

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
REEL POLITICS – POLSCI 2MN3E
Winter 2021

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Lecture: Wednesdays 7pm – 10pm
Room: Virtual

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Course Description

While politics is often associated with government and formal political events, it is actually practiced all around us on a daily basis and often times in less than overt or explicit ways. In particular, popular culture depictions of life and everyday occurrences can often mask the state policies and contested politics underlying these events. This course seeks to highlight and explore the practices of politics, the occurrence of political events and the underlying contests surrounding political issues through a consideration of the portrayal of these in our popular culture through the use of film. The main themes of this course will focus on global political economy and crime.

Course Objectives

The course is intended to introduce students to and provide them with a greater understanding of the breadth of the impact of politics in society. It will also present students with an introductory foundation to critical theory approaches to politics.

By the end of the course, it is anticipated that students will be able to identify underlying political themes in popular culture. With the focus on global political economy and crime, students should be able to grasp an introductory level of political economic theory and the social construction of crime, understand how economic interests work to influence society and how different forms of punishments or regulations are used to keep different sectors of the economy and social classes in check. Students will also be able to explore and critically assess political events and contests at an introductory level.

Required Materials and Texts

There are no required texts for this course. All applicable readings and films listed are available in electronic format through either the McMaster University Library or Google Scholar (one film is available for rent through YouTube Movies as indicated in the weekly schedule). In addition, readings will also be made available through Avenue to Learn. It is recommended that students complete assigned readings prior to class in order to fully comprehend the material.

Class Format

The format of this course is virtual. The first hour of the allotted lecture time slot will be used for students to ask questions about the assigned films, readings and assignments. Students are required to watch the film and do the assigned reading prior to the lecture question period.

Course Evaluation – Overview

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| 1. Movie Review 1 | 25% |
| 2. Movie Review 2 | 25% |
| 3. Take-Home Examination | 50% |

Course Evaluation – Details

Movie Review 1 (25%), due February 10, 2020

Students will submit a two to three page double-spaced paper that provides a review of at least two movies from Weeks 2-4. Your review should connect the films to the concepts and themes in the readings; also distinguish and politically analyze how popular culture portrays economic and criminal activity through film. Students should focus on not only the stories being told, but also to the extent that it provides an understanding of the theoretical issues brought forth by the readings.

Movie Review 2 (25%), due March 17, 2020

Students will submit a two to three page double-spaced paper that provides a review of at least two movies from Weeks 5-8. Your review should connect the films to the concepts and themes in the readings; also distinguish and politically analyze how popular culture portrays economic and criminal activity through film. Students should focus on not only the stories being told, but also to the extent that it provides an understanding of the theoretical issues brought forth by the readings.

Take-Home Exam (50%), due April 14, 2020

The final take exam will be based on all materials covered in the movies, lectures and assigned readings throughout the semester. The exam will provide students with an opportunity to apply the material they have learned over the course in a general fashion and students will be expected to cover as much material as possible in their answers. The exam will be distributed on April 7, 2021 and be due one week later on April 14, 2021. Answers to the take home exam should not exceed seven double-spaced pages and will consist of answering one essay format question.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 13, 2021)

Introduction to Course

PART 1: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CRIME & CLASS

Week 2 (January 20, 2021)

Film

In Time (2011)

Readings

Abdelal, R., Blyth, M., & Parsons, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Constructing the international economy*. Cornell University Press. Chapter 1: p. 1-19.

Week 3 (January 27, 2021)

Film

Taken (2008)

Readings

Weitzer, R. (2007). The social construction of sex trafficking: Ideology and institutionalization of a moral crusade. *Politics & Society*, 35(3), 447-475.

Week 4 (February 3, 2021)

Film

Parasite (2019)

Readings

Lawson, V., & with Middle Class Poverty Politics Research Group. (2012). Decentring poverty studies: Middle class alliances and the social construction of poverty. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 33(1), 1-19.

PART 2: ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Week 5 (February 10, 2021): MOVIE REVIEW #1 DUE

Film

The Big Short (2015)

Readings

Helleiner, E. (2009). Reregulation and fragmentation in internal financial governance. *Global governance*, 15, 16.

Week 6 (February 17, 2021)

READING WEEK

No Assigned Films or Readings

Week 7 (February 24, 2021)

Film

War Dogs (2016)

Readings

Kellner, D. (2004). 9/11, spectacles of terror, and media manipulation: A critique of Jihadist and Bush media politics. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1(1), 41-64.

Week 8 (March 3, 2021)

Film

The Mule (2018)

Readings

Mercille, J. (2011). Violent narco-cartels or US hegemony? The political economy of the 'war on drugs' in Mexico. *Third World Quarterly*, 32(9), 1637-1653.

Week 9 (March 10, 2021)

Film

Blood Diamond (2006)

Readings

Katsaura, O. (2010). Violence and the political economy of informal diamond mining in Chiadzwa, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Sustainable development in Africa*, 12(6), 340-353.

PART 3: CRIME, PUNISHMENT & INEQUALITY

Week 10 (March 17, 2021): MOVIE REVIEW #2 DUE

Film

Shawshank Redemption (1994)

Readings

Tewksbury, R., & Demichele, M. T. (2003). The good, the bad, and the (sometimes) ugly truths: American penal goals and perspectives. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 28(1), 1-14.

Week 11 (March 24, 2021)

Film

Just Mercy (2019)

Readings

Davis, A. Y. (2003). Race and criminalization: Black Americans and the punishment industry. *Criminological perspectives: Essential readings*, 284.

Week 12 (March 31, 2021)

Film

Civil Brand (2002)

*[Rent on YouTube Movies](#)

Readings

Davis, A. Y., & Shaylor, C. (2001). Race, gender, and the prison industrial complex: California and beyond. *Meridians*, 2(1), 1-25.

Week 13 (April 7, 2021): TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED

Film

The Green Mile (1999)

Readings

Miller, R. J. (2013). Race, hyper-incarceration, and US poverty policy in historic perspective. *Sociology Compass*, 7(7), 573-589.

Week 14 (April 14, 2021)

TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

No Assigned Films or Readings

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted online through Avenue to Learn.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Students should make all reasonable attempts to submit papers on the due date. In the event that a legitimate extension is required, students should speak to one of the instructors in advance of the due date to make the appropriate arrangements for such an extension.

Late papers may be penalized at the rate of three percentage points per working day for each day of delay, up to a maximum of one week. After one week, the instructor may refuse to accept any late assignments in the absence of proper medical certification justifying an inability to fulfill academic requirements on a prolonged basis.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Courses with an On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic**

integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about [McMaster's use of Turnitin.com](#) please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.