



UNIVERSITY STUDIES COURSE APPROVAL REQUEST

FACULTY AND CHAIR SPONSOR SHEET

COURSE NAME/DEPARTMENT/NUMBER: PSC 212 Politics in Film / Political Science Department

CLUSTER REQUIREMENT: 4.B

As a condition of approving this course for University Studies credit, we agree:

That each offered section of this course shall have a syllabus explicitly listing the learning outcomes for this Cluster Requirement along with the course-specific learning outcomes.

That each offered section of this course shall follow the general spirit of the Master Syllabus, with the understanding that different instructors may emphasize different elements of the course and/or use different pedagogical approaches or assessments.

That a syllabus for each offered section of this course will be emailed to the University Studies Director prior to the end of the semester in which it is offered.

That all faculty teaching this course will make available to the University Studies Director and the University Studies Committee any and all student work for the purposes of program assessment, with the understanding that such assessment will take place on a multi-year cycle, that such assessment will keep anonymous the identities of both the students and the instructors, that the responsibility for the collection of student work will fall in the main on the University Studies Director or designee and that this collection shall entail minimal disruption to the operation of the course.

Chair: _____
Printed Name Signature Academic Rank Date

Faculty Sponsor: Kenneth L. Manning Kenneth L. Manning Professor 11/4/2014
Printed Name Signature Academic Rank Date

Faculty Sponsor: _____
Printed Name Signature Academic Rank Date

Faculty Sponsor: _____
Printed Name Signature Academic Rank Date

Faculty Sponsor: _____
Printed Name Signature Academic Rank Date

Master Syllabus
Course: PSC 212 Politics in Film
Cluster Requirement: 4.B
The Social World: Humanity and Society - The Nature of U.S. Society

This University Studies Master Syllabus serves as a guide and standard for all instructors teaching an approved course in the University Studies program. Individual instructors have full academic freedom in teaching their courses, but as a condition of course approval, agree to focus on the outcomes listed below, to cover the identified material, to use these or comparable assignments as part of the course work, and to make available the agreed-upon artifacts for assessment of learning outcomes.

Course Overview:

Public opinion is often shaped and influenced by the film industry. This has been recognized for generations by those who have sought to use the power of sound and imagery as a means of supporting or opposing political goals. Movies can be much more than simple entertainment: they can be an extremely powerful medium to express political ideas and arguments.

In PSC 212 Politics in Film, students view, analyze, and discuss notable and influential films which explore various topics in politics and public policy. Political topics touched upon in the course include governmental process, campaigns and elections, economic policy and the economy, the role of media in politics, and war and foreign policy. Particular emphasis is placed upon how films may critique political personalities, processes, and/or public policies; reinforce or challenge commonly shared political beliefs and/or values; and/or convey a political message that may have implications for others.

Learning Outcomes:

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

1. Foster and develop students' critical thinking skills by viewing and analyzing political films
2. Develop an understanding of how the public and the political system may be influenced by films
3. Educate students about classic and/or influential political films that may be part of a common political dialogue

University Studies Learning Outcomes:

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain different aspects of political citizenship in the United States
2. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize political film material
3. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on U.S. politics

Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings:

- Ernest Giglio. 2010. *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film, and Politics* (Peter Lang Publishing)
- Daniel P. Franklin. 2006. *Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States* (Rowman and Littlefield)

Films viewed in the course may include:

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939; Frank Capra, director)
Dr. Strangelove (1963; Stanley Kubrick, director)
The Manchurian Candidate (1962; John Frankenheimer, director)
Network (1976; Sidney Lumet, director)
Soylent Green (1973; Richard Fleischer, director)
Roger and Me (1989; Michael Moore, director)
The Candidate (1973; Michael Ritchie, director)
Wag the Dog (1997; Barry Levinson, director)

Students are required to view feature-length films associated with the assigned readings.

Example Learning Activities and Assignments:

• Discussion Groups

One of the course objectives is to increase student's ability and willingness to think about the political process. Toward this aim, there will be topical discussion questions on the course website in each unit of the three units in the course. Students must contribute AT LEAST THREE times to each of the THREE unit discussions (for a total of a minimum of 9 posts). Follow-up posts to previous posts are certainly welcomed and encouraged, but posts that offer simple agreement with another message, or brief statements with no substantive contribution, do not count as a post — you have to express an informed opinion with some thought and care — not just a quick reply. Because people are often passionate about political topics, it is important to keep in mind some simple rules of courtesy and decency. Please, address your comments to the ideas and concepts in the discussion and refrain from personal attacks or insults. In order to have access to the discussion boards you will need to act with civility in the online conversations. Uncivil behavior will result in being barred from participation in the online group discussions and a resulting decline in the student's grade.

