

SOSC1000E: Politics Through Film
(Tentative Syllabus: Subject to Change)

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Class time: Friday 09:00AM - 11:50AM

(AIM TO COME @8:50AM)

Class location: Lecture Theater F

Teaching Assistant:

Office Hours: Friday 12:30PM - 2:00PM (Academic Building 206)

Course Overview. This course examines world politics through the medium of film. Movies provide interesting perspectives on how we view political, economic, social, and cultural issues. This course will pair a film with a reading that provide social and political context. Class time is devoted to movie viewing and lecture. For all movies, we will explore following questions: What does the film tell us about politics and society? Is the film still relevant today? What does the film teach you what you did not know? Do films affect the way we view politics?

There are four main requirements of this course. First, students will attend ALL lectures on time and watch the movie together. Second, students will take weekly quiz after the film. Third, students will take final exam on movies, readings and lectures. Finally, students will actively and effectively participate in class discussions.

This course will not require that you view films outside normal class time because we will view the required movies in class. If you cannot make this time, you will have to either check out the movie from the Library (all movies will be available from the Library) or rent it on your own.

Requirements: Grades are based on the following criteria:

Film Quiz (50 percent of final grade). Students will watch movie together (starting promptly at the beginning of the class, no late attendance allowed) and solve weekly quiz right after viewing the movie. The quiz questions will be strictly on film contents. If you do not focus on watching movie, you may not be able to solve some of the questions.

Final Exam on Readings and Lectures (50 percent of total grade, 40 percent if the class size is below 50). The final exam will be on the contents of lecture, readings and relevant contents in movies.

(Attendance-on-time Check). This class watch movie together. This means that prompt attendance is critical for the success of the course. As in a theater, if you are late, other

students are disturbed. If late comers exceed my expectation after a few classes, I will add attendance-on-time as part of the grade.

Class Policy.

1. **Don't be late. Aim to come at 8:50am.** The whole class will view a movie at the beginning of the class. If you are late, you get to disturb other people like in a theater. Therefore, students who are late should sit at the back seats. If back seats are not available, in the corridor.
2. **Bring your cellphone or laptop to every class to take quiz.**
3. **Do not take the cellphone out until the movie ends.** If you cannot take this rule seriously, reconsider taking the class. As in a theater, if you open your cellphone, many people around you get seriously bothered by the light. Remember we will have quiz every class right after we watch the movie. Therefore, disturbing other people from watching a movie also potentially affect their grade negatively (not to mention yours).

Course objectives and learning outcomes. The Politics through Film gives students an opportunity to:

- Observe various political phenomenon around the world
- Understand foundational theories of politics
- Analyze how institutions and history shape the politics and public policy today.
- Understand how movies reflect politics and its impacts on society.
- Indirectly experience the process by which individuals are affected by politics and come to hold their political ideology

Course Schedule. The scheduled movies are subject to change without prior notification.

Warnings. Please note that some of the movies we watch contain disturbing images, violence, and bad language. If you are a freshman, younger than your cohorts, please consult with the instructor.

September 7. Week 1. Introduction

What is politics? Why does it matter to us? What is political science? How does political science research help us understand politics better?

September 14. Week 2. Authoritarianism

Movie: *The Lives of Others* (2006) <https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991009228189703412>

Essential Reading:

Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz. 2014. "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set," *Perspectives on Politics*, 12 (2) 313-331.

Additional Movies: *Snowpiercer* (2013), *Hunger Games* (2012-2015)

September 21. Week 3. Protest and Democratization

Movie: *1987: When the day comes* (2018) or *A Taxi Driver* (2017)

<https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991012578765403412>

Essential Reading:

Barbara Geddes. 1999. "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1): 115-144.

