

The University of Georgia  
Department of International Affairs  
INTL 4660 Politics, Film and Literature, Spring 2026  
Sanford Hall 312  
Tuesday 2:55 p.m 5:35 p.m.  
Contact hours: Th: 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. and by e-mail/zoom appointment  
Dr. Markus M. L. Crepaz ([mcrepaz@uga.edu](mailto:mcrepaz@uga.edu))

Politics is not just what happens in campaigns, elections and in assemblies. It runs much deeper and affects every aspect of an individual's life. We encounter it in popular culture, "high culture", in boardrooms, bedrooms, around kitchen tables, playgrounds, nursing homes, and many other places. The impact of the fictional world of the arts on how people absorb "politics" or political commentary cannot be overstated. "Political" films, books or even songs have a power to mobilize people more than any dry fact in a newspaper or fancy econometric model in a prestigious academic journal. The purpose of this class is to sharpen the student's perception of political messages produced in the arts, connect them to the world of "political science", and relate them to contemporary political events.

Course outcomes:

In this seminar-style class we examine seven political themes as they appear in films and novels. This class takes a new approach to exploring political themes: we investigate how timeless political topics, such as the "authoritarian impulse", the "tyranny of the majority", or "revolution" has been dealt with in fictional form, as manifested in the forms of novels and films. Students will

- Appreciate the power of fiction in mobilizing people for political action.
- Understand how individual political action can affect other individuals, and groups, and even the fate of nations.
- Make students more discerning consumers of information as distributed via the mass and social media.
- By identifying with the protagonists in the various movies and central figures in the novels, students develop a more visceral sense of the ambiguous nature of individual political decisions, often making them to choose sides and unearthing their own hidden prejudices and biases.
- Based on the power of the fictional narrative students become emotionally engaged and develop a deeper understanding of concepts such as democracy, war, race, or authoritarianism, among others.
- Students thus experience international affairs and seemingly distant global issues in an immediate, visceral way.

***The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.***

## *Mental Health and Wellness Resources:*

- *If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.*
- *UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).*
- *If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.*
- *Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.*

**Prohibition on Recording Lectures.** In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

## **Course requirements:**

This seminar requires some serious reading (seven books), writing and **active participation** on the part of the students. Increasingly, students' attention span to read books

from cover to cover is decreasing. If you are not willing or able to put in that effort, this class is not for you.

The class requirements are as follows:

- 1) **Participation in discussion forum in eLC:** shortly after showing the films I will post a series of questions about the films and the readings in the “discussion” area of the eLC. It is absolutely crucial you participate in this electronic forum in a robust and informed manner. What I’m looking for is not just a response from the students but a “conversation” among the course participants about their interpretations of the events, themes, etc. they have seen/read. I’m not looking for “right” or “wrong” answers – what I’m looking for is an informed, reflective, and honest conversation amongst you. To participate at a quality level means that you will have to have **read and digested** the book and have seen the film that goes with each theme and the accompanying articles. While the movie and the book are “fictional” the articles are NOT. They are designed to help you understand the themes in more concrete political terms. **Participation is measured in the frequency and quality of students’ comments in the “discussion” section of the eLC. This form of participation counts for 10% of the overall grade.**
- 2) **In-class participation:** this again will be measured by **both the frequency and quality** of students’ comments and will count **for 15% of the overall grade. This is of utmost importance since when I hear your voice I know it is YOU, your original thoughts, arguments, and reflections I’m hearing, not some bot.**
- 3) **Four quizzes:** These will be timed, open book quizzes on eLC and will cover the readings for each theme either via multiple choice questions, true/false answers, short essays, fill in the blanks, etc. Each quiz will count for 5 % of the final grade for a **total of 30 %**. These will ask simple factual questions (such as: “what is the name of the dog of the Jessup family”) about the novels and the other readings and represent a check on whether students are up to date on the reading assignments.
- 4) **Mid-term paper:** each student must produce a typed paper between 8-10 pages in length (conventional fonts and margins) on the following topic:

