

The University of Texas at Dallas
2013 Spring Semester

PSCI 3340: Film and Politics -- Head of Government and Head of State
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 AM to 11:15 AM
Classroom: SOM 2.902

Instructor: Yunda Eddie Feng
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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Syllabus

Course Objective:

Per the Political Science Undergraduate Catalog, "This course examines the role of one form of media in shaping political discourse. It examines the role of documentaries, drama, and comedy in shaping, exposing, and reflecting public political sentiments of the day."

Broadly, there are two types of "political" films -- movies that are *used in politics* and movies that are *about politics*. These are not mutually exclusive categories. Frequently, they are meant to be both types simultaneously, or they are made with one purpose in mind but become the other with the passage of time.

This semester, the focus will be on movies that are *about politics* (though bear in mind that even ostensibly "neutral" movies attempt to influence their viewers' opinions). Specifically, we will be studying how filmmakers have depicted Heads of Governments and Heads of States. We will address the following questions:

- Who are they, and what do they do?
- Why are these offices separated in some countries but combined in others?
- How do they shape political and historical discourse?

Required Textbook:

Comparative Politics Today: A World View (9th Edition). Gabriel A. Almond, G. Bingham J. Powell Jr., Russell J. Dalton, Kaare Strom. (Please use the 9th Edition, NOT the 10th Edition.)

Assigned Films:

Thor (Kenneth Branagh, 2011)
The Deal (Stephen Frears, 2003)
The Queen (Stephen Frears, 2006)
The Special Relationship (Richard Loncraine, 2010)
Why We Fight (Eugene Jarecki, 2006)
Thirteen Days (Roger Donaldson, 2000)
Primary Colors (Mike Nichols, 1998)
Michael Collins (Neil Jordan, 1996)
Gandhi (Richard Attenborough, 1982)
Invictus (Clint Eastwood, 2009)

When and How to View the Assigned Films:

None of the Assigned Films will be shown in class. Class time will be devoted to lectures and discussions. The assigned films should be viewed before the first class (Tuesday) of each week. That way, you will be able to draw connections between the films and the lecture material in anticipation of class discussions on Thursdays. The Assigned Films should be easy to find via libraries, brick-and-mortar retail stores, online retailers, online digital streaming services, etc.

This is not a "film appreciation" class, where students receive credit simply for watching movies. Rather, students should study movies seriously, as they would a traditional textbook. Similarly, class discussions will not revolve around whether or not we "liked" or "dis-liked" a movie. Instead, we will be analyzing how the cinematic form has been used to depict and comment on what it means to be a Head of Government and/or Head of State.

I encourage you to use eLearning to form viewing parties.

I suggest viewing each film at least twice and at least once with subtitles so that you do not miss any important information. While you watch the movies, take notes with a computer or pen-and-paper. (You might be surprised at how legible your handwriting can be even if you're writing in the dark without looking down at the paper.)

Grading:

Test #1 = 30% of Total Grade
Test #2 = 30% of Total Grade
Test #3 = 30% of Total Grade
Attendance/Class Participation = 10% of Total Grade

The Tests will be administered in class during regularly-scheduled meeting times. Each is worth 30% of the Total Grade. As such, they will be graded on a 30-point scale. Students will answer 2 out of 3 essay prompts. Students will need to bring their own Bluebooks. A black- or blue-ink pen must be used. Make-up exams will not be given other than for documented medical emergencies or extraordinary circumstances as determined by the instructor.

Attendance/Class Participation is worth 10% of the Total Grade.

0 to 2 absences = 10 Points

3 to 6 absences = 5 Points

7 or more absences = 0 Points

Note: Exceptional Class Participation -- meaning students who offer substantive insights into understanding core concepts -- will be taken into consideration when determining Final Grades.

Grade Scale:

A+: 97-100; A: 93-96%; A-: 90-92; B+: 84-89%; B: 78-83%; B-: 72-77%; C+: 66-71%;

C: 64-66%; C-: 60-63%; D+: 57-59%; D: 54-56%; D-: 50-53%; F: Below 50%

Electronic Devices:

Electronic Devices must be silenced before class begins. This includes vibrating mode. You may use a computing device to take notes, but please refrain from engaging in other activities as they may distract your fellow students.

NOTE: Students are expected to

- (a) know that this syllabus, including the calendar, is subject to change at the discretion of the professor;
- (b) access and read related policy material at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.

