

Pop Culture and World Politics/INTL2005
University of Georgia, Fall Semester 2023
Monday/Wednesday/Friday: 3:00-3:50PM
Room: Sanford Hall 313

Dr. Eli Sperling

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Office Hours: Monday 10:00am-12:30PM, Zoom meetings can also be scheduled throughout the week, depending on my availability—email to inquire.

Office Location: Candler 312

Course Description:

In this course, we will examine global political events and behaviors through the lens of popular culture. Throughout the semester, we will study top-down and bottom-up political messaging in American, Soviet/Russian, Middle Eastern and Korean popular culture, utilizing analytical tools and methods from the social sciences and cultural studies. Students will gain a clear understanding of the ways in which popular culture both reflects and impacts political phenomena worldwide and our four case studies will offer a practical overview of global political history from the start of the Cold War until today.

Grade Scheme

A: 93-100

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 63-66

D-: 60-62

F: 00-59

Grade Composition

Quizzes/writing assignments: 10%

Group Presentation: 15%

Midterm: 20%

In class attendance and participation: 20%

Take home Final paper: 35%

Assignments:

Quizzes:

There will be 3-5 pop quizzes and about the readings, course content during the semester

Short writing assignments:

There will be two short group writing assignments.

Presentation:

Students in the course will be divided into groups during the first half of the semester. During the last two weeks of the semester, each group will give a 20 minute presentation—details will be discussed in the first weeks of the semester.

Participation:

Students should regularly attend class, having read all the required readings. They should be prepared to both pose and answer questions about the readings and engage in discussion on the broader subject matter.

Midterm Exam:

Midterm exam covering the topics in the course so far.

Final Paper

The final paper topic will relate to students' group assignments, the countries they study during the semester for their presentation. Further instructions about the final paper will be discussed in the second half of the semester.

Policies:

Academic Integrity

Every student must agree to abide by UGA's academic honesty policy and procedures known as A Culture of Honesty and the University of Georgia Student Honor Code, which work together to define a climate of academic honesty and integrity at the university.

Special Needs

This course is guided by the assumption of dignity and respect for all persons in the classroom. My hope is to support diversity of learners and to provide a non-threatening environment. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of classes), and make sure that you have contacted the Disability Resource Center: <http://drc.uga.edu>

In-Class Discussion Guidelines:

Civility and respect are essential when engaging in productive academic discourse. All communications for this course should be conducted constructively, civilly, and respectfully. Differences in beliefs, opinions, and approaches are to be expected. Please bring any communications you believe to be in violation of this policy to my attention. Active interaction with peers and your instructor is essential to success in this course, paying particular attention to the following:

- Be respectful of others and their opinions, valuing diversity in perspectives, backgrounds, abilities, and experiences.
- Challenging ideas, phenomena and the scholars that we engage with is integral to critical thinking and the scholarly process. Please articulate your written and verbal communications carefully and thoughtfully, recognizing that a positive atmosphere of healthy discourse is encouraged.
- It is important to do the reading! We will be discussing nuanced and often complicated circumstances. Being a productive member of in-class discussions means doing the reading and being prepared to talk about those assignments and how they relate to lectures and concepts discussed in class.

Course schedule/sessions—please complete all readings below each session for that session, unless otherwise specified by Dr. Sperling

Week 1: Introduction

August 16: Syllabus overview, goals and expectations of course

August 18: Syllabus review continued, discussion of general scholarly frameworks

- Nieguth, Tim. *The Politics of Popular Culture: Negotiating Power, Identity, and Place*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. Pp 3-18,

Week 2: American pop culture and politics

August 21: 1950s

- Bodnar, J. "Unruly Adults: Social Change and Mass Culture in the 1950s." *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2012, pp. 21–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oahmag/oas031>.
- Nieguth, Tim. *The Politics of Popular Culture: Negotiating Power, Identity, and Place*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. Pp 51-64.

