I. Introduction

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.

For the purposes of this section, the course will focus on the use of the criminal law power by the state and to the extent that provides or interferes with perceptions of justice in society. In particular, the course will pursue a relatively critical perspective of the use of coercive powers by the state through the criminal justice system and how it might impact different groups of persons differently.

II. 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 various stages or elements in the criminal justice system, including the making and enforcement of criminal measures, the criminal justice process, the use of incarceration and other forms of punishment and alternatives to the criminal justice system in the pursuit of justice. Students will also be able to explore and critically assess political events and contests at an introductory level.
III. Required Texts

There are no required texts for this course. All applicable readings listed are available in electronic format through either the McMaster University Library or Google Scholar. 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 and participate in class discussions.

IV. Class Schedule

Class 1  May 02, 2017  Introduction to Course

Part I - Criminalization

Class 2  May 04, 2017  The Social Construction of Crime

Movie  Logan’s Run


Class 3  May 09, 2017  The Changing Nature of Crime

Movie  If These Walls Could Talk


Class 4  May 11, 2017  “Just” Criminals

Movie  A Time to Kill

Part II – Enforcement and Prosecution

Class 5 May 16, 2017 “Un-Just” Victims

Movie Review I due in class

Movie The Accused


Class 6 May 18, 2017 Police Discretion

Movie L.A. Confidential


Class 7 May 23, 2017 Prosecutorial Discretion

Movie Presumed Innocent


Class 8 May 25, 2017 Judges, Juries and Trial Fairness

Movie Twelve Angry Men


Part III - Punishment

Class 9 May 30, 2017 Incarceration

Movie Review II due in class

Movie The Shawshank Redemption

Class 10       June 01, 2017       Capital Punishment
Movie          The Green Mile

Class 11       June 06, 2017       Post-Incarceration
Movie          The Woodsman

Part IV – Social Impact

Class 12       June 08, 2017       Privatization of Justice
Movie          Runaway Jury

Class 13       June 13, 2017       Reinforcing Social Divisions
Completion of Course Evaluation

Take Home Exam Distributed at the end of class
Movie          The Siege

Class 14       June 15, 2017       Exam Submission
No Readings

TAKE HOME EXAM DUE
V. Teaching Methods

The class is scheduled for one three-hour session per week.

The first fifteen to thirty minutes of each class will be conducted in interactive discussion and/or lecture format concerning the scheduled topic. The remaining class time will be used for the showing of the movie for that class. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and participate in discussions concerning the discussions, readings and movie both before and after the movie.

In addition to formal class time, students are invited to meet with the instructors during regular office hours or by appointment to discuss course content or any other concerns.

VI. Evaluation

The following evaluations will determine the grade received by students.

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

In the event that the course offers opportunities for group work, all students in a group will receive the same grade on the assignments, unless otherwise expressly approved by the instructors. No class time will be set aside for group work and, as such, students are expected to make their own arrangements to ensure the completion of work on time. No accommodations will be made for group work that is not submitted in on time or for work that is not up to appropriate standards due to lack of group member availability or for other group work related dynamics.

Written assignments should be provided to the instructor, either in class or during office hours. As a last resort, assignments can be submitted to the box outside of the political science office. Assignments will not be accepted by the Department of Political Science Office staff or that are slipped under the instructor’s or any other door. Papers received by e-mail or fax will not be accepted without the prior express permission of the instructors on each assignment.

In the event that students are unable to attend class or complete required assignments and have submitted the appropriate documentation to their faculty or received the approval of the instructor for the incomplete work, the instructor reserves the right re-allocate the missed grades to the final take-home examination. The completion of an MSAF form does not absolve a student from the requirement to complete an assignment. Should a student complete an MSAF form, they should speak with the instructors to make arrangements for a new due date or other arrangements at their first opportunity or upon their first return to class.
**Students with Disabilities:**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

**Late Policy**

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. Requests for an extension submitted by e-mail will not be considered – you must speak to one of the instructors in person.

Examinations and/or assignments related to other courses do not constitute or qualify as exceptional circumstances or legitimate excuses.

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. Papers accepted after one week of lateness will be deducted by one full letter grade per each week of lateness.

The instructors reserve the right to not provide any comments or feedback on papers submitted after the original deadline, whether an extension is granted or not.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Students are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials earned are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

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.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).
The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**VII. Assignments**

Students may complete the movie review assignments either alone or working with another person.

1. **Movie Review I**  
   **May 16, 2017**  
   25%

Students will submit either a two to three page paper if working alone or a four to five page paper if working in a group of two that provides a review of at least two movies from Part I – Criminalization. Students should focus on not only the stories being told, but also to the extent that it provides an understanding of the theoretical issues associated with defining certain activities as criminal or not. While standard typed assignments are acceptable, students are encouraged to present their reviews involving more creative formats.

2. **Movie Review II**  
   **May 30, 2017**  
   25%

Students will submit either a two to three page paper if working alone or a four to five page paper if working in a group of two that provides a review of at least two movies from Part II – Enforcement and Prosecution. Students should focus on not only the stories being told, but also to the extent that it provides an understanding of the theoretical issues associated with the roles played by the "key players" in the criminal justice system. While standard typed assignments are acceptable, students are encouraged to present their reviews involving more creative formats.

3. **Take Home Examination**  
   **June 15, 2017**  
   50%

The final take exam will be based on all materials covered in the movies, discussions, 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 June 13, 2017 and be due forty-eight hours later. Answers to the take home exam will be page limited to seven pages.
**Statement on Electronic Resources**

In this course we will be using AvenueToLearn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, 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 this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

**Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2011, 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.

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.