

POLITICAL SCIENCE 4920: POLITICS IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Mondays, 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Gateway Film Center House 2
Fall 2014

Professor Vladimir Kogan

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 9 to 11 a.m., and by appointment

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Tophat Course URL: <https://app.tophat.com/e/469019>

Tophat Course Code: 469019

Course Description:

Political films and television shows often communicate an understanding of how politics works. In some instances, how films portray the political process may also influence society's attitudes toward politicians and government institutions. While such films can provide an accurate depiction of the world, they can also stray substantially from political reality. In this course, students will compare the portrayal of politics in films and television to the reality as understood through political science research. Our goal is not to appraise the artistic merit of the films but rather evaluate how faithfully they represent the political process. Where significant discrepancies exist, we will consider how these might shape the audience's views toward democracy and government. We will also use films as a tool for surveying and improving our understanding of a broad array of topics from the political science literature, including legislative behavior, elections, presidential politics, interest-group influence, and war.

*This course requires the active participation of the students. There will be no in-class lecture. Instead, the class will consist of three weekly components. Starting in the third week, students will watch a short video lecture (the links will be posted on Carmen) prior to the beginning of class. Students will complete a short multiple-choice quiz covering the lecture and the readings assigned for that week at the beginning of each week's class. Following the weekly quiz, we will watch a political film. During final hour of the class, we will discuss the film in the context of the assigned readings. A large part of your grade (see below) is based on your completion of the in-class discussion questions via Tophat. The success of the class absolutely depends on the contribution of the students. *Note: This class is not part of the Film Studies major and does not satisfy any course requirements for that program.**

!!WARNING!!

Some of the movies we'll watch may have an "R" rating and may depict extreme violence, nudity and sexual intercourse, racist and profane language, drug use, and other content that may disturb and unnerve you. If you are easily offended, I strongly encourage you to consider taking a different course.

!!WARNING!!

Course Goals:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have learned about:

1. Processes, theories, and empirical regularities of political institutions and political behavior.
2. How to apply theoretical concepts from political science to the discussion of political films, making connections between the literature and real-world political events.
3. How to evaluate the social and political impact of a film.
4. How to apply contemporary social science research methods to conduct rigorous research on political phenomena.

Required Materials:

1. *All required readings are posted on Carmen*
2. *Students are required to purchase a Tophat license (\$20 to \$38, depending on type)*
Tophat is a mobile audience response system has been adopted campus-wide at OSU starting this fall. We will use it extensively throughout the course for both the weekly quizzes and in-class discussion questions. You can access the system via the URL on the front page of the syllabus or use the company's app on your iOS or Android device. At minimum, you will need a phone capable of sending SMS text messages, but to take advantage of the full functionality of the system, I *strongly encourage* those who do not have a laptop or tablet they can bring to class to purchase one. An inexpensive Android tablet can be found online for \$50 or less, and a limited number of iPads are available for checkout for free at the library.

You can purchase your Tophat license directly on the company's website (tophat.com), or from the OSU bookstore if you are using financial aid. A one-semester license, which can be used for all of the courses this semester, costs \$20, while a five-year license costs \$38.

Additional information about using the Tophat system and purchasing your license are posted on Carmen.

Assignments:

1. **Weekly Quiz (20% of Overall Grade)**
Students are required to complete the assigned readings and watch the weekly lecture video prior to the start of class. A short multiple-choice quiz covering each week's readings and lecture video will be administered via Tophat in the beginning of each class. The quizzes will focus on the comprehension and recall of major facts from the readings and lecture assigned for that week (i.e., there will be no trick questions and the answers will be obvious if you've done the reading and watched the video carefully). Be sure to arrive on time: Students who miss the reading quiz because they are late to class will not be able to make it up. *Quizzes missed due to absences also cannot be made up, but the lowest two quiz scores will be dropped prior to the calculation of the final grades.*

2. **In-Class Discussion Questions (20% of Overall Grade)**

After watching each week's film, students will be asked to work in small groups to discuss three to four questions connecting the events in the movie to the themes from the readings for that week. Although students will work in groups, each student will need to submit an answer for each question via Tophat. These questions will be related to, but distinct from, the Big Idea questions listed for each week below. Use the Big Idea questions to orient your thinking as you complete the course readings, watch the lecture, and view the film to focus on the important themes for each week.

3. **Midterm (10% of Overall Grade)**

On Oct. 20, students will complete a short multiple choice exam in class. *Students will have previously seen at least of half of the multiple choice questions part of the weekly quizzes.*

4. **Final Exam (10% of Overall Grade)**

The final exam will have the same format as the midterm and will take place in class on the regularly scheduled final exam time on Dec. 15. The exam *will not* be cumulative; we will cover only the material since the midterm.

