

# **POLITICAL SCIENCE 4920: POLITICS IN FILM AND TELEVISION**

**Mondays, 12 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.  
Gateway Film Center House 2  
Spring 2016**

**Professor Vladimir Kogan**

**Office:** Derby Hall 2004

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., and by appointment

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**Top Hat Course URL:** [tophat.com/e/567830](http://tophat.com/e/567830)

**Top Hat Course Code:** **567830**

**SMS Response Number:** **+1 (315) 636-0905**

## **Course Description:**

Political films 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 the government. But 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 empirical 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 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. An additional discussion question will be posted on Top Hat following class. A large part of your grade (see below) is based on your completion of the discussion questions via Top Hat. 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 academic research 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 course readings are posted on Carmen*
2. *Students need to create a free Top Hat account*

Top Hat is a mobile audience response system has been adopted campus-wide at OSU. It is now free to use for students. We will use it extensively throughout the course for both reading quizzes and discussion questions. You can access the system via the URL on the front page of the syllabus or use an 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 (particularly for discussion questions), 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. A limited number of iPads are available for checkout for free at the library.

## Assignments:

1. **Weekly Quiz (25% 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 Top Hat in the beginning of each class. The quizzes will focus on the 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. **Weekly Discussion Questions (30% of Overall Grade)**  
After watching each week's film, students will be asked to discuss and answer three to four questions connecting the events in the movie to the themes from the readings for that week. Although students may work in groups, each student will need to submit an answer to each question via Top Hat. 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.

After each week's class, students will also be required to complete an additional discussion question applying the ideas from the movie, readings, and lecture to a current event or ongoing political debate. Answers to this last question will be due by midnight of Wednesday each week.

*Grading:* Students will receive points for submitting answers to each question (the participation portion of the grade). Note that, for each in-class discussion question, the submission mode will be available only for a few minutes. Students who miss the submission window because they are absent from class or do not send their answers in time will not receive credit.

In addition, one of these in-class questions will be chosen at random and will be graded for its content each week. The grade will be based on: (1) How well students draw on the materials from the readings and lecture, being sure to identify specific authors, readings, and ideas in their answer; (2) How well students make connections between the materials and the film, discussing specific characters, events, or plot developments in the movie. In addition, the final question that will be answered after class each week will be graded for its content as well. Overall, half of the discussion question points will be based on participation (submitting questions) and half will be earned based on the content.

**3. Midterm (20% of Overall Grade)**

On Feb. 29, students will complete the midterm exam on Carmen during the regularly scheduled class time. The exam will consist of multiple choice and short-answer questions and will cover materials from readings, lectures, and films. A significant portion of the multiple choice questions will be taken directly from the reading quizzes.

**4. Final Exam (25% of Overall Grade)**

The final exam will have the same format as the midterm and will be completed on Carmen during the regularly scheduled final exam time on Friday, April 29.

***\*\*\*Both exams for this class will be completed on Carmen. Students are responsible for having access to the hardware, software, and internet connection necessary to complete the exams. No allowances will be made for technical difficulties, so if you're in doubt, make plans ahead of time to take the exam at a computer lab on campus.\*\*\****

**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/>.

**Late and Make-Up Policy:**

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. 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 question 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 answer, 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/>.

**Other Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers):**

1. *I have a personal/ medical emergency or must miss class for other legitimate reasons. How can I make up the points I lose?*

I do not make distinctions between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. I allow every student to miss up to two reading quizzes without penalizing their quiz grade, regardless of the reason.

Students who miss class can still complete the discussion questions as long as they are logged into to the Top Hat website or mobile app when these questions become available for submission during regularly scheduled class time. However, students who will be completing questions on their own should be sure to obtain and watch the movie for that week ahead of time.

2. *What if I have to miss several classes?*

If you expect to miss more than one class, I strongly encourage you not take this course. Although it will still be possible to pass the course, you will likely miss a great deal of material and will probably not get the grade you want. If unexpected circumstances result in you missing many classes during the course of the semester, your best course of action is to withdraw prior to the deadline. If you must withdraw after the deadline due to an emergency, I am happy to write a letter of support to get your withdrawal processed retroactively. Please see an academic advisor to learn about your options.

3. *What if I am absent on the day of an exam?*

Since both exams will be taken online on your own from any location, there are very few conditions under which students will be able to reschedule an exam.

If a medical emergency precludes you from taking the exam during the regularly scheduled exam time, you need to: (1) contact me *prior* to the start of the exam to arrange for an extension; and (2) go to an urgent care center to get necessary help and receive appropriate medical documentation. Unless you have *both* contacted me ahead of time and have the necessary documentation, you will not be allowed to make up the exam. If you are unable to take the exam for other university-approved reasons, the same policy applies. You must notify me ahead of time and have the necessary documentation.

4. *How can I review the quiz questions I missed?*

The gradebook on Top Hat will indicate which questions you answered correctly and which you got wrong. It will also show you the first few words of each question. If you would like to see the full question and/or the correct answer, please come see me at office hours. (This option is available only to students who attended class on the day the quiz was given.) Also, feel free to write down/take a screen shot of each question for study purposes, although remember that the questions will also be available to you for review prior to the exam using the Top Hat tournament.

5. *Can I access the quiz and discussion questions if I'm not in class?*

Students who are logged in to Top Hat remotely will see exactly the same questions as the students in class. In theory, this means that it is possible to complete these without being present. Note, however, that the questions are available only for a limited period of time during the course of the class. If you're going to sit around by your phone or computer waiting for the questions to appear, you might as well come to class.

