu bar with different tabs. Start at the top with Overview and move downward to the next tab. The Course Content tab is one of the most important areas of the course website because this is where you are going to go every week to access the weekly readings, visual content and lessons.

- Each week, starting with week one, go to the weekly content under the Course Content tab. When you click on week 1, the content for that week's lesson will appear and you will start at the top of the page and move towards the bottom.
- Each week contains a short overview, a provocative image, some readings, many things to watch, a series of short lessons where I provide you with a lecture-style presentation, and even some reflection questions to help you think more deeply about the course materials.
- Go once a week to the course content page, click on the scheduled week, and do the readings, listen to videos and lectures and complete a short quiz worth 2% that will test you on the content of that week's materials. Each week comes with a checklist so you can clearly identify and complete that week's homework.
- You will also be expected to complete all assessments associated with this course (see below for details of the assessments).
- Check the discussion forum on a weekly basis by going to the 'forums' tab on the left-hand side menubar. If you have a course-related question, post it on the forum and I will be posting responses on a regular weekly basis. If you would like hear more about what your classmates think about a particular weekly topic, post your comment and/or question to start a conversation.
- If, however, you have a non-course related issue, like a personal issue, then contact me as soon as you can and do not post to the discussion forum.
- Contact me directly through the message tab found on the left-hand side toolbar of your course website. If, however, for technical reasons (e.g. if OWL is down) you cannot contact me directly through the course website, you can use my email address found at the beginning of this course outline.

Course Assessments:

- a short quiz to be completed after each week's content worth 2% each; there are 10 weeks with a quiz for each, so all together the quizzes will make up 20% of your overall grade. The content of each quiz will correspond to that week's materials. The format of the quiz will be multiple choice and/or fill in the blank type questions and it will be short.
- a mid-term multiple choice test to be completed week 5 covering course materials from weeks 1-4 (inclusive) worth 35%; there will be up to 40 questions on this test.
- a final multiple choice exam covering all the course materials to be scheduled by the Registrar's office during the final exam period worth 45%.

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.

Makeup Test/Exam Policy: The course policy (no exceptions) is that no tests/exams may be taken early for any reason. A student who misses a test/exam must provide a very good reason supported by evidence such as a hospital admittance form. If you are ill prior to a test/exam, let me know as soon as possible beforehand if you think you will not be able to take the exam. Failure to write one of the tests/exams without providing a sufficient excuse will result in a grade of zero for that test/exam.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university. The University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously (even when these are unintended because you should know when you are doing it).

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids
- Communicating with someone else during an exam or test
- Misrepresenting your identity when you knew or ought to have known you were doing it.

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes
- When you knew or ought to have known you were doing so.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and

citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from their instructors or from other institutional resources.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services.

Weekly Schedule of Themes:

Week 1	Politics and Pop Culture in the Age of 'Spin
Week 2	Walking the Line: Satire and Fake News
Week 3	Dystopian Utopias: The 'Ideal' vs. the 'Real'
Week 4	-Ologies and -Isms: Ideologies, Perceptions, and Framing
Week 5	Mid-term Test
Week 6	The Ideology of Humanitarianism: Orientalism and 'Decaf Capitalism'
Week 7	Who Rules and Over Whom? Governance, Leadership and the Politics of Fear
Week 8	The Power of an All-Seeing Eye: Surveillance and the Politics of Insecurity
Week 9	The Politics of Transhumanism: Is the Mind just a Machine?
Week 10	The Neuropolitics of Control: <i>Neuropath</i>

**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

https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.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. https://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 www.registrar.uwo.ca
- Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here) can be reached at: <https://westernusc.ca/your-services/>
- Student Development Services can be reached at: <http://sdc.uwo.ca/>
- Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <https://www.uwo.ca/health/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Procedures for Requesting Academic Consideration

Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

Submitting a Self-Reported Absence form provided that the conditions for submission are met;

- For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration; or
- For non-medical absences, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration in order to be eligible for academic

consideration. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Counselling unit to clarify what documentation is appropriate.

Students seeking academic consideration:

- are advised to consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying handing in work;
- are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances, recognizing that minor ailments (upset stomach) or upsets (argument with a friend) are **not** an appropriate basis for a self-reported absence;
- must communicate with their instructors **no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by either the self-reported absence or SMC, or immediately upon their return following a documented absence.

Academic consideration **is not** normally intended for students who require academic accommodation based on an ongoing physical or mental illness (recurring or chronic) or an existing disability. These students are expected to seek and arrange reasonable accommodations with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible in accordance with the Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disability.

Students who experience high levels of stress related to academic performance (including completing assignments, taking part in presentations, or writing tests or examinations). These students should access support through Student Health and Wellness and Learning Skills Services in order to deal with this stress in a proactive and constructive manner.

Requests for Academic Consideration Using the Self-Reported Absence Form

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the **online Self-Reported Absence portal**. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities **within 48 hours or less**.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:
Students will be allowed:

- a maximum of two self-reported absences between September and April;
- a maximum of one self-reported absence between May and August.

Any absences in excess of the number designated above, regardless of duration, will require students to present a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities.

- The duration of the excused absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours from the time the Self-Reported Absence form is completed through the online portal, or from 8:30 am the following morning if the form is submitted after 4:30 pm;
- The duration of the excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the 48 hour period should the student undertake significant academic responsibilities (write a test, submit a paper) during that time;
- The duration of an excused absence will terminate at 8:30 am on the day following the last day of classes each semester regardless of how many days of absence have elapsed;
- Self-reported absences **will not be** allowed for scheduled final examinations; for midterm examinations scheduled during the December examination period;
- Self-reporting **may not be** used for assessments (e.g. midterm exams, tests, reports, presentations, or essays) worth more than 30% of any given course.
- students must be in touch with their instructors **no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by the Self-Reported Absence form, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence.

Request for Academic Consideration for a Medical Absence

Students seeking academic consideration for a medical absence not covered by existing Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation, will be required to provide documentation in person to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration in the form of a completed, signed Student Medical Certificate (SMC) where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported Absences.

Request for Academic Consideration for a Non-Medical Absence

Students seeking academic consideration for a non-medical absence will be required to provide appropriate documentation to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported Absences.