

PLS 208
Politics in the Entertainment Media
Fall 2007

Instructor: Dr. Earl Sheridan
Office: Leutze Hall, 269
Office Hours: T-Th 10-11am; 11-12pm

Texts:

Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film, and Politics by Ernest Giglio; *Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment*, by Michael Parenti; *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, by Timothy Corrigan. Coursepack: *Politics in the Entertainment Media*. On reserve in the library, *Reel Politics* by Terry Christiansen: and *The Political Companion to American Film*, Gary Crowdus, editor.

Course Description

An examination of the political and ideological implications of entertainment media – principally movies, although television may be marginally covered. We will examine the political relationship between Hollywood and Washington and how movies reflect and influence our political and ideological perceptions.

Course Requirement and Grading

Final exam (100 pts) which will be multiple choice, short answer and short essay. A critical essay of 6-7 pages (70 pts) on a political film (not shown in the course or the films of a particular filmmaker). The paper is to be typewritten, double-spaced and include citations and a bibliography. Two pop essays (20 pts). Two 30 pt quizzes, 30 pts participation/attendance. These will be added to get 300 points and divided by 3.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken. You have 2 unexcused absences. For each absence over 2, 4 points will be taken from your participation grade. Excused absences will only be granted with an official written excuse. Your attendance is particularly important for you to view and discuss the films. No special arrangements will be made to show films you have missed.

Make-up Tests

Make-up Tests will only be given with a written acceptable excuse. All make-ups will be given on reading day.

Keys To Success In This Class

1. Come to class and pay attention.
2. Read your assigned readings.
3. Participate: Discuss, Ask Questions, Listen to Others.

Cheating or Plagiarism will be dealt with seriously. See Code of Student Life or university catalogue; pg. 84.

Course Outline

Course Introduction

August 22 **Readings** – Giglio, Chapt. 1-4; Parenti, Chapt. 1 and 11; Christiansen, pp.1-26;

Handouts. Corrigan, Chapt 1-4.6. Especially pp.9-14 and 105-108.

Films about Politicians

August 29 **Readings** – Giglio, Chapt. 6: Christiansen, pp 31-35, 45-48, 78-83, 106-108, 116-120; Crowds, ed., “Politicians in American Cinema” pp. 322-330; Giglio, Chapt 8 and 9.

Film – *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)*

September 5 **Film** – *Dave (1993)*

War Films

September 12 **Readings** – Giglio, Chapt. 8 and 9; Crowds, ed. “The War Film” 455-463; Christiansen, Chapt. 5

Film – *Paths of Glory (1957)*

The Cold War and the Hollywood Blacklist

September 19 **Readings** – Christiansen, Chapt. 7, pp. 135-142; Giglio, Chapt 5; Crowds, ed. “The Hollywood Blacklist” pp.193-199, “Carl Forman” pp. 153-154, “Ena Kazan” pp. 232-235; Parenti, Chapt. 3.

Readings – Crowds, ed. “The Western” pp. 469-475. Stephen King handout.

Film – *High Noon (1952)*

September 26 **Quiz**

Film – *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)*

Political Thrillers/Terrorism

October 3 **Readings** – Crowds, ed. “Political Thrillers” pp. 319-321; Christiansen, Chapt. 10.

Film – *North by Northwest (1959)*

October 10 **Film** – *The Manchurian Candidate (1962)*

October 17 **Film** – *The Siege (1998)*

October 24 **Film** – *Paradise Now (2005)*

October 31 **Film** – *Munich (2005)*

Documentaries

November 7 Film –*Fahrenheit 911* (2004)

Race, Gender & Class

November 14 Readings – Crowds, “Sidney Poitier” pp. 307-309, “Spike Lee” pp. 245-248, “Blacks in American Cinema” pp. 41-49, “African American Filmmakers” pp. 3-8, “The Women’s Film” pp. 483-495, “Martin Ritt” pp. 347-348; Parenti, chapt. 8.

Film – *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967)

November 28 Film – *Crash* (2005) **Quiz**

December 5 Film – *Norma Rae* (1979) **Critical essays due**

Comprehensive Final Exam **December 10th (3-6pm)**