

POLITICS AND POP CULTURE
2142A, Section 001
2022-23

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Instructor: Dr. Nandita Biswas Mellamphy

What is this course about?

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, technoscience, 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
- the politics of justice, gender, and race in superhero(ine) narratives

What will I learn?

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.

What is expected of me each week?

- Completion of weekly readings, viewing of visual materials/films etc. and taking your own notes
- Watching the weekly lecture and taking good notes
- Completion of weekly quiz . There are 10 quizzes, but only the best 8 quizzes will count, making each quiz worth 2.5% of your overall grade (cumulatively worth 20% of your overall grade). Each quiz opens Monday at 8am and closes on Thursday by 8pm; YOU MUST COMPLETE YOUR QUIZ DURING THIS PERIOD OF TIME; there are no makeups for missed quizzes.
- Completion of an online midterm test worth 35%
- Completion of an online final exam worth 45%

How will I be graded?

A short quiz to be completed after each week's content; there are 10 weeks with a quiz for each. The bottom two quiz grades will be dropped leaving 8 quizzes worth 2.5% each making up 20% of your overall grade (there is no quiz for week 5 when you take your midterm test).

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 (October 20, 2022) 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%.; there will be up to 100 questions on this test.

All assessments are available online and can be taken by going to the Tests/Quizzes tab of your course OWL webpage.

All assessments will be timed and linear, meaning you will only have a specific amount of time for each question and once you click on your answer, you will NOT be able to change it, or go back to review/modify it.

All assessments are open book and no proctoring software is being used.

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 scheduled for Thursday October 20, 2022

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: Neuropath

Week 11 Who Gets to Be a Superhero? Justice, Gender, and Race in Pop Culture Narratives

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.

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.

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.

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:

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.

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

Western is discontinuing use of the Self Reported Absence system as of Fall 2022 and reinstating the AIUS policy or the Request for Academic Consideration for a Medical Absence, found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

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.