
POLI 392 Politics, Art and Film

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Fall 2023

Instructor:	Dr. Saemyi Park
Class Time & Location:	TH 3:00 PM – 5:50 PM & SCI D224
Email:	spark@uwsp.edu (please do NOT use the Canvas inbox for communication.)
Office Hours:	<i>In-Person:</i> 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM (T/TH) @ SCI D335 <i>Online:</i> 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM (M) via Zoom

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The important and long-standing interplay between politics and film is the focus of this course. While most people go to the movies for mere entertainment, a good film can inspire its viewers, challenge people to think in new ways, and even educate its audience. Since its inception, the film has been used to set political agendas, advocate policies, and influence political socialization. It has both challenged and upheld traditional values and institutions. The purpose of this course is to tap into the power of film to study, learn about, and deepen your understanding and appreciation of politics and government.

Throughout the semester, we will view several films with political messages. Our goal is not to appraise the artistic merit of the films but rather interpret their larger meaning. We will 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, war, domestic policies, race, class, and economy. Students will also be exposed to other forms of art such as opera, play, literature, photography, music, and more. But, our focus of this course is to explore political issues raised by the films. **While this course will be entertaining due to its nature to watch a lot of films, it is a serious course where students should complete readings, class participation, assignments, and other required work diligently.**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- LO1: Examine the various perspectives and theories that illuminate the film-politics relationship
- LO2: Analyze the political ideas embedded in art and films
- LO3: Explain processes, theories, and empirical regularities of political institutions and political behavior expressed in art and films
- LO4: Evaluate the effectiveness of art and films in conveying the intended political message

Students will meet the outcomes listed above through a combination of the following:

- Thematic Analysis Paper (LO1, LO2, LO3)
- Special Activities – Data Analysis (LO2, LO3, LO4)
- Research Project & Oral Presentation (all LOs)
- Small Group Discussion (all LOs)

COURSE STRUCTURE

Classes begin with the screening of the film; the second part of class is devoted to the class discussion to analyze the political meanings and significance of the messages found in the film. A brief lecture will be given if it is necessary. **Active participation in this class is a CRUCIAL component to the overall success and a good grade.** I encourage everyone to be active participants during class discussions. The best learning environments are those where there is open dialogue, free conversation, and respectful debate. Your active participation in these discussions should challenge and engage you to think critically about the topics presented and the questions raised in this course. Thus, students will be expected to regularly participate in class discussions and to keep up with the readings for that week's class session.

WARNING

Several of the films shown in class have an "R" rating. An R-rated motion picture may include dialogue with profanity, racial, ethnic, and/or sexist slurs; graphic violence; nudity and/or sexual situations; drug use; and/or other adult themes. Please contact me if you have any moral, religious, political, or other objections to viewing films with an "R" rating. We can work on finding alternative sources for the particular topic(s). If you are easily offended, however, you may consider taking another class.

REQUIRES TEXTBOOK

There is NO required textbook for students to borrow or purchase. This course has a site in Canvas. All course materials including the assigned readings will be uploaded to the course site. You can click on the Canvas quick link from the UWSP homepage or the address is <http://www.canvas.uwsp.edu>. Please see the course calendar at the end of this syllabus to see the list of readings assigned to each topic.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

	Weight	Due Date
Thematic Analysis Paper I	15%	by October 12 (TH)
Thematic Analysis Paper II	15%	by November 9 (TH)
Thematic Analysis Paper III	15%	by December 21 (TH)
"Politics & Art" Research Project	30%	December 14 (TH)
Discussion & In-Class Activities	25%	Every class throughout the semester
Total	100%	

Note: Students must complete ALL the required work to be eligible to receive a passing grade in the course. **You do NOT have the option to "take a zero" on an assignment.** Not completing all required work will result either in a final grade of F for the course or I (incomplete) until the work is submitted (but a very rare option). You are NOT allowed to submit and complete the required course assignments late unless you receive my permission to do so. Please read the attendance policy on page 4.