August 23: 1960s

- Frith, Simon. "Rock and the Politics of Memory." *Music and Ideology*, 2017, pp. 393–403.

- James, David E. “Rock and Roll in Representations of the Invasion of Vietnam.” *Representations*, vol. 29, 1990, pp. 78–98.

August 25: 1970s

- Waxman, Olivia B. “Elvis Presley and Richard Nixon: The Story behind the Photo.” *Time*, 15 Aug. 2017, <https://time.com/4894301/elvis-president-nixon-photo/>
- Williams, Paul. “Serialization, Solipsism, and Swarming: American Politics and the Graphic Novel in the 1970s.” *American Literary History*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2023, pp. 259–275.

Week 3: American pop culture and politics

August 28: 1980s:

- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. Rowohlt-Taschenbuch-Verl. 2004.

August 30: 1990s

- Wilson, Joshua C. *The Street Politics of Abortion: Speech, Violence, and America’s Culture Wars*. Stanford Law Books, an Imprint of Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. 1-38

September 1: 2000s (writing assignment given)

- Ferrence, Matthew J. *All-American Redneck: Variations on an Icon, from James Fenimore Cooper to the Dixie Chicks*. University of Tennessee Press, 2014. Pp 1-37

Week 4: American pop culture and politics

September 4: No class for Labor Day!

September 6: 2010s

- Rabaka, Reiland. *Hip Hop’s Inheritance from the Harlem Renaissance to the Hip Hop Feminist Movement*. Lexington Books, 2011. Pp. 1-48

September 8: wrap up (writing assignment due)

Week 5: Russian/Soviet pop culture and politics

*We will schedule in-class presentations this week

September 11: 1950s:

- Lovell, Stephen. *The Soviet Union: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. 1-36.

September 13: 1960s

- M., Von Eschen Penny. *Satchmo Blows up the World Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Harvard University Press, 2006. 1-56

September 15: 1970s:

- M., Von Eschen Penny. *Satchmo Blows up the World Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Harvard University Press, 2006. 148-184.

Week 6:

September 18: 1980s

- M., Von Eschen Penny. *Satchmo Blows up the World Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Harvard University Press, 2006. 185-222.

September 20: 1990s (short writing assignment given)

- Wojnowski, Zbigniew. "The Lives and Afterlives of a Soviet Misfit: Volodymyr Ivasiuk, the Emotional Crisis of Late Socialism and the Anti-Soviet Turn in Ukrainian Popular Culture." *Contemporary European History*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2022, pp. 61–78.

September 22: 2000s

- Alexander Prokhorov, Elena Prokhorova, & Rimgaila Salys. *Russian TV Series in the Era of Transition: Genres, Technologies, Identities* Boston. Academic Studies Press, 2021. Pp.8-47. **This book is available as a free digital check out on the UGA library site.**

Week 7:

September 25: 2010s

- Alexander Prokhorov, Elena Prokhorova, & Rimgaila Salys. *Russian TV Series in the Era of Transition: Genres, Technologies, Identities* Boston. Academic Studies Press, 2021. Pp.48-75.

September 27: Wrap up (short writing assignment due)

- The Global Controversy over Pussy Riot: An Anti-Putin Women's Protest. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx/global-controversy-over-pussy-riot-an-anti-putin-womens.pdf?c=ijj;idno=11645653.0002.104;format=pdf>

September 29: Movie

- Hernández, Javier C. "Russia's Storied Tchaikovsky Competition Is Diminished by War." *The New York Times*, 29 June 2023. www.nytimes.com/2023/06/29/arts/music/tchaikovsky-competition-putin-war.html

Week 8: Korean pop culture and politics

October 2: 1950s

- Gwon, Gwisook. "Reframing Christianity on Cheju during the Korean War." *Journal of Korean Religions*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2015, pp. 93–120.