Additional Movies: *A Taxi Driver* (2017), *Attorney* (2014)

<https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991009579719703412>

No (2012)

September 28. Week 4. Presidency and Congress

Movie: *Lincoln* (2012) 2:30 <https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991009528919703412>

Readings:

Larry Diamond's lecture on "[What is Democracy?](#)"

José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi. 2002. "Democratic Institutions and Regime Survival: Parliamentarism and Presidentialism Reconsidered" *Annual Review of Political Science* 5:151-179.

Additional Movies: *The American President*; *JFK*; *Nixon*; *Seven Days in May*; *Dr. Strangelove* (1964); *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington* (1939)

October 5. Week 5. Election and Campaign

Movie: *The Ides of March* (2011) <https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991009460789703412>

Essential Reading:

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris. 2017. Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse. *Perspectives on Politics* 15(2): 443-454.

Additional Movies: *Bulworth*; *Election*; *Game Change*; *The War Room*; *The Manchurian Candidate*; *Primary Colors*

October 12. Week 6. Discrimination and Resistance

Movie: *Selma* (2014) 2:08 <https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991009605539703412>

Essential Reading:

Morris, Aldon D. (1999), "A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement,"

Annual Review of Sociology, 25: 517-39.

Drew, Elizabeth (2015), "[Selma vs. History](#)" *The New York Review of Books*.

Additional Movies: *Ghosts of Mississippi*; *Malcolm X*; *Mississippi Burning*; *Erin Brockovich*; *The Life of David Gale*

October 19. Week 7. Corruption and Lobbying

Movie: *Casino Jack (2010)* 1:48 [PN1997.A13 C368 2010a](#)

Essential Reading:

Daniel Treisman. 2000. The causes of corruption: a cross-national study, *Journal of Public Economics*, 76(3):399-457.

Additional Movies: *Bowling for Columbine (2002)*; *Fed up (2014)*; *Thank You For Smoking (2005)*

October 26. Week 8. Media

Movie: *Good Night and Good Luck (2005)* 1:33 [PN1997.A12 G6535 2005a](#)

Essential Reading:

Allcott, Hunt, and Matthew Gentzkow. 2017. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31 (2): 211-36.

Additional Movies: *Wag the Dog (1997)*

<https://lbdiscoversust.hk/bib/991009138709703412>

Additional Readings:

Shepard, Geoff (2013), "[The Watergate Cover Up Trial: Justice Denied.](#)" *The Atlantic*, Online August 9.

November 2. Week 9. War

Movie: *Dunkirk (2017)* 1:46 <https://lbdiscoversust.hk/bib/991012578765303412>

Essential Reading:

Fearon, James D. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization*, vol. 49, no. 3, 1995, pp. 379-414

Additional Movies: *Munich (2005)*; *Saving Private Ryan (1998)*

November 9. Week 10. Civil Conflict

Movie: *American Sniper (2015)* 2:13 <https://lbdiscoversust.hk/bib/991009605139703412>

or *Lone Survivor (2013)* 2:01 PN1997.A12 L638 2013a

Essential Reading:

James Fearon and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75-90.

Additional Movies: *Blood Diamond* (2006); *Hotel Rwanda* (2004); *Lone Survivor* (2013); *Taegukgi* (2004); 集结号 (2008); *No Man's Land* (Bosnia-Herzegovina 2001)

Additional Readings:

November 16. Week 11. Terrorism and Human Rights

Movie: *Unthinkable* (2010) or *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012)

Essential Reading:

Robert A. Pape. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97(3), 343-361.

Additional Movies: *Munich* (2005); *World Trade Center* (2006);

Additional Readings:

November 23. Week 12. Economic Inequality and Poverty

Movie: *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) 2:00 [PN1997.A12 S627 2008b](https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991009317019703412)
<https://lbdiscover.ust.hk/bib/991009317019703412>

Essential Reading:

Global Inequality Dynamics: New Findings from WID.world (AEA Conference)

Additional Movies: *Snowpiercer* (2013)

Additional Readings: [World Inequality Report 2018](#)

November 30. Week 13. Lecture.