### **Does Democracy require dissent or obedience?**

The first three themes deal with related topics, that is, the desire of people or groups of people (or animals in the second case) to control society. Please identify and articulate what you believe are the most compelling reasons why you take the position that you do. **Convince me with logic, reason, data, and other kind of evidence that you have the strongest possible justification for your position. You must use a minimum of 5 sources (quoted, not cited) to make your case.** Feel free to make references to contemporary or historical events but **support your assertions with evidence. If you want to learn something, do NOT use AI – see the AI policy statement above! I will check whether any AI tools were used in the creation of this essay!**

**This paper will count for 25 % of the final grade. February 27, at 11:59 p.m. (via MS Word file sent to my e-mail address).**

**The mid-term paper grade will be based on the following categories:**

1. The strength of your theoretical argument in answering the question
2. The strength of your empirical support and connection to your theoretical argument.
3. The number and appropriateness of the sources you indicate to support your claim
4. [The correct quoting/citing of your sources](#) (click here to go to APSA manual of style, start reading from p. 37).
5. Correct spelling and grammar

**Final exam: For the final exam we'll go back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, to the very first University, in Bologna, Italy, where students were tested in "viva voce" – with the "living voice" – meaning oral exams. [We'll do the same thing!](#) (click on this link for further information).**

**This oral exam will unfold over the second half of the semester and will take place in my office hours (Thursdays – 2:00 to 4:00 p.m) where individual students and I meet for about a 15-minute oral exam. The exam will cover the content of the readings as well as the slide presentations and general lecture and will count for 20% of the final grade. You can bring hand-written notes to the exam of the books/articles if you so desire.**

**Required readings:**

**George Orwell. Animal Farm (1946).  
Sinclair Lewis. It can't happen here (1935).  
B. F. Skinner. Walden Two (1951).  
Jhumpa Lahiri. The Namesake (2003).  
Ernest Callenbach. Ecotopia (1977).  
Upton Sinclair. The Jungle (1906).  
Sinclair Lewis: Babbitt (1922).**

In addition, there are various articles required also. For your convenience, they are all linked and can be downloaded directly at no cost. Make sure you log in via your institution. If this still does not work, just google the title and find the article this way.

**Some ground rules:**

1. This is not a lecture-style class. I will encourage as much participation as possible. How much you will get out of this class will depend on your own willingness to participate!
2. This is a **NO-TECH class**. No laptops, phones, or tablet use in class. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices that will disturb either your classmates – or your professor– during class. In this class you need to listen, observe, and actively participate, and take notes, preferably on a college ruled yellow pad.

3. *In order to ensure you develop and master the foundational knowledge and skills in this course, **the use of generative AI (GAI) tools is strictly prohibited.** This includes all stages of your work process, even the preliminary ones. This prohibition extends to AI writing tools like Grammarly and Wordtune, as well as GAI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Writesonic, Rytr, and Rtutor (and any others). If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it.*
4. This course covers seven themes: the authoritarian personality; tyranny of the majority and the culture of dissent; social engineering and its limits; immigration, integration, and identity; political activism and revolution; between conformism and anomie, and environmental thought and action. Typically, there will be a “movie week” when most of the class time will be used to watch a full feature movie, followed by a break and a general discussion with the TA about the themes covered in that movie. The next week I will provide the political context for the themes covered in the movies and literature. We will examine historical examples provide theoretical explanations as well as connecting the fictional accounts with the political science literature that is also informs each week’s themes.
5. Late papers are not acceptable. They are a burden for me and are unfair to your colleagues who do their work on time. Therefore, I will deduct a FULL letter grade for each day a paper is late. Extensions may be given but only if they are requested well in advance of the deadline, and if there is a compelling reason.
6. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. *Any student turning in a written assignment which is not your own work or is AI generated will receive a failing grade for the course, and may have further implications.* All academic work must meet the standards contained in “[A Culture of Honesty](#).” Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.
7. The use of sources is essential. On the midterm paper and on the final paper, you must make reference to the sources from which you drew your information. For information on how to cite correctly go to the [APSA manual of style](#).
8. I do not expect that your views and perceptions of these controversial themes are identical with mine or your classmates’, either now or at the completion of the course. The Politics, Film and Literature course is a place for the free and perhaps even heated exchange of ideas. **Thus I expect you to challenge viewpoints that differ from your own, but I also expect you to substantiate your arguments from the readings, lectures and discussions.**
9. If you need to use outside reference works, please consult Joel Krieger, et. al., *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, Oxford University Press, 2001 as a place to start for political terms or concepts – DO NOT USE WEBSTER’S DICTIONARY to define terms such as DEMOCRACY.
10. If you believe that you deserve a better grade, please provide an explanation to me *in writing within a week* of receiving the grade. I will then grade your exam/paper again and I will issue a “new” grade which will be either the same, a higher, or a lower grade.