GRADING SCALE

Grades will be determined according to the university’s standard scale. There is no curve, so you receive what you earn.

A	94-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-93	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D+	67-69
B-	80-82	D	63-66
		F	Below 63

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

A. Three Thematic Analysis Papers (15% each)

You will submit three papers throughout the semester. For each paper, you will choose one of the assigned thematic groupings and compare three or more of the films on their political messages. Your task is to discover similarities and differences among the films in the thematic group. The critical component of this paper is to incorporate learning materials in your analysis. Your paper needs to address the following questions:

- How does the film director approach the given theme in each film?
- Do these films convey similar or different opinions about the given topic?
- What are the connections between films and learning materials (readings, lectures)?

	Deadline	Thematic Category			
Paper I	by Oct. 12 (TH)	War	Political Representation	Elections & Political Institutions	
Paper II	by Nov. 9 (TH)	The Media	Class & Inequality	Health	
Paper III	by Dec. 21 (TH)	Immigration	Education	LGBTQ+	Environment

You will watch one film in each category in class. You need to watch other films in the category on your own - all films are available at UWSP Library or UW Interlibrary Loan System, and newer films are available on Netflix or Amazon Prime Video. Please check the course site in Canvas for information about online access to these films. Your comparison should include the one we watched in class.

Your paper will be 800-1,000 words, single-spaced, with 11-point, Times New Roman or Calibri font and 1” margins. Please include a title (not a cover page) and page numbers. A separate worksheet will be provided.

B. “Politics & Art” Research Project Presentation (30%)

You are invited to conduct in-depth research and present it in class. It is a group project where 3 or 4 students (a total of 8 groups) work together to analyze political messages of arts and its impact. In this project, you are invited to specifically focus on “**ART**” such as painting, sculpture, literature, music, play, shows, photography, etc. **EXCEPT films.**

There are several ways that your project could be structured. First, your project can be “**thematic**” to examine several different forms of art from painting to poetry to music based on your chosen theme (war, race, women, health, election, etc.). Second, your project can be “**genre-specific**” where you discover the connection of painting (or novel or hip-hop music or play) to politics. Third, your project can focus on “**a time period**” which you examine different kinds of art during a specific era (a silent era, the Cold War era, the Civil Rights Movement era, the post-911 era, etc.).

Each group is expected to present its project in front of the class for 15 minutes (and a few minutes for the Q&A session) on December 14 (TH). PowerPoint presentation and/or another visual/audio presentation is required.

The components of this project include:

- Project consultation with Dr. Park
- PowerPoint slides and other materials delivered during the presentation
- Peer evaluations (within a group & the class)
- Participation in Q&A

A separate worksheet will be distributed in the second week of class.

C. Class Discussion & Activities (25%)

You are required to attend all class sessions. It is your interest too. Students who regularly attend class generally enjoy the course more, learn more, and get the most out of their education with higher grades. In addition, you are expected to enrich the learning experience of fellow students and teachers through regular attendance and active participation in class. For all class times, you will be invited to complete a brief activity that will help you better understand social and political issues. These activities will promote in-depth class discussion and will be graded.

Because we will only meet 14 times over the semester, **2 or MORE unexcused absences will result in an automatic F in the course.** Please make sure to be aware of this policy. Please keep in mind that only a few cases are considered excusable absences:

1. UWSP-sponsored activities (sports game, organization events, etc.)
2. The university-recognized religious holidays
3. The serious and extraordinary circumstances of your medical issues or your immediate family members

In the above-mentioned cases, you are required to submit the proof of evidence to the instructor in advance. For the 1st and 2nd cases, you are supposed to know the schedule already or by the beginning of the semester. Please check your schedule and the course calendar to see if any conflicts occur. Make sure to submit the official documents (letters, emails from the coach, etc.) by the third week of the semester. For the 3rd case, you should inform your instructor immediately and provide the documentation within 48 hours of the event occurring. I reserve the right to review the document and determine if your absence is excusable.