Topics for discussion may include:

- The film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* depicts most members of Congress as being either politically corrupt or aloof and out-of-touch. Do you think this is accurate? Why or why not?
- The film *Roger and Me* suggests that the town of Flint, Michigan, was crippled by management decisions made by General Motors Inc. and also by large, macro-level economic trends. How can local leaders, who are responsible for governing their communities, have an impact in the face of such large-scale matters?
- Most national security experts say that foreign policy decisions are made by a nation's carefully calculated desire to further its own interests. However, in the film *Dr. Strangelove*, international conflict is portrayed as a result of inter-personal misunderstandings, bureaucratic snafus, and juvenile competition. Which do you think is correct?

• Quizzes/exams

Sample questions:

One of the more notable visual aspects of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is:

- A. the central role African-American characters play in the film
- B. the depiction of Clarissa Saunders as Senator Smith's secretary
- C. the ample use of patriotic American symbols throughout the film
- D. the unusual display of social class stratification

Of the films we have viewed so far, which presents the most simplistic and optimistic view of American politics:

- A. Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
- B. Michael Ritchie's *The Candidate*
- C. Michael Moore's *Roger and Me*
- D. All three of these films present equally simplistic and optimistic views of American politics

What does Bill McKay in *The Candidate* have that seems to make him a successful candidate?:

- A. a lot of wealthy financial supporters
- B. sex appeal
- C. a strong anti-tax message
- D. a successful and politically connected mother

One of the more notable aspects of *Soylent Green*, a film made over 30 years ago, is that the film appears to accurately predict:

- A. awareness of climate change and global warming
- B. the current overpopulation of the United States
- C. a lack of food available today
- D. the legalization of marijuana in the U.S.

Michael Moore, the director of *Roger and Me*, effectively uses the camera to do all of the following EXCEPT:

- A. endorse a political party
- B. expose hypocrisy
- C. tell a story of human tragedy
- D. ridicule his subjects

The film *Network* suggests that the news media:

- A. are biased in a liberal direction.
- B. cannot be always trusted or relied upon to convey the truth
- C. is dominated by government bureaucrats who stifle creativity
- D. places a great emphasis upon keeping the people informed

As discussed in class, documentary films do all of the following EXCEPT:

- A. documentaries seek to present the world the way it is, rather than through an imaginary representation
- B. documentaries are generally unsuccessful in recreating a specific historical event or period
- C. documentaries fashion an argument or point of view through the presentation of images or through the testimony of witnesses or experts.
- D. documentaries often engage the viewer more because he/she knows the story depicted is real rather than simulated

The Manchurian Candidate suggests that:

- A. the far left and far right may not be all that different—both seek broad governmental power
- B. vigorous attempts to resist communism in the early 1950's were an asset to the country
- C. truth is highly dependent upon whether one lives in a free or oppressive society
- D. it is time that the media awaken to the threat that communism poses in the U.S.

- **Film critique essay**

All students are required to write a brief film review. You are free to choose a theatrical movie you'd like to review, with the exception of those shown in this course. The essay should discuss how the selected film addresses a key issue of U.S. politics or policy. Articulate what you think is the thesis of the film, and evaluate whether you think this thesis is sound or not. The goal of this exercise is to encourage you to develop your analytical skills in evaluating political films. The essay is NOT to summarize the movie. Rather, you should be analytical and critical: THINK about the messages(s) presented in the film. CRITIQUE and ANALYZE the work.

The review should contain no less than 1,000 words. You need to cite at least two sources (not including the course textbook) in the review. The two sources may include: 1) academic or professional publications in the area of politics and/or policy; 2) academic or professional publications in the area of film studies; 3) professional film reviews published in major news/current event outlets (i.e. NY Times, Washington Post, LA Times, The Atlantic, The New Yorker, etc.). Additional sources may be cited but at least two of the sources must be from the three categories listed here.

Sample Course Outline:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Reading Assignment</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Film Name</i>
Sep. 5	Introduction		
Sep. 12	Chap. 1	Politics and Film: The Connection	Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939, Frank Capra)
Sep. 19	Chap. 2	Defining Political Film	Casablanca (1942, Michael Curtiz)
Sep. 26	Chap. 6	Politicians on Screen	Bob Roberts (1992, Tim Robbins)
Oct. 3	Chap. 7	Running for Office	The Candidate (1972, Michael Ritchie)
Oct. 10	<i>Class cancelled - University follows Monday schedule per official calendar</i>		
Oct. 17	Chap. 5	Politics as Theater	Wag the Dog (1997, Barry Levinson)
Oct. 24	Chap. 4	The Media and Politics	Network (1976, Sidney Lumet)
Oct. 31	Chap. 3	Documentary Film	Roger and Me (1989, Michael Moore)
Nov. 7	Chap. 9	Futuristic Vision: Politics and Science Fiction Film	Soylent Green (1973, Richard Fleischer)
Nov. 14	Chap. 8	Hollywood and War	The Manchurian Candidate (1962, John Frankenheimer)
Nov. 21	<i>Class cancelled - Thanksgiving holiday</i>		
Nov. 28	Chap. 11	The Cold War in Film	Dr. Strangelove (1964, Stanley Kubrick)
Dec. 5	Chap. 13	Reporting a Story: Film as Narrative	The Killing Fields (1984, Roland Joffé)
Tuesday, Dec. 18		FINAL EXAM	