Grading structure:	≥93	A
	90-92	A-
	87-89	B+
	83-86	B

80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
<60	F

**Reading assignments and dates:** Each theme consists of two classes. The first class of each segment is the “movie class”, the second is the discussion and presentation class for each theme. **Make sure that you have read and digested the readings before the discussion and presentation meeting which means you should start reading the materials the week we start watching the movies.**

**January 13:** Introduction of the class, explanation of themes, and expectations.

**January 20:** **The authoritarian personality – the authoritarianism from within (Theme 1)**

Movie: **Die Welle (2003)**

**Readings (Book) Sinclair Lewis (1935) It can't happen here. (entire).**

**Dick Geary (1998) “Who voted for the Nazis?”**

**Stephen J. Whitfield (1981) Hannah Arendt and the Banality of Evil. The History Teacher. 14:469-477**

**January 27:** **Lecture on Theme 1**

**February 3:** **Authoritarianism from without, tyranny of majority, and the culture of dissent (Theme 2)**

Movie: **The Lives of Others**

**Reading (book). George Orwell (1945) Animal Farm.**

**Karen Stenner and Jessica Stern (2021). How to Live with Authoritarians. FP.**

**Omer Aziz (2019), “America through Nazi Eyes” in : Dissent, Winter 2019.**

**February 10:** **Lecture on Theme 2**

**February 17:** **Social engineering and its limits (Theme 3)**

Movie: **Skin (2008)**

**Readings: Book: B.F. Skinner: Walden Two.**

**Hermann Gilliomee, The Making of the Apartheid Plan 1929-1948**

**Visit this site: <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/>**

**February 24: Lecture on Theme 3**

**Mid Term is DUE: February 27, at 11:59 p.m. (via the ELC Assignment tab)**

**March 3 : Immigration, Integration, and identity (Theme 4)**

Movie: **East is East.**

**Readings: Book: The Namesake (Jhumpa Lahiri)**

**Maykel Verkuyten (2019) To be Both (and more): Immigration and Identity Multiplicity. Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 75: 2.**

Kieran Connell (2024) The Guardian: White British people aren't under threat from multicultural Britain – they are part of it. Find it here: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/dec/27/multiculturalism-britain-white-people>

**March 17: Lecture on Theme 4**

**March 24: Political activism and revolution (Theme 5)**

Movie: **The Motorcycle Diaries**

**Readings: Book: Upton Sinclair (The Jungle).**

**Gizachew Tiruneh (2014) Social Revolutions: their causes, patterns and phases. Sage Open Publications.**

**Why Do People Choose to Rebel? OEF Research (2018).**

**March 31: Lecture on Theme 5**

**April 7: Between conformism and anomie (Theme 6)**

Movie: **American Beauty**

**Readings: Book: Babbitt (Sinclair Lewis)**

**Eva Bertram and Kenneth Sharpe (2000). *Capitalism, Work, and Character*. *American Prospect*. Vol: 11 (20)**

**Scott London (1999). *On Fraternity, Social Capital and the American Community*. Can be found here:**

**April 14: Lecture on Theme 6**

**April 21: Environmental thought and action (Theme 7)**

Movie: **Princess Mononoke**

**Readings: Book: Ecotopia (Ernest Callenbach)**

**Do the ecological footprint quiz. You can find information on it and do your own calculation (i.e. to find out what would happen if everybody else lived like you) here: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>**

**Garrett Hardin (1968) "The Tragedy of the Commons". *Science*. 162, (3859) 1243-1248. Can be found here: <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/reprint/162/3859/1243.pdf>**

Final lecture and reflections on the theme will follow immediately after the movie.