POS 3258, Politics and Film, Spring Term 2026 Syllabus

(January 12 – May 5)

(Traditional/ Lecture Course Format)

(Tuesday & Thursday, 10:30 A.M. – 11:50 PM., CB2 204)

(3 Credit hours)

Part 1: General Course Information.

Instructor: Alvin (AJ) Quackenbush

Email: alvin.quackenbush@ucf.edu

Office Hours: Spring 2026

On Campus: Faculty Center, Classroom Building 1 (CB1), room 207: Tuesday from 12 P.M. - 1:00 P.M. and Thursday from 3:45 P.M. - 4:15 P.M.

Students can also contact me via the WebCourses message system and I can make myself available via the Chat function.

Political Science Department Office: Howard Phillips Hall, Room 302

Phone: (407) 823-2608

Website: https://sciences.ucf.edu/politics/

Course Description: (3 Credits)

Politics in Film: The influence of motion pictures on popular understanding of American and international politics.

PR: ENC 1102 or POS 2041 or C.I.

Textbook: There is NO required textbook for this course. However, students will be expected to purchase an online movie streaming service and/or rent movies from time to time throughout the semester.

Introduction:

Welcome to Politics and Film. In this course we will examine politics through the medium of film. Movies provide original and interesting perspectives on how we view political, economic, social, and cultural issues. This course will pair various films with a lecture and reading that provides social and political context.

In this course, students will compare the portrayal of politics in films 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 political ideologies, legislative behavior, campaigns and elections, presidential politics, war and terrorism, civil rights, and environmental politics.

Topics and Discussion:

WARNING: Several of the films for 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 see me if you have any moral, religious, political, or other objections to viewing films with an "R" rating.

Also, please keep in mind that in this course we will be analyzing and debating topics that are current, relevant, political, and sometimes controversial. Some students may find that certain topics hard to discuss and there may be a level of discomfort. Please keep in mind that the intent is to promote critical thinking, present alternative ideas, challenge preconceptions, and deepen important conversations.

It is natural for students to sometimes feel overwhelmed. If this happens, please advise me in class or afterwards via email. As always, the goal is to maintain a safe space for learning.

Time will be dedicated for in-class discussion. Please see the course schedule at the bottom of the syllabus.

Part 2: Classroom Policies.

Attendance: Regular class attendance is expected. This class is very interactive and students will be expected to discuss films in groups and complete related weekly discussions. Failure to attend class can lead to lost points on some assignments.

Tardiness: Students are expected to be on time for class. Students who are tardy disrupt other students and the overall learning environment, so tardiness is not acceptable. Students who are late on Exam days will not receive extra time for their assessments.

Email: It is the policy of this professor to communicate with you via UCF email or the WebCourses message system. Failure to check for e-mail messages will not be accepted as an excuse for missed work.

Cell Phone**:** Students are expected to turn off or make silent all cell phones and electronic devices before the beginning of class because they can disrupt the learning environment. If a cell phone vibrates or is audible, the student may be asked to leave for the remainder of the class. If there is an emergency situation warranting the use of a cell phone during class time, the student must notify the professor in writing prior to the beginning of class. During a testing situation, if a cell phone vibrates or is audible, the student's test or examination will be collected and the student will be asked to leave without an option for completion.

Laptop Computers: Students may use their laptop, tablet, or "mini-computer' (smart phone) during class to take notes or to access the Internet for research. A student who uses this freedom in an inappropriate fashion may be asked to leave the class for that day or to turn off their laptop or phone.

Student Recordings: Students may record video and/or audio of class lectures for their personal use. Recordings may be a useful tool to support your learning and provide a resource for review. It is important to be respectful of your peers' rights to privacy; with that in mind, please refrain from recording your peers during lectures. You may not record class discussions, student presentations, labs, group work, and private conversations. Further, you may not publish or share recordings without my written consent, nor may you provide recordings to classmates as a substitution for class participation and attendance. If necessary, I will handle violations of this section through the College's Student Code of Conduct.

Protected Course Learning Materials: All course learning materials are protected information and cannot be shared via social media or outside of the class canvas page. In

order to maintain a comfortable and private learning environment, students should not take screen shots of the course website. This is to protect the privacy rights of you and your fellow students. Such conduct may be determined to be a violation of college policy and the student code of conduct.

Part 3: Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

Evaluation: Your grade will be determined by grades on a Syllabus Quiz, 12 Discussion Posts (your lowest 2 will be dropped), and 3 Exams (your lowest 1 exam will be dropped), and a Written Assignment.

Syllabus Quiz: 10 points.