If you are simply sick or under the weather, you do not need to email me about it. I will give you **ONE free pass** on your attendance record.

COURSE POLICIES

A. Films & Readings

Students are asked to complete each week's learning materials BEFORE class on Thursday. You are expected to apply the readings to analyze the film during the class discussion. Therefore, it is critical for you to complete the readings prior to our class time.

B. Office Hours

I will have regular office hours in two different ways (online & in-person). Please utilize this opportunity to make yourself clear with course materials. If my regular online office hours do not work for you, you can certainly schedule an online meeting for a different time and date. Just email me to set up the appointment. The Zoom link will be posted on the course site.

- ***In-Person:*** 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM (T/TH) @ SCI D335
- ***Online:*** 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM (W) via Zoom

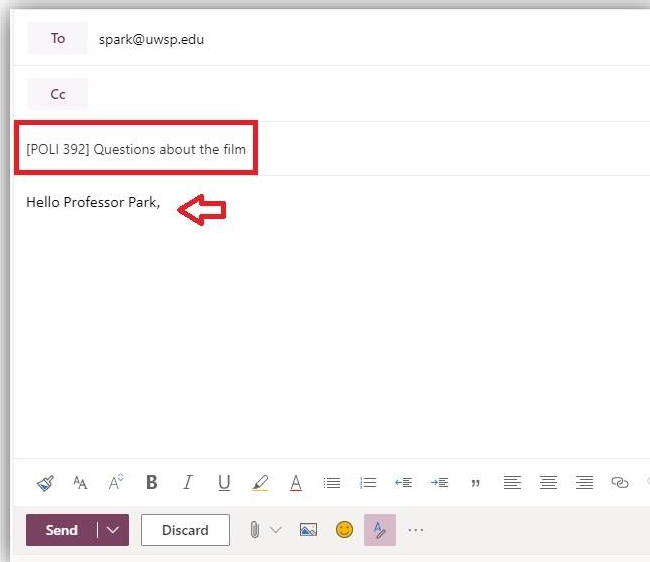
C. Canvas

I maintain a page for this course at the Canvas site. After the first day of class, the course site in Canvas will be open for you. You can find the assigned readings, review the supplemental learning materials, submit the research project, and/or complete the in-class activities if you are asked to do so.

D. Email Communication

I will do my best to help make your learning experience as smooth and enjoyable as possible. If you have questions, please email me via spark@uwsp.edu. I will check my email at least once a day during the weekdays (not during the weekends). You can expect me to respond to your email within 48 hours. If you don't hear from me within 48 hours, please email me again to remind me of your previous inquiry. Please note that I may not be able to respond to you at late night and/or during the weekend. I also may not be able to respond if your questions can be easily addressed by the information from the syllabus.

When you email me, please follow **the professional email format** shown in the picture below:



- Include the course # and a brief topic in the subject line: “[POLI 392] Questions about XXX”
- Have a proper salutation
- Indicate your name
- Brief contents

E. Honesty:

Any instance of academic misconduct will be taken seriously and may result in failure of the course. Misconduct will result in notification to the Dean of Students. If you are having a problem, it is much better to talk to me about it. Do not struggle by yourself. I want you to learn and do well in this course, not punish you with a lower grade. Talk to me if you are having a problem so I can try to help you work out a solution.

F. Ground Rules

This course is open to a variety of ways of interpreting history, theories, and policies. Students are encouraged to share their questions and ideas in class. Since there will be differences and disagreements, students are expected to show respect for the comments and positions of fellow students and me.

Course Calendar

(Topics, readings, films, and schedule are subject to announced change by instructor.)