6. *Is attendance required?*

I will take attendance every day using Top Hat. However, this information will be used *only for record-keeping purposes*. None of your grade is based on attendance. But keep in mind that the discussion questions make up 30 percent of your final course grade and weekly quizzes make up another 25 percent. From my experience, it is very hard (but certainly not impossible) to do well on these portions of your grade without actually attending class regularly.

7. *I am having problems connecting to the OSU wi-fi during class. How can I complete the reading quiz and discussion questions if I can't connect to the internet?*

Make sure that you have registered your cell phone number on your Top Hat student account and have your phone with you in class. This will allow you to submit answers via SMS text message if you run into internet problems. Another option is to connect to Top Hat using your mobile internet, if you have a data plan.

If the internet connection is lost unexpectedly during a Top Hat session and you are using the Top Hat app on your phone or mobile device, the app will give you the option of saving your answers in "Offline Mode." You will need to record the four-digit question code and your responses will be automatically uploaded to Top Hat when the internet connection is re-established. You can find more information about Offline Mode here:

<https://support.tophatmonocle.com/hc/en-us/articles/200200514-Offline-Submission->

[Mode-Video-Tutorial](#). Note that Offline Mode is available only to students who are logged in while the question is active, and the app records an internal timestamp to verify that this is indeed the case. You cannot use this feature to submit answers late if you were not logged in when the questions are available. A question on the Top Hat reading quiz for this syllabus asks you to enter a secret word. The word you should enter as the answer is “xenium.”

***\*\*Please be sure that you understand all of these options and know what to do if you run into problems using Top Hat. You will be responsible for making sure your answers are submitted and recorded correctly. Please contact Top Hat directly at [support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com) if you run into problems with anything.\*\****

8. *My internet connection is fine, but for some reason Top Hat will not let me submit my response.*  
If you encounter an error message saying “Submission Failed, Please Retry” or see that the submission button is disabled (but there is still time available to submit an answer), click the answer you are trying to submit and take a screenshot of the question. Send the screenshot to [support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com). Be sure to CC me on your e-mail.

If the question won’t load on your device, submit your response via SMS text message.

9. *I’ve submitted my response via SMS text message, but Top Hat responded with an error message saying the question code is incorrect. I verified the question code I’m using and it is indeed correct.*  
Carefully check the question code again. If it is correct, your response was likely recorded successfully, despite the error message. You can check in the Top Hat gradebook to verify that this was the case. If the response was not recorded, take a screenshot of your text message (including timestamp and error message) and e-mail it to Top Hat technical support at the e-mail listed above. Again, CC me on the e-mail.

10. *Is there a curve?*

No. Students who complete the readings ahead of time and regularly come to class usually do very well in my classes, relative to other 4000-level American politics courses. Students who earn a grade below a “B-” usually miss courses frequently, do not come to class with the assigned readings complete, or turn work in late. Avoid these pitfalls, and you will do well.

I do reserve the right to adjust the weights given to individual components of your final grade if doing so improves your overall course grade. These adjustments will never be made in a way that gives you a lower grade than you would earn using the weights listed above.

11. *What should I do if I am having problems viewing the online lecture videos?*

All of the videos for this class are hosted on OSU’s Mediasite. There are a variety of hardware and software requirements and updates/plugins/settings you may need to install and/or update to correctly view the videos. A description of these and other related issues are posted here: <https://resourcecenter.odde.osu.edu/mediasite/2115>.

If you are still having trouble, consider trying a different browser or watching the videos at an campus computer lab.

## Course Overview and Schedule:

### Week 1 (Jan. 11) — 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”).
- Pautz, Michelle C., 2015, “*Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty*: Film, Government, and Audiences,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48(1): pp. 120-128.
- Davidson, Amy, “Why ‘Selma’ Is More Than Fair to L.B.J.,” *New Yorker*, Jan. 22, 2015.
- Taub, Amanda, “Every movie rewrites history. What ‘American Sniper’ did is much, much worse.” *Vox*, Jan. 22, 2015.

### Week 2 (Jan. 18) — No Class (University Holiday)

### Week 3 (Jan. 25) — 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:*

- 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 (Feb. 1) — Presidential Elections II: The General Election

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

*Film:* “Mitt” (2014)

*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 (Feb. 8) — 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 (Feb. 15) — 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 (Feb. 22) — 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 (Feb. 29) — MIDTERM EXAM TAKEN ON CARMEN DURING CLASS TIME**

### **Week 9 (March 7) — 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 (March 14) — No Class (Spring Break)**

### **Week 11 (March 21) — 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 12 (March 28) — Political Parties**

Big Question: *How do parties affect the behavior of individual legislators and, as a result, the outcomes that emerge from the legislative process?*

Film: “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” (1939)

Reading:

- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): Chapters 5 (“A Theory of Legislative Parties”).
- Jones, David R., 2010, “Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections,” *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2): pp. 323-333.
- Butler, Daniel M., and Eleanor Neff Powell, 2014, “Understanding the Party Brand: Experimental Evidence on the Role of Valence,” *Journal of Politics* 76 (2): pp. 492-505.

### **Week 13 (April 4) — 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 14 (April 11) — 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 15 (April 18) — 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 (April 25) — 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 EXAM TAKEN ON CARMEN: Friday, April 29, 12 to 1:45 p.m.\*\***