

Western University
Department of Political Science



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



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.

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



Contact Info

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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)

4. Oct 3-7: 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

5. Oct 10-14: 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

6. Oct 17-21: 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

7. Oct 24-28: Political Satire: Situation Comedies
 - Tryon, "4: Comedy and the Political Spectacle", 121-134 [13]
 - Consider: Parks & Recreation, Veep, SpinCity, Dan for Mayor, The Mayor

READING WEEK Oct 31 – Nov 6



8. Nov 7-11: 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

9. Nov 14-18: Political Drama: Tortured Leaders
 - Tryon, "Political Process Melodramas and Serial Narrative", 146-154 [9]
 - Consider: Scandal, House of Cards, Blackstone

10. Nov 21-25: 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

11. Nov 28-Dec 2: 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

12. Dec 5-8: 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, Iss. 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]
 - Tryon, "Conclusion"
 - Consider: The Simpsons, Family Guy, South Park, American Dad, The Flash, The Green Arrow, Supergirl, Black Lightning, Legends of Tomorrow

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. Quizzes are not reviewable. Quiz questions have been checked repeatedly. Given the small number of questions in each quiz, the extensive time to complete them, and especially the volume of students in this class, reviewing of quizzes is not feasible, so quizzes will not be reviewable
5. As this is an online course and everything is done through OWL and online means.
6. There are no regular office hours, just by appointment.
7. If you have computer or other problems during Quizzes or the Final Exam:
 - If you have any problems/issues, you need to contact OWL support for help
 - If you have Internet or other issues, while completing quizzes or the final 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, 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. *Please also read the Appendices also provided.*
16. 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!**



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.

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Counselling office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a "Multiple Exam Situation" (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

Note: Missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

Accommodation and Accessibility

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the

Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

Academic Policies

The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>.

In accordance with policy,

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf,

the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

During exams/tests/quizzes, no electronic devices (e.g. a phone, laptop, iPad) are allowed and must be powered down and stored out of reach.

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.

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>).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

If a course uses remote proctoring, please be advised that you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide **personal information** (including

some biometric data) and the session will be **recorded**. Completion of a course with remote proctoring will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at:

<https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

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 \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/academic_counselling/)

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 the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

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Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

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.

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Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991