Discussion Posts: 20 points each (200 Total)

Exams: 200 points each (400 Total)

Written Assignment: 150 Points.

Total Points: 760

Syllabus Quiz: There will be a 10 point syllabus quiz due on Friday, January 16th during the first week of the semester to ensure student attendance in the course.

Discussion Posts: During the semester there will be 12 discussion posts related to political films and our in-class discussions. Your lowest two discussions will be dropped when calculating your grade. In your post you should answer the questions and reply to at least two other students. Five points of the discussion grade will be based on student participation/attendance for the in-class film discussions.

Discussions are either 20, 15, or zero grade. Your post should consist of at least two cited quotations from your film and be at least 2 paragraphs long. A paragraph is considered at least 5 meaningful, substantive sentences. Your citations should be (Film Title, 1:00 - 2:00), as an example. You should make two replies that are also at least one paragraphs each. This will earn you 15 points. If you do not complete any of these things adequately you will receive the grade of zero. There is no partial credit. Additionally, if you are in attendance on the day of the in-class film discussion then you will earn an additional 5 points, 20 total. Due dates will be indicated in the posts and in the assignment schedule.

Examinations: There will be 3 exams in this course during the semester, your lowest score will be dropped. The tests will consist of fill in the blank, multiple choice and true/false questions. The exam dates are listed in the course schedule. Students who miss an exam are expected to drop that exam score as their low grade. Students who miss two exams are entitled to a make up for the second exam but must provide evidence of a documented illness or emergency, religious observances, or active military duty. Please note that all make up exams will be short answer and essay format only.

Written Assignment: During the semester you will be required to write one short research paper. The assignment will be type written and will be at least 2000 words (based upon the word count in Microsoft word) not including titles and work cited. Papers that do not meet the minimum word count will not be accepted. The paper assignment will be posted on WebCourses during the semester with specific details. The due date will be included in the assignment and is listed in the course schedule at the bottom of the syllabus. Keep in mind that it is your responsibility to make sure that your paper is attached correctly.

Extra Credit: There will **NOT** be any specific assignments for extra credit; however, attendance will be taken from time to time on lecture days and points will be added for extra credit.

Late Work Policy: You can submit late online work (syllabus quiz, discussions, or the written assignment) with a 20% penalty per day. See the course schedule for all due dates.

All graded materials in this course will be returned individually only by request. You can access your scores at any time using the Grades section of Webcourses@UCF. Please note that scores returned mid-semester are unofficial grades.

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	**Range**
A	100% to94%
A-	< 94%to90%
B+	< 90%to87%
B	< 87%to84%

Letter Grade	Range
B-	< 84%to80%
C+	< 80%to77%
C	< 77%to74%
C-	< 74%to70%
D+	< 70%to67%
D	< 67%to64%
D-	< 64%to61%
F	< 61%to0%

Part 4: University Policies.

Course Accessibility

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need access to course content due to course design limitations should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone 407-823-2371). For students connected with SAS, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential course access and accommodations that might be necessary and reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student. Further conversation with SAS, faculty and the student may be warranted to ensure an accessible course experience.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct at Student Conduct and Integrity Office. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

1. Academic misconduct is defined as any submitted work or behavior that obstructs the instructor of record's ability to accurately assess the student's understanding or completion of the course materials or degree requirements (e.g., assignment, quiz, and/or exam). Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance to complete an academic exercise; unauthorized communication with others during an examination, course assignment, or project; falsifying or misrepresenting academic work; providing misleading information to create a personal advantage to complete course/degree requirements; or multiple submission(s) of academic work without permission of the instructor of record.
2. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.
3. Commercial Use of Academic Material. Selling of course material to another person and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the University and the instructor of record. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, the instructor of record's slide deck, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, and handouts.
4. Soliciting assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements. The solicitation of assistance with an assignment, lab, quiz, test, paper, etc., without authorization of the instructor of record or designee is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to asking for answers to a quiz, trading answers, or offering to pay another to complete an assignment. It is considered Academic Misconduct to solicit assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements, even if the solicitation did not yield actual assistance (for example, if there was no response to the solicitation).

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule*. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and respond to academic misconduct when necessary. Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an "F" letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary

probation, or deferred suspension or separation from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a “Z” designation on one’s transcript.

Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc.

Let’s avoid all of this by demonstrating values of honesty, trust, and integrity. No grade is worth compromising your integrity and moving your moral compass. Stay true to doing the right thing: take the zero, not a shortcut.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at Let's Be Clear and UCF Cares.

