

POLS 184
Summer 2008
University of Illinois at Chicago

Dr. Brandon Valeriano
BSB 1115
TR 10:45-1:15pm

International Politics and Film

This course will use the medium of film to explain and discuss important topics in international politics. Film provides a window to the world and this course will explore how various aspects of international politics have been covered and dramatized by movies and television. Emphasis will be placed on international conflict, but topics such as diplomacy, civil-military relations, nationalism, international interventions, clash of civilizations, and espionage will be covered. Film will be used to explain theories, events, and history. This is not a film course, but a politics course, so filmmaking nuance and subtext will not be analyzed.

Course Goals

By the end of this semester, each student should be able to:

1. Understand morality and justice from the international perspective
2. Be aware of diverse international concerns and perspectives
3. Be able to critically analyze United States' actions in a global context
4. Understand the concepts and causes of international community and discord

Required Books

- James Blight and Janet Lang. The Fog of War: Lessons From the Life of Robert S. McNamera. (ISBN: 0742542211)

The following is not required but recommended if you have not had Introduction to International Politics before.

- John Vasquez, ed., Classics of International Relations, 3rd ed. (ISBN: 0131466488)

Course Requirements

Midterm (15%) and Final (20%)

Final Paper (40% Total)

Participation (15%)

Fog of War Report (10%)

Office Hours

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The Course

The course is divided into three main sections. The first section will deal with the morality of conflict and its possible use in the international system. This section will illustrate the main theories of international relations and how they relate to the use of force. We will look at the worldviews of Realism, Idealism (Liberalism), and Radicalism.

The second section will deal with the causes of conflict in the international system. We will ask what conditions lead to war and what do we know about war to this point? This section will focus on understanding the deadliest state of international affairs, conflict.

The third section will deal with the causes of peace. What is required to build a lasting peace in the international system? Can a lasting peace even be built in the current era? This section will be focus on understanding the common conditions for peace in the global system.

We will start each day be talking about current events. *Each student is required to keep up with the international news and be able to participate in class discussion.* Next we will move to a short lecture on the concepts to be discussed for the day. There is no mandatory attendance policy, but missing class will adversely affect your participation grade. Missing an excessive amount of class is grounds for failure automatically. It will be difficult to finish any exam if you do not have notes for the class from each day, simply reading the book and avoiding class is the surest path to failure.

The Paper

Your paper assignment for this term will be to find a movie and discuss its relevance to International Politics. You can choose any movie; you just need to connect it back to international relations and the course in general (use your readings or the textbook as a guideline for topics). The paper should outline the movie briefly, discuss the concept you think is most relevant, and how the movie relates to that concept. You should do some background research on both the movie and concept you choose to discuss. I will give an automatic A to the person who writes about a movie I end up adopting for next year. The paper should be at least 15 pages in length. **War movies are poor choices!**

You will also have to write a 5-7 page paper on Fog of War and the corresponding book. Topic to be discussed later

News

Each day we will start off with the discussion of the international news if events take place that are relevant to international politics. Students should be prepared to bring up and discuss these events. Any reputable national news source is acceptable. I prefer the New York Times. Finding news events that are relevant will take time and skill. Some of reports are buried in the news coverage of the day and it is your responsibility to find the relevant ones that others may have missed.

Participation

Participation is simply showing up and contributing to class. Either asking questions, bringing up news articles, following up on lecture points, or private conversations with the professor/teaching assistant (if you are more comfortable with that) all count towards your participation grade. I do not take attendance and feel that missing class will be reflected on your final grade because you will miss important material.

Exam

There will be a midterm and a final. Each test will basically be a movie comprehension test that includes important class concepts. Some questions will center on events in the movie, others will focus on applying themes of the course to the movies. A few questions will reflect directly on the readings.

Disclaimers

Writing Deficiency Policy - Students who exhibit writing deficiencies will be required to seek help from the Writing Center and provide documentation that they have done so. You may seek help from the Writing Center if you think it would help you even if I do not refer you.

Schedule

June 17

Introduction

Duck Soup (Humor and Prestige)

June 19

Lord of the Flies (Anarchy)

Read “morality and politics” (p 1-8)

Aquinas (in Classics)

June 24

300 (Power Politics)

Read: Thucydides and Machiavelli

June 27

Munich (Morality vs. Power Politics)

Read: Morgenthau, Kennan, Wolfers

July 1

Wilson (Liberalism)

Read: Wilson (Classics)

July 3

High Noon (Bush Doctrine)

Read: US National Security Strategy (my UIC webpage)

July 8

All Quiet on the Western Front (Marxism)

Read: Tolstoy, Zinn (all Classics)

Midterm

July 10

Fog of War

Discussion (Fog of War Book)

Read: Fog of War Book

July 15

Fog of War Paper Due

World War II Series (Steps to War)

Read: Clausewitz, Bremer (Classics)

July 17

Battle of Algiers (Civil War)

July 22

Lawrence of Arabia (Middle East, Long)

July 24

Butter Battle War

Dr. Strangelove (Deterrence)

Read: Kahn, George and Smoke, and Cohn (Classics)

July 29

Gandhi (Peace, Long Class)

Gandhi (Classics)

July 31

Tae Guk Gi (Cold War Diplomacy)

Paper Due

August 5

Thirteen Days (Diplomacy)

August 7, Final

Other Options (All are in my office):

Lord of War
Good Night, Good Luck
The Great Dictator
Casualties of War
Constant Gardener
Blood Diamond
Animal Farm
V for Vendetta
Platoon
Team America
Saving Private Ryan
No Man's Land
Hero
Jarhead
Napoleon
Bravo Two Zero
Longest Day
Big Red One
Patton
Glory
Uncovered
Tora Tora Tora
Mouse That Roared
Bridge on the River Kwai
Hotel Rwanda
A Bridge Too Far
Paths of Glory
Saving Private Ryan
Full Metal Jacket
Manchurian Candidate
Triumph of Will
Apocalypto
Letters from Iwo Jima
Flags of Our Fathers
Wag the Dog
Band of Brothers
Team America
Enemy at the Gates
Braveheart
K 19
Crimson Tide
Patton
Hunt for Red October
Canadian Bacon
Fail Safe
Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country
Elizabeth
Rules of Engagement
Dances with Wolves
Clear and Present Danger
Paths of Glory