

International Politics and Film
GOVT 390/391
Spring 2003

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Office Hours: W 10-11:30
R 2-3:30

Morton 13
221-3036

Course Description

This is a course primarily about international politics, not film. The films were selected because they illuminate or comment on important ideas in the international relations discipline and/ or on key historical or contemporary events in the international system. At the same time, however, feature films are a remarkably poor source of information about international affairs. The film maker does not unobtrusively or objectively report facts. Rather, he or she often plays a role as social commentator, critic, political activist, or apologist. From the beginning, films have served a political purpose, whether explicitly through propaganda (in both documentaries and feature films) or more subtly through a film's intended and unintended political bias and influence. That is, films both reflect and attempt to change national and international politics. The films we view this semester, therefore, must be put in the context of specific historical events, broad political structures, and larger social and cultural dimensions.

The goals of the course are twofold: to learn about a number of topics in international politics, especially the use of force, by viewing and reading about films; and to learn to critically evaluate films in their historical, political, and cultural contexts.

Course Requirements

All students are required to attend the weekly film screenings, complete all reading assignments before class, and come to class prepared to discuss both. Students also are encouraged to read a daily newspaper, such as the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, or to access some internet news source on a daily basis. Course grades are based on five requirements:

Paper 1: Film Exercise	January 23	10%
Paper 2: Critical Analysis	no later than March 18*	20%
Paper 3: Critical Analysis	no later than April 25*	20%
Paper 4: Film in Context Paper	April 18	30%
Class Participation		20%

*Note: Papers 2 and 3 are due within a week of the viewing for the films they address. (If you opt to write on the last film of the semester, the paper is due on the last day of classes, April 25.) The dates listed above are the last possible dates on which you may submit Papers 1 and 2.

Paper 1 Write no more than 400 words (1-2 pp.) on a single element of film technique—editing, sound, mis-en-scene, cinematography, lighting—in *The Year of Living Dangerously*. The paper should describe and make an argument about the filmmaker's use of the film technique. ***Paper 1 is not a research paper.***

The paper will be evaluated on clarity of thesis, presentation of detail and evidence to

support thesis, comprehension and application of relevant film concepts and techniques, and style and composition. Paper 1 is worth 10% of your final grade and is due in class on January 23.

Papers 2 and 3: Critical Analyses (Due within one week of the screening for the film they address): Analyze one of the films screened in the class. In 600 words or less (2 pp.), propose and defend a thesis about the films of your choice. The papers should move beyond pure description to a critical interpretation of the film. The thesis must address an international political theme of the film and the ways in which the medium of film is used to explore this theme. You also might address any of the following questions: What is the film maker trying to say? What is the film's intended purpose and audience? How does the film maker use formal elements to reinforce his or her intended themes? How successful is the film in these terms?

Papers 2 and 3 are not research papers.

Paper 2 must address one of the following films: *Before the Rain*; *Breaker Morant*; *Dr. Strangelove*; *13 Days*; *Counterfeit Traitor*; or *Clear and Present Danger*. Paper 3 must discuss: *Sum of All Fears*; *Battle of Algiers*; *Paths of Glory*; *Platoon*; *Apocalypse Now*; or *The Manchurian Candidate*.

Papers 2 and 3 will be evaluated on originality and plausibility of ideas, clarity of thesis, presentation of detail and evidence to support thesis, comprehension and application of relevant film concepts and techniques, organization and development of ideas, and style and composition. Each paper is worth 20% of your final grade. Papers 2 and 3 are due within one week of the scheduled viewing of the film discussed and must be submitted in class the night of the screening for the subsequent film. Please note: The final option for Paper 3 is due by 4 pm on the last day of classes, Friday, April 25.

Paper 4: Critical Analysis: Film in Context Paper (Due April 18): Take one of the films viewed in class or, with my prior permission, another film of your choice and develop a critical reading of it in its historical political, social, and/ or cultural context. With prior permission, you may examine two films, but you must stay within the same length requirements as if you were discussing a single film. In approximately 1500 words or less (7 pp), present a ***researched***, critical analysis of the film. You may not analyze the film solely as a work of art, although you should explore the way formal elements reinforce the major themes of the film. Rather, you must read the film in its historical context: To what extent does the film represent or reject existing political ideologies, institutions, norms, and events? Does the film maker have a political message or intent? To what extent does the film seek to influence or is influenced by the international political context? How does the film maker use formal elements to reinforce his or her intended themes? How successful is the film in these terms? Note that, unlike the other three assignments, ***this is a research paper***. The analysis should be your own, but it should be informed by what other critics and students of film have written on the film. You should look up reviews and conduct research on the film maker, genre, and historical context. In the end, however, you must present a reading of the film that is your own, that draws on but expands, qualifies, revises, or refutes others' readings of the same film.

Paper 4 will be evaluated on originality and plausibility of ideas, clarity of thesis, extent and accuracy of research, clarity of thesis, presentation of evidence to support thesis, comprehension and application of relevant film concepts and techniques, organization and development of ideas, and style and composition. The paper is worth 30% of your final grade. It is due in class, Thursday, April 18.