5. **Two Response Papers (20% of Overall Grade)**

On the day of both the midterm and final exam, students will also be required to submit a short (approximately four to five pages) response paper that focuses on the film and readings from any single week of class. The purpose of these papers will be to compare and contrast the depiction of politics in the movie to the understanding of these same topics in empirical political science research. The response papers are due *at the beginning* of regularly scheduled class on the day of the midterm and the final.

6. **Final Paper (20% of Overall Grade)**

For the final paper, students will be asked to write a screenplay depicting a scene based on a published piece of empirical political science research. The purpose of the screenplay is to creatively and originally represent the main findings of the research study to the audience. The screen play should be about eight to twelve pages long (double spaced, standard formatting) and should be motivated by and based on an *empirical* (rather than purely theoretical) study published within the last ten years in the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, or the *Journal of Politics*. The study cannot be one of the readings already assigned for the course. If students wish to use a study published in a different scholarly outlet, they must first receive permission from the instructor.

The grade on this assignment will be based on how well each student: (1) understands the primary findings from the published study; (2) creatively conveys the main message from these findings to the audience. The screenplay will be due at the beginning of class on Dec. 8.

*****A copy of all written assignments must be uploaded to the appropriate dropbox on Carmen. The upload feature on Carmen sometimes does not work on the Google Chrome browser, so I encourage you to install a backup (Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, etc.) ahead of time just in case. Assignments will be considered late and a penalty will be assessed unless they are uploaded by the beginning of the class when they are due. *****

Academic Integrity:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. *Instructors are obligated* to report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Students are required to upload their papers to Carmen, which utilizes Turnitin.com for plagiarism detection. This online service analyzes student submissions for plagiarism from published or online sources and from submissions made by other students (including students who have taken the course in previous semesters). To avoid plagiarism charges, students must cite all sources from which they get their information and use quotation marks when quoting directly from these sources, including the readings assigned for class. **Students are responsible for knowing how to correctly cite their sources; ignorance about proper citation standards will not be accepted as an excuse for plagiarism.**

Late and Make-Up Policy:

All paper assignments are due at the beginning of class (12:00 p.m. on each due date). Assignments submitted more than 15 minutes after the class has begun will be assessed a 5 percentage point late penalty. There will be an additional 10 percentage point penalty for each subsequent day that the assignment is late. *No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.*

Make-up exams and extensions on written assignments will be approved only in the event of a medical or family emergency or a University-sanctioned event. *Extensions must be arranged ahead of time.* You must have documentation of your emergency (for example, a doctor’s note) to be able to take a make-up exam or get an extension. After you provide this documentation, a decision will be made regarding whether and when you may take a make-up exam/get an extension. Similarly, any request for an incomplete must be accompanied by written medical documentation.

Grade Appeals:

You have one week from when the exam and assignment grades are posted on Carmen to appeal the grade. You must submit a typed, double-spaced statement to the teaching assistant explaining why you are appealing your grade and justify it with evidence from your paper, exam, readings, lectures, and/or answer keys. If you choose to appeal your grade, we reserve the right to decrease the original grade if the teaching assistant determines that it was erroneously high.

Accommodations for Disabled Students:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Course Overview and Schedule:

Week 1 (Sept. 1) — No Class

Week 2 (Sept. 8) — Introduction and Course Overview

Reading:

- Christensen, Terry, *Reel Politics: American Political Movies from Birth of a Nation to Platoon* (New York: Basic Blackwell, 1987): Forward (“Messages Are Not Only for Western Union”).
- Giglio, Ernest, *Here’s Looking at You: Hollywood, Film & Politics, Third Edition* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2010): Chapter 1 (“The Hollywood-Washington Connection”).
- Iyengar, Shanto, *Is Anyone Responsible?* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987): Chapters 2 (“Framing Effects of News Coverage”), 3 (“Methods of Research”) and 5 (“Effects of Framing on Attributions of Responsibility for Poverty, Unemployment, and Racial Inequality”).

Week 3 (Sept. 15) — Presidential Elections I: The Primaries

Big Question: *What does a presidential candidate need to do to successfully win his or her party’s nomination?*

Film: “Primary Colors” (1998)

Readings:

- Popkin, Samuel L., *The Candidate: What It Takes to Win – and Hold – the White House* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): Chapter 4 (“Challenger Case Study: The Search for the Experienced Virgin”).
- Sides, John and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Random, or Romney?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013): Chapters 3 (“Random, or Romney?”) and 4 (“All In”).

Week 4 (Sept. 22) — Presidential Elections II: The General Election

Big Question: *What factors determine whether an incumbent president wins reelection?*

Film: “The War Room” (1993)

Reading:

- Sides, John and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Random, or Romney?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013): Chapters 2 (“The Hand You’re Dealt”), 5 (“High Rollers”), 6 (“The Action”), and 7 (“The Winning Hand”).