October 4: 1960s

- Kim, Pil Ho, and Hyunjoon Shin. "The Birth of 'Rok': Cultural Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Globalization of Rock Music in South Korea, 1964–1975." *Positions: Asia Critique*, vol. 18,

no. 1, 2010, pp. 199–230.

October 6: Midterm review

- Come to class with three written questions about the midterm

Week 9: Midterm! Movie....

October 9: Midterm

October 11: Movie

October 13: Movie pt 2

Week 10: Korean pop culture and politics

October 16: 1970s

- Klein, Christina. “Why American Studies Needs to Think about Korean Cinema, or, Transnational Genres in the Films of Bong Joon-Ho.” *American Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2008, pp. 871–898.

October 18: 1980s

- Dong, Wonmo. “University Students in South Korean Politics: Patterns of Radicalization in the 1980s.” *Journal of International Affairs*, Winter/Spring 1987, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 233-255

October 20: 1990s

- Lee, Chae-Jin. “U.S. Policy toward North Korea in the 1990s.” *Korean Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1992, pp. 13–28.
- “North Korea’s Musical Environment.” *Censorship and Government Regulation of Music*, <https://wordpress.clarku.edu/musc210-cgr/music-censorship-and-piracy-in-north-korea-2/north-koreas-musical-environment/>

Week 11:

October 23: 2000s

- Patrick A. Messerlin and Wonkyu Shin. “The Success of K-pop: How Big and Why So Fast?” *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 2017, Vol. 45, No. 4/5 (2017), pp. 409-439

October 25: 2010s

- Kerr, Sari Pekkala, et al. “Global Talent Flows.” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Fall 2016, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 83-106.

October 27: No Class—Fall break!

Week 12: Middle East pop culture and politics

October 30: 1950s

- Walter Armbrust and Walter Armbrust. “New Cinema, Commercial Cinema, and the Modernist Tradition in Egypt” *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 15, 1995.

November 1: 1960s

- Elsaket, Ifdal, et al. *Cinema in the Arab World: New Histories, New Approaches*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 27-45.

November 3: 1970s—movie

- Mortimer, Robert A. “The Algerian Revolution in Search of the African Revolution.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1970, pp. 363–387.

Week 13:

November 6: 1980s

- Bayat, Asef. “Activism and Social Development in the Middle East.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2002, pp. 1–28.

November 8: 1990s

- Ruoff, Jeffrey. “The Gulf War, the Iraq War, and Nouri Bouzid’s Cinema of Defeat.” *South Central Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2011, pp. 18–35.

November 10: 2000s

- Stacy Takacs. “Monsters Everywhere: Spooky TV and the Politics of Fear in Post-9/11 America.” *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar., 2009), pp. 1-20.

Week 14:

November 13: 2010s

- James Dorsey. “Saudi Women Behind the Wheel: Prince Mohammed’s Litmus Test.” *BESA Center Perspectives Paper*. No. 604, October 4, 2017.
- Orit Perlov and Yoel Guzansky. “The Social Media Discourse in Saudi Arabia: The Conservative and Radical Camps are the Dominant Voices.” *Institute for National Security Studies* (2014).
- Arabiya.net, Al. “How Hip Hop Became Part of Saudi Arabia’s Cultural Scene.” Al Arabiya English, 20 May 2020, <https://english.alarabiya.net/life-style/entertainment/2017/08/01/How-Hip-Hop-became-part-of-Saudi-Arabia-s-cultural-scene>

November 15: Wrap up

- Laachir, Karima, and Saeed Talajooy. *Resistance in Contemporary Middle Eastern Cultures: Literature, Cinema and Music*. Routledge, 2013. Pp. 1-14.

November 17: Presentation preparation

- As a group, come to class with five written questions about your upcoming presentation

Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 15:

November 27: In class presentations

November 30: In class presentations

December 2: In class presentations

Last day of class:

December 4: Concluding session, prompt for take home final assigned after class. It will be due at the end of finals week.