Week	Date	Theme/Topic
Week 1	September 7	First Day of Class & Logistics & Theoretical Framework
Week 2	September 14	War Part I – Propaganda Films
Week 3	September 21	War Part II
Week 4	September 28	Political Representation
Week 5	October 5	Elections & Political Institutions
Week 6	October 12	The Media
Week 7	October 19	Class & Inequality
Week 8	October 26	Health
Week 9	November 2	Exploring Digital Collections
Week 10	November 9	Immigration
Week 11	November 16	Education
Week 12	November 23	Special Topic & Thanksgiving Recess
Week 13	November 30	LGBTQ+
Week 14	December 7	Environment
Week 15	December 14	Presentation Day – Final Research Project

W1: Logistics & Theoretical Framework

- **Films**
 - “What Did Jack Do? (2020)” or
 - “Anima (2019)” or
 - “If Anything Happens, I Love You (2020)”
- **Readings**
 - “Setting the Scene: A Theory of Film and Politics” (Required) in *Projecting Politics: Political Message in American Films* by Elizabeth Hass, Terry Christensen and Peter J. Hass, 2nd Edition (2015): Routledge
 - “Making of a Message: Film Production and Techniques, and Political Message” in *Projecting Politics*

W2: War Part I – Propaganda Films

- **Films**
 - “In Which We Serve (1942)” or
 - “Ninotchka (1939)” or
 - “Why We Fight (1942-1945)”

- **Readings**
 - “Hollywood Goes to War: From the Great War to the Good War to the Forgotten War” in *Here’s Looking at You: Hollywood, Film & Politics* by Ernest Giglio, 4th Edition (2014): Peter Lang
 - “The Impetus of Wartime: The Political Importance of War Film Propaganda” in *Film Propaganda and American Politics: An analysis and Filmography* by James E. Combs and Sara T. Combs (1994): Garland Publishing, Inc.

W3: War Part II

- **Films**
 - “1917 (2019)” or
 - “Grave of the Fireflies (1988)” or
 - “All Quiet on the Western Front (2022)”
- **Readings**
 - "Propaganda and Persuasion in Contemporary Conflict" By David Miller, Piers Robinson, Vian Bakir (2016) in *Routledge Handbook of Media, Conflict and Security*
 - "State-Sponsored Art During the Cold War" in *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945* (2013) by Claudia Mesch

Week 4: Political Representation

- **Films**
 - “Selma (2014)” or
 - “Green Book (2018)” or
 - “Suffragette (2016)” or
 - “The Hidden Figures (2016)” or
 - “Thelma & Louise (1991)”
- **Readings**
 - “Voter ID Laws” – A Report by NCSL
 - “The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets” (2008) by Devah Pager and Hana Shepherd, *Annual Review of Sociology*. 34:181–209
 - "Feminisms" in *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945* (2013) by Claudia Mesch
 - "Post-Colonial Identity and the Civil Rights Movement" in *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945*

W5: Elections & Political Institutions

- **Films**
 - "The Distinguished Gentleman (1992)" or
 - The Front Runner (2019)" or
 - "Primary Colors (1998)" or
 - "State of Play (2009)" or
 - "Recount: The Story of the 2000 Presidential Election (2008)"
- **Readings**
 - "Congressional Campaigns Download Congressional Campaigns" in *The Politics of Congressional Elections* by Gary C. Jacobson and Jamie L. Carson (2020)
 - "Hollywood on the Campaign Trail Download Hollywood on the Campaign Trail" In *American Politics in Hollywood Film* by Ian Scott, 2nd Edition (2011): Edinburgh University Press

W6: The Media

- **Films**
 - "The Post (2018)" or
 - "Truth (2015)" or
 - "Journeys with George (2004)" or
 - "Spotlight (2015)" or
 - "Page One: Inside the New York Times (2011)"
- **Readings**
 - "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models" by Dietram A. Scheufele¹ & David Tewksbury from *The Journal of Communication* (2007)
 - "Hostile News: Partisan Use and Perceptions of Cable News Programming" by Kevin Coe et al. from *The Journal of Communication* (2008)