Week 5 (Sept. 29) — Congressional Elections: Incumbency Advantage

Big Question: *Why are so few Congressional elections competitive (i.e., won by a small margin)?*

Film: “The Distinguished Gentleman” (1992)

Reading:

- Jacobson, Gary C., *The Politics of Congressional Elections, Eighth Edition* (New York: Pearson, 2012): Chapters 3 (“Congressional Candidates”) and 5 (“Congressional Voters”).
- Abramowitz, Alan I., Brad Alexander, and Mathew Gunning, 2006, “Incumbency, Redistricting, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections,” *Journal of Politics* 68(1): pp. 75-88 .

Week 6 (Oct. 6) — Legislative Politics

Big Question: *How do elections affect the behavior of members of Congress in office?*

Film: “Charlie Wilson’s War” (2007)

Reading:

- Mayhew, David, *Congress: The Electoral Connection, Second Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974): Part I.

Week 7 (Oct. 13) — Congressional-Presidential Relations I

Big Question: *Who has more control over the executive branch, Congress or the president?*

Film: “The Contender” (2000)

Reading:

- Howell, William G. *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003): Chapter 1 (“Presidential Power in the Modern Era”).
- Kriner, Douglas L., and Eric Schickler, 2014, “Investigating the President: Committee Probes and Presidential Approval, 1953-2006,” *Journal of Politics* 76(2): pp. 521-534.
- McCarty, Nolan, and Rose Razaghian. 1999. “Advice and Consent: Senate Response to Executive Branch Nominations 1885-1996.” *American Journal of Political Science* 43(4): pp. 1122-1143.

Week 8 (Oct. 20) — MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9 (Oct. 27) — Congressional-Presidential Relations II

Big Question: *How can and does the president influence the content of legislation in America's political system, which separates executive and legislative power?*

Film: "The American President" (1995)

Reading:

- Cameron, Charles, *Veto Bargaining: Divided Government and Interbranch Bargaining* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000): Chapters 1 ("Divided Government and Interbranch Bargaining").
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, 2001, "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals," *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2): pp. 313-329.
- Lee, Frances E., *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): Chapter 4 ("Dividers, Not Unifiers: Presidential Leadership and Legislative Partisanship").

Week 10 (Nov. 3) — Interest Groups Politics and Regulations

Big Question: *What causes the government to enact regulations on private, economic activities?*

Film: "Dallas Buyer's Club" (2013)

Reading:

- Stigler, George J., 1971, "The Theory of Economic Regulation," *Bell Journal of Economics and Management Science* 2(1): pp. 3-21.
- Carpenter, Daniel P., 2004, "The Political Economy of FDA Drug Review: Processing, Politics, and Lessons for Policy," *Health Affairs* 23(1): pp. 52-63.
- Carpenter, Daniel, Evan James Zucker, and Jerry Avorn, 2008, "Drug-Review Deadlines and Safety Problems," *New England Journal of Medicine* 358: pp. 1354-1361.

Week 11 (Nov. 10) — Political Parties

Big Question: *How do parties affect the legislative process? Do the majority and minority parties have equal influence?*

Film: "House of Cards," Chapter 9

Reading:

- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): Chapters 1-3.

Week 12 (Nov. 17) — Media and Politics

Big Question: *How do political elites and the media interact to shape public attitudes?*

Film: "Wag the Dog" (1997)

Reading:

- Iyengar, Shanto, and Mark D. Peters, Donald R. Kinder, 1982, "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs" *American Political Science Review* 76(4): pp. 848-858.
- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley, 1997, "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance," *American Political Science Review* 91(3): pp. 567-583.
- Hetherington, Marc J., and Michael Nelson, 2003, "Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 36(1): pp. 37-42.

Week 13 (Nov. 24) — Authoritarianism and Democratization

Big Question: *What explains the stability and breakdown of authoritarian regimes?*

Film: "The Last King of Scotland" (2006)

Reading:

- Geddes, Barbara, 1999, "What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: pp. 115-144.
- Gandhi, Jennifer, and Adam Przeworski, 2007, "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," *Comparative Political Studies* 40(11): pp. 1279-1301.

Week 14 (Dec. 1) — International Relations

Big Question: *Why do states go to war if it is always in their interest to reach a negotiated, peaceful resolution?*

Film: "Deterrence" (1999)

Reading:

- Fearon, James D., 1995, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49(3): pp. 379-414.
- Tomz, Michael, 2007, "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach," *International Organization* 61(4): pp. 821-840.

Week 15 (Dec. 8) — Civil War

Big Question: *What explains the onset and duration of civil wars?*

Film: "Hotel Rwanda" (2004)

Reading:

- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin, 2003, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97(1): pp. 75-90.
- Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, 2013, "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War," *American Journal of Political Science* 57(4): 875-891.
- Narang, Neil, 2014, "Humanitarian Assistance and the Duration of Peace after Civil War," *Journal of Politics* 76(2): pp. 446-460.

****Final papers due****

****FINAL EXAM: Monday, Dec. 15, 12 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.****