For more information on diversity and inclusion, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF’s complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – OIE – Office of Institutional Equity& askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – Student Accessibility Services& sas@ucf.edu
- Access and Community Engagement(including the Ginsberg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement, Military and Veteran Student Success, and HSI Initiatives)
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – Compliance, Ethics, and Risk Office& complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- The Ombuds Officeis a safe place to discuss concerns.

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

Students who are deployed active duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

Reporting an Incident or Issue

If you believe you have experienced abusive or discriminatory behavior by any faculty of staff member, contact the Office of Institutional Equity online or at 407-823-1336. You can also choose to report using the UCF Integrity Line and can report anonymously or as yourself at 1-855-877-6049 or using the online formLinks to an external site.. UCF cares about you and takes every report seriously. For more information see the Reporting an Incident or Issue Webpage.

Campus Safety

At UCF Public Safety and Police, safety is the top priority. Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise, it's important to be familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In an emergency, always dial 911.
- Every UCF classroom has an **Emergency Procedure Guide**posted on a wall near the door, which will show you how to respond to a variety of situations. This guide can also be found online here.
- In the event of an active threat, remember **AVOID, DENY, DEFEND**. Choose the best course of action and act immediately. Watch the video hereLinks to an external site.to learn more.
    - **AVOID**. Pay attention to your surroundings and have an exit plan. Get as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as quickly as possible.
    - When avoiding is difficult or impossible, deny the threat access to you and your space. Lockdown by creating barriers, turning the lights off and remaining quiet and out of sight. Make sure your cell phone is silenced, but do not turn it off.
    - When you are unable to put distance between yourself and the threat, be prepared to protect yourself. Commit to your actions, be aggressive and do not fight fairly. Do whatever it takes to survive.
- For emergencies on campus, UCF will utilize the UCF Alert All UCF students, faculty and staff are automatically enrolled to receive these email and text alerts, however, it's a good idea to frequently ensure your contact information is up to dateLinks to an external site..

Financial Aid Accountability

All instructors/faculty are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete this activity by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Disclaimer: Changes in the syllabus and/or schedule may be made at any time during the term by announcement of the professor. It is your responsibility to stay informed of any changes.

Part 5: Course Schedule.

All the dates and assignments listed below are tentative and can be changed at the discretion of the professor with proper notification via UCF email.

Week 1: (January 12 - 18), **Drop/Swap Deadline - January 16.**

Topic: Introduction.

Assignments: Syllabus Quiz due by 5:00 pm, on Friday, January 16

Week 2: (January 19 - 25), **MLK - Monday, January 19, no classes.**

Topic: Environment

Assignments: Discussion 1 due Sunday, January 25.

Week 3: (January 26 - February 1)

Topic: Civil Liberties

Assignments: Discussion 2 due February 1.

Week 4: (February 2 - 8)

Topic: Liberal Ideologies.

Assignments: Discussion 3 due February 8.

Week 5: (February 9 - 15)

Topic: Alternative Ideologies & War: Cold War/Arms Race

Assignments: **Discussion 4 due February 15.**

Week 6: (February 16 - 22)

Exam 1: in class on Tuesday, February 17.

Topic: Campaigns and Elections.

Assignments: Discussion 5 due February 22

Week 7: (February 23 - March 1)

Topic: American Institutions: The Presidency

Assignments: Discussion 6 due March 1.

Week 8: (March 2 - 8)

Topic: American Institutions: The Legislature

Assignments: Discussion 7 due March 8.

Week 9: (March 9 - 15)

Topic: American Institutions: The Courts.

Assignments: Discussion 8 due March 15.

Week 10: (March 16 - 22), **Spring Break: no classes.**

Assignments: None.

Week 11: (March 23 - 29)

Exam 2: in class on Tuesday, March 24.

Topic: Civil Rights: African Americans

Assignments: None.

Week 12: (March 30 - April 5), **Withdrawal Deadline - April 3**

Topic: Civil Rights: African Americans, cont'd.

Assignments: Discussion 9 due April 5.

Week 13: (April 6 - 12)

Topic: Civil Rights- Women

Assignments: Discussion 10 due April 12.

Week 14: (April 13 - 19)

Topic: Civil Rights: Native Americans

Assignments: Written Assignment and Discussion 11 due April 19

Week 15: (April 20 - 26)

Topic: Civil Rights: LGBTQ

Assignments: **Discussion 12 due April 26.**

Week 16: (April 27 - May 5), **Tuesday, April 28 - Study Day, no classes.**

Exam 3: in class on Tuesday, May 5, at 10:00 AM