POS 3258 Politics in Film

Fall 2011

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Course Description:

Special Warning: It is the purpose of this course to explore political and often sensitive issues in film, these issues are portrayed, sometimes graphically and offensively through sex, violence, racism and a host of other things students may find objectionable. We will be watching these films and it is integral to the course to discuss them—if this not something you wish to expose yourself to, you should find a different course or discuss the issue the first week of class with the instructor. By staying in the class, I assume your consent to the eventuality that we will be offended—but keep in mind that these offenses are worth interrogating as part of the politics of film.

This course will explore the intersections of film and politics from multiple dimensions. We will look at historical films and the use of propaganda, the use of different genres to convey political messages, as well as engage in film criticism to pull apart the structure of political thought in movies.

Course Objectives:
Students will learn to read films—to critically view films for political content and context in direct and indirect ways. Students will learn the historical issues of changing political messages found in film and ways in which film reflects and generates political opinion and sensibility.

Not so special warning: the films are chosen for their portrayal and interaction with politics, and (unfortunately) not for their inherent entertainment value—you may find any one of these boring or uninteresting, but we study them to learn something specific in each case. I hope you find them interesting, but that is secondary for our purposes. Also, films are scheduled but may change according to availability.

Required Text:
***Politics and Film,* Franklin**
***Political Economy, Capitalism, and Popular Culture,* Lipshutz**

Recommended:
***Film Studies: The Basics,* Villerejo**

NOTE: Course Protocols found in webcourses are part of this syllabus.

Assignments and Exams
There are 4 film reviews and 3 exams.

Film Reviews: 600 points toward total grade
See Coure Protocols for writing standards, and see the grading form in webcourses to see how I will grade and provide feedback. Film reviews will be submitted into webcourses. These reviews should compare the films of that respective section. You may also include comparisons from prior sections, but the main goal is to compare that section. Each review should explore concepts that are found in the readings and these should be properly cited in text with work cited at the bottom. Better reviews will cite and explain connections and concepts that come from outside articles in film criticism journals, outside books, or newspapers. Do not use blogs or online material unless it is important, relevant and you plan on explaining what that source is, and its context—e.g., why this material matters and is relevant, what its political background is, etc… These reviews must be between 1000 and 1200 words, and word count should be at the bottom of the essay. Essays should be free of grammatical, spelling and stylistic problems. 30% of the essay is graded on this matter; 70% on content, worth 150 points each. See Grading Form in webcourses.

Exams: 400 points toward total grade
Exams are taken in webcourses in the allotted time noted in this syllabus. Exams will contain 50 questions worth 2 points each and you may 75 minutes to complete each exam, after which new answers cannot be saved.

Schedule by Week, though films are subject to change:

1. *The Godfather (8/24)*
2. *The Birth of a Nation (8/31)*
    a. Franklin: Introduction and Chapter 1
3. *Metropolis* (*(9/7)*
    a. Franklin Chapter 2 and 3
4. *Triumph of the Will (9/14)*
    a. *Franklin chpt 4*
5. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (9/21)
    a. *EXAM 1 in webcourses, open from 9/21 6am-9/23 @6pm*
    b. First Review Due 9/23 @ 6pm
6. *Harlan County USA* (9/28)
    a. Franklin Chapter 5
7. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers (10/5)*
    a. Franklin Chapter 6 and 7 and conclusion
    b. *EXAM 2* in webcourses open 10/5 6am -10/7 @6pm
    c. Review 2 Due in 10/7 @6pm
8. *The Fountainhead 10/12*
    a. Lipshutz chapt 1
9. *A Force of Evil (10/19)*
    a. Lipshutz chpt 2
10. *Dirty Harry (10/26)*
    a. Lipshutz Chapter 3 and 4
11. *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song (11/2)*
    a. Lipshutz Chapter 5 and 6
    b. **Review 3 Due in Webcourses by 11/4 @6pm**
    c. **Exam 3 in webcourses open 11/2 6am -11/4 @ 6pm**
12. *Do the Right Thing (11/9)*
    a. Lipshutz 7 and 8
13. *Black Girl (11/16)*
    a. Lipshutz Chapter 9
14. *Elephant (11/23)* Final class
    a. ***Review 4 due in webcourses by 12/2 @6 pm***
15. ***FINAL EXAM in webcourses (12/7 @ 7-950pm)***