

Course Title - Films and International Relations
Course Code – MA(DLB) 0619
Fall 2026

Course Information

Course Duration: 15 weeks
Credit Hours: 3
Meetings: Wednesdays, 4pm to 7pm
Location: **T4 - S113 A, T4 Second Floor Central**
Prerequisites: None
Equivalent Courses: N/A
Exclusive Courses: N/A

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Rajdeep Pakanati
Biography: Dr. Rajdeep Pakanati is a Professor in JSIA. My research interests include International Relations, Comparative Politics, International Law and Global Governance.
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1. Course Description

For mainstream Political Science and International Relations, ‘popular culture’ is still not considered worthy of serious investigation. Similarly, the idea of using movies as a pedagogical tool has remained at the margins. Nevertheless, film can be a valuable means of teaching university students about politics and international politics in particular. This course will focus on the topics of history, conflict, peace and theories of international interactions. The goals of the course are – learn about the number of topics of international politics portrayed by films and to critically evaluate the films in the context of discourse about international politics. Film itself is a special symbolic language that is composed of cinematic codes such as camera shot, lighting, framing, performance, narrative structure, editing and montage, sound and music, mise-en-scène, etc. The course will be done by movie screening followed by, in class discussion.

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.

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
To learn about a number of topics in international politics, especially the use of force, by viewing and reading about films.	Watching Films & Classroom Discussion	Mid-Term Exam
To learn to critically evaluate films in their historical, political, and cultural contexts.		Paper 4

3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation breakup

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

ITEM	Description	Grade Value
Mid-Term Exam	In-class Mid-Term Exam	35%
Video Essay	Video Essay	35%

ENDTERM ASSESSMENT

End-Term Assessment	Film in Context Paper	30%
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Mid-Term Exam

In week 6, a mid-term exam will be conducted based on the movies that are covered until Week 5. This will be an in-class, timed exam. Guidelines about the Exam will be provided in the class.

Video Essay (subject to change)

In Week 14, a video essay is due. Detailed guidelines will be provided in class. In this video essay any one of the films screened in the class has to analyzed with reference to the movie's clips. Here some of these questions should be addressed: 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?

End-term Paper: Critical Analysis of a Film in Context Paper.

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, 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 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. It will be evaluated on originality and plausibility of ideas, clarity of thesis, extent and accuracy of research, 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.

Grade Definition

<i>COURSE LETTER GRADES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION</i>			
Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.

B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter .
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

4. Academic Integrity

Academic Honesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism. – As per university policy
 Participation/Attendance Policy – As per university regulations
 Use of phone/ texting/ laptop – As per university guidelines

5. Keyword Syllabus

Films, International Relations

6. Course Material

Included in Session Plan below.

7. Session Plan

Session (with Date)	General Topic	Readings	Approach/Pedagogy and Theme
Week 1	Introduction	How to Read a Film, Chapter 3	Critical Analysis of Text.
Week 2	All Quiet on the Western Front	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modris Eksteins. War, Memory, and Politics: The Fate of the Film All Quiet on the Western Front. <i>Central European History</i> Volume 13(1), March 1980, pp. 60-82. 2. Jerold Simmons, Film and International Politics: The Banning of All 	Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films World War I

		<p>Quiet on the Western Front in Germany and Austria, 1930-1931. <i>The Historian</i> Volume 52, Issue 1 November 1989, Pages 40–60.</p>	
Week 3	The Wind That Shakes the Barley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Donal Ó Drisceoil. Framing the Irish Revolution: Ken Loach’s <i>The Wind That Shakes the Barley</i>. <i>Radical History Review</i> Issue 104 (Spring 2009). 2. David Archibald, Ken Loach and Paul Laverty. Correcting Historical Lies: An Interview with Ken Loach and Paul Laverty. <i>Cinéaste</i> Vol. 32, No. 2 (SPRING 2007), pp. 26-30. 3. Martin J. Weiner. The Idea of “Colonial Legacy” and the Historiography of Empire. <i>The Journal of The Historical Society</i> XIII: 1 March 2013. 	<p>Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films</p> <p>Civil wars, social revolution, and anti-colonialism</p>
Week 4	The Great Dictator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. J. Michael Waller, “Ridicule as a weapon,” White Paper No. 7, Institute of World Politics, January 2006. 	<p>Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films</p> <p>Comedy of Global Politics</p>
Week 5	Saving Private Ryan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daniel Warner. Two Realist Readings of the Tragic in International Relations,” <i>International Relations</i>. Volume 	<p>Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films</p> <p>World War II</p>

		20, 2006 pp. 225-230.	
Week 6	Grave of the Fireflies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daisuke Akimoto. Peace education through the animated film “Grave of the Fireflies” Physical, psychological, and structural violence of war. <i>Ritsumeikan Journal of Asia Pacific Studies</i> Volume 33, September 2014 2. Wendy Goldberg. Transcending the Victim’s History: Takahata Isao’s Grave of the Fireflies. <i>Mechademia</i> Volume 4, 2009, pp. 39-52. 3. Masako N. Racel. Grave of the Fireflies- and Japan’s Memories of World War II. <i>Education About Asia</i> Volume 14, Number 3 Winter 2009 	<p>Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films</p> <p>Nationalism and Identity Politics, Post WWII</p>
Week 7	Gandhi	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sharp, Gene, <i>There Are Realistic Alternatives</i> (Boston: Albert Einstein Institution, 2003). 	<p>Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films</p> <p>Non-violence, Peace and Anti-Colonialism</p>
Week 8	Battle of Algiers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bruce Hoffmann “A Nasty Business”. <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> January 2002 http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/2002/1/hoffman 2. Kevin Beary. Battle of Algiers. <i>LewRockwell.com</i> 	<p>Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films</p> <p>Terrorism, Insurgency, Counter-insurgency</p>

		June 30, 2003, https://www.lewrockwell.com/2003/06/kevin-beary/battle-of-algiers/	
Week 9	Thirteen Days	1. Graham T Allison. 1969. Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis. <i>American Political Science Review</i> , 63(3): 689 – 718.	Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films Cuban Missile Crisis, Force and Politics; Deterrence and Decision Making
Week 10	Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb	1. Dan Lindley. What I Learned Since I Stopped Worrying and Studied the Movie: A Teaching Guide to Stanley Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove. <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i> . Volume 34, Issue 3. September 2001, pp. 663-667. 2. Lee Butler. The Risks of Nuclear Deterrence: From Superpowers to Rogue Leaders. <i>National Press Club</i> February 2, 1998. 3. Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy," <i>Foreign Affairs</i> March/April 2006.	Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films Nuclear Strategy, Cold War, Military Thinking
Week 11	Persepolis	1. Marian Quigley. Drawing on Experience: Animation as History in <i>Persepolis</i> . <i>Screen Education</i> Issue 51.	Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films Iranian Revolution, Feminism
Week 12	Goodbye Lenin	1. Hillman, R. (2006). Goodbye Lenin (2003): History in the	Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films End of Cold War

		subjunctive. <i>Rethinking History</i> , 10(2), 221-237.	
Week 14	Hotel Rwanda	1. Gareth Evans. The Responsibility to Protect: Rethinking Humanitarian Intervention,” Address to <i>The American Society of International Law</i> , 98th Annual Meeting, Panel on “Rethinking Collective Action”, Washington DC, 1 April 2004.	Critical Analysis of assigned Text and Films Post Cold – War Period and Humanitarian Intervention
Week 15	End term Exam		