General Paper Policies: All papers must be typed and double-spaced using no smaller than 12 point print with one-inch margins on all four sides. ***All late assignments will be penalized one grade (i.e., from an A- to a B+) for each day or fraction of a day late, but it is always better to turn in an assignment late than not to turn it in at all, since you may not pass the course without completing all assignments.*** Late assignments will not be penalized only when I receive an official written excuse from the Office of the Dean of Students or the Health Center.

Other Policies

Absence: Late assignments will be penalized as stated above, unless an excuse is provided from the Health Center or the Office of the Dean of Students. If you will miss class because of a religious holiday, you must notify me in the first two weeks of classes.

Disability Services: Persons with documented disabilities requiring accommodations to meet the expectations of this course should contact the Dean of Students office. If you feel it is important for me to know that you have a diagnosed disability that will require accommodation, the Dean of Students office must notify me in the first two weeks of classes.

Blackboard/ CourseInfo: All assignments and course documents are available on the CourseInfo site accessible through the William and Mary homepage.

Reserve Readings: All readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on the CourseInfo page, in hard copy at Swem and in Morton 2, and for copying (at .05 a page) in Morton 19.

Dates to Remember

January 23	Paper 1 due
January 24	last day to add/drop and exercise pass/fail or audit option
January 24	last day to drop a class without a "W"
March 21	last day to withdraw with a "W"
April 18	Paper 4 due

Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase in the bookstore.

–Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001).

–Robert W. Gregg, *International Relations on Film* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

–Fred Kaplan, *Wizards of Armegeddon* (Stanford University Press, 1991).

I. Introduction

A. General Introduction and Requirements (Week 1)

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, ch. 1. [Yes, you are behind already!]

B. Theories and Techniques of Film (Week 2)

Readings:

Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, entire.

Film:

The Year of Living Dangerously (115 min) (**January 21**)

C. Nations, States, and Nationalism (Week 3)

Readings:

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, chs. 2-3.

*Barry R. Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” *International Security* 18:2 (fall 1993): 80-124.

Film:

Before the Rain (112 min) (**January 28**)

D. Ethics and International Relations (Week 4)

Readings:

*Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), chs. 1-2.

*David Fisher, “The Ethics of Intervention,” *Survival* (spring 1994).

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, ch. 9.

Film:

Breaker Morant (107 min) (**February 4**)

II. Force and Politics

A. Deterrence and Decision Making (Weeks 5 and 6)

Readings:

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, ch. 6, pp. 118-122 only.

Fred Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, chs. 1-22.

Film:

Dr. Strangelove (93 min) **(February 11)**

13 Days (145 min) **(February 18)**

B. Intelligence, Espionage, and Covert Action (Week 7 and 8)

Readings:

*Richard K. Betts, "Intelligence Test: The Limits of Prevention," in James F. Hoge, Jr., and Gideon Rose, eds., *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2001).

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, ch. 5.

*Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000), chs. 8 and 10.

Films:

Counterfeit Traitor (140 min) **(February 25)**

Clear and Present Danger (140 min) **(March 11)**

C. Terrorism (Week 9 and 10)

Readings:

*Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism Trends and Prospects," ch. 2 in Ian O. Lesser, Bruce Hoffman, John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, *Countering the New Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Rand, 1999), pp. 7-38.

* Tom Z. Collina and Jon B. Wolfsthal, "Nuclear Terrorism and Warhead Control in Russia," *Arms Control Today* (April 2002).

http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002_04/colwolfapril02.asp A link to the article is provided on the CourseInfo page.

*Thomas Homer-Dixon, "The Rise of Complex Terrorism," *Foreign Policy* (January/February 2002): 52-62.

*Bruce Hoffman, "The Hard Questions: A Nasty Business," *Atlantic Monthly* (January 2002). <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2002/01/hoffman.htm> A link to the article is provided on the CourseInfo page.

Films:

Sum of All Fears (124 min) (**March 18**)

Battle of Algiers (123 min) (**March 25**)

D. The Causes and Consequences of International War

1. Crisis Escalation and War: World War I (Week 11)

Readings:

*Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30:2 (January 1978).

*Stephen Van Evera, "Why Cooperation Failed in 1914," *World Politics* (October 1985).

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, ch. 7.

*Tom Wicker, "World War I: Five Films," in Carnes, *Past Imperfect*, pp. 186-91.

Film:

Paths of Glory (87 mins) (**April 1**)

2. Intervention: The U.S. War in Vietnam (Week 12 and 13)

Readings:

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, ch. 4.

*Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud, eds. *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), introduction and chs, 1-3, 8.

*Frances Fitzgerald, "Apocalypse Now," in Carnes, *Past Imperfect*, pp. 284-287.

Films:

Platoon (120 min) (**April 8**)

Apocalypse Now (155 mins) (**April 15**)

III. Domestic Politics and International Relations (Week 14)

Readings:

Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, chs. 6 (pp. 109-18, 122-29 only), 10, 11.

*Samuel P. Huntington, "The Erosion of American National Interests," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (September/ October 1997): 28-49.

Film:

The Manchurian Candidate (129 min) (**April 22**)

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.