W7: Class and Inequality

- **Films**
 - "Parasite (2019)" or
 - "Hillbilly Elegy (2020)" or
 - "The Florida Project (2017)" or
 - "The Wolf of Wall Street (2014)"
- **Readings**
 - "Inequalities in Household Wealth and Financial Insecurity of Households" from OECD (2021)
 - "American Politics and Political Science in an Era of Growing Racial Diversity and Economic Disparity" by Rodney E. Hero, *Perspectives on Politics* (2016)

- “Racial residential segregation and economic disparity jointly exacerbate COVID-19 fatality in large American cities” by Qinggang Yu et al. (2021), *Annals of the New York Academic of Sciences*
- “Affluent Class and Corporate Brass Download Affluent Class and Corporate Brass” in *Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment* by Michael Parenti (1992) [recommended]

W8: Health

- **Films**
 - “Dallas Buyers Club (2013)” or
 - “Sicko (2007)” or
 - “Still Alice (2015)” or
 - “I, Daniel Blake (2016)”
- **Readings**
 - "FDA Regulation of Medical Devices from Congressional Research Service [2023]
 - "Racial and Ethnic Health Inequities and Medicare" from KFF
 - "College Students and SNAP: The New Face of Food Insecurity in the United States " by Freudenberg N, Goldrick-Rab S, and Poppendieck J. (2019) in *the American Journal of Public Health*

W9: Exploring Digital Collections

- “Digital Collections” via The New York Public Library
- “Metropolitan Opera On Demand” via UWSP Library
- “Political Posters” via SFMOMA and OMCA

W10: Immigration

- **Films**
 - “Minari (2020)” or
 - “The Farewell (2019)” or
 - “Everything Everywhere All At Once (2022)” or
 - “Turning Red (2022)”
- **Readings**
 - Rethinking the concept of acculturation: implications for theory and research” (2010) by Schwartz SJ, Unger JB, Zamboanga BL, Szapocznik J. from *American Psychology*
 - “White Nationalism as Immigration Policy” (2019) by Jayashri Srikantiah and Shirin Sinnar from *Stanford Law Review*

W11: Education

- **Films**
 - "Operation Varsity Blues: The College Admission Scandal (2021)" or
 - "Race to Nowhere (2011)" or
 - "Waiting for Superman (2010)" or
 - "Freedom Writers (2007)"
- **Readings**
 - "New Directions in the Study of Asian American Politics, Part I: Affirmative Action" by Vivien Leung and Daeun Song (2021), *Perspectives on Politics*
 - "Racial Misdirection: How Anti-affirmative Action Crusaders use Distraction and Spectacle to Promote Incomplete Conceptions of Merit and Perpetuate Racial Inequality" by Malerie Beth Barnes and Michele S. Moses (2021), *Education Policy*

W13: LGBTQ+

- **Films**
 - "Milk (2008)" or
 - "3 Generations (2015)" or
 - "Moonlight (2016)" or
 - "The Dreamlife of Georgie Stone (2022)"
- **Readings**
 - "Toward transformative media organizing: LGBTQ and Two-Spirit media work in the United States" by Sasha Costanza-Chock, Chris Schweidler, and Transformative Media Organizing Project (2017) from *Media, Culture & Society*
 - "Gay Identity/Queer Art" in *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945*

W14: Environment

- **Films**
 - "Ice on Fire (2019)" or
 - "Plastic Wars (2020)" or
 - "The Day After Tomorrow (2004)" or
 - "Don't Look Up (2021)"
- **Readings**
 - "Climate Change: US Public Opinion" by Patrick J. Egan and Megan Mullin from *Annual Review of Political Science* (2017)
 - "Facing Change: Gender and Climate Change Attitudes Worldwide" by Sarah Sunn Bush and Amanda Clayton from *American Political Science Review* (2023)
 - "Nonfiction Film: Picturing Reality" from *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film and Politics*