Course Schedule

Part I: Introduction to the Course

Week 1: Course Objectives, Basic Conceptual Definitions

Tuesday, January 15

Head of Government; Head of State; Capital City; Seat of Government; Capitol Building

Thursday, January 17

Institutional Design: Power Sharing Between Levels (Unitary, Federal, Confederal) and "Branches" of Government (There can be more than three!); Executive-Legislative Arrangements; Electoral Systems (Plurality/Majoritarian, Proportional, Ranked/Alternate/Single Transferable)

Week 2: Understanding and Analyzing Films

Tuesday, January 22

Classical Definitions of Drama, Tragedy, and Comedy (show clips from *Henry V*); Static and Dynamic Characters; Symbols; Plot vs. Theme

Basic Film Aesthetics; Auteur Theory

Thursday, January 24

In-class discussion of *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh, 2011)

Part II: Parliamentary Systems

Week 3: Intra-party Competition

Tuesday, January 29

reading: pages 152 - 154 (Introduction), 171 - 172 (The Role of Parliament), 176 - 181 (MPs and Cabinet Ministers)

Thursday, January 31

In-class discussion of *The Deal* (Stephen Frears, 2003)

Week 4: Head of Government and Head of State -- Cooperation and Competition

Tuesday, February 5

reading: pages 156 - 168 (What the Prime Minister Says and Does), The United Kingdom Explained diagram

(show clip of J.K. Rowling on Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*, 10/15/2012; show clip of Queen Elizabeth II at 2012 London Summer Olympics)

Thursday, February 7

In-class discussion of *The Queen* (Stephen Frears, 2006)

Week 5: How Personalities Shape International Relations

Tuesday, February 12

International Relations: Realism and Liberalism

(show clip from *Love, Actually*)

Thursday, February 14

In-class discussion of *The Special Relationship* (Richard Loncraine, 2010)

Week 6: Test #1

Tuesday, February 19

Review for Test #1

Thursday, February 21

Test #1

Part III: Presidential Systems

Week 7: The American President as the Head of State

Tuesday, February 26

reading: pages 706 - 707 (Country Bio), 709 - 715 (Separation of Powers); "The Permanent Militarization of America", *The New York Times*, November 4, 2012

Thursday, February 28

In class discussion of *Why We Fight* (Eugene Jarecki, 2006)

Week 8: Civility and Decorum During High-Pressure Situations

Tuesday, March 5

(show clips from various Presidential addresses)

reading: Joanne B. Freeman, "When Congress Was Armed and Dangerous", *The New York Times*, January 11, 2011

Thursday, March 7

In-class discussion of *Thirteen Days* (Roger Donaldson, 2000)

Week 9: Spring Break

(Sunday, March 10 - Saturday, March 16)

Week 10: What kind of person runs for public office?

Tuesday, March 19

reading: pages 716 - 723 (The Unique Direct Primary), 736 - 738 (Traditional Ways of Avoiding Deadlocks)

Thursday, March 21

In-class discussion of *Primary Colors* (Mike Nichols, 1998)

Week 11: Test #2

Tuesday, March 26

Review for Test #2

Thursday, March 28

Test #2

Part IV: Decolonization and Nation Building

Week 12: Ireland

Tuesday, April 2

reading: TBA

(show clips from *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*)

Thursday, April 4

In-class discussion of *Michael Collins* (Neil Jordan, 1996)

Week 13: Semi-Presidential Systems

Tuesday, April 9

France

reading: pages 200 - 208 (The Legislature), 216 - 18 (The Importance of Gender), 235 - 240 (Parliament)

Thursday, April 11

Russia

reading: pages 354 - 356 (left column), 357 (Putin bio), 360 - 366 (Exec- Legis Relations), 375 - 377 (Elite Recruitment)

Week 14: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh

Tuesday, April 16

reading: pages 602 - 610 (Colonial Rule/Anticolonial Movement), 616 - 622 (The Parliament)

Thursday, April 18

In-class discussion of *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough, 1982)

Week 15: South Africa

Tuesday, April 23

reading: TBA

(show clips from *The Color of Freedom*)

Thursday, April 25

In-class discussion of *Invictus* (Clint Eastwood, 2009)

Week 16: Test #3

Tuesday, April 30

Review for Test #3

Thursday, May 2

Test #3

Test #3 will be graded by Tuesday, May 7. I will have Office Hours from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM on May 7 and May 9 so that you may pick up Test #3.