

# PS140O: Projecting Power

*Prof. Wasow*

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## Course Description

How do stories influence our understanding of politics? What role do state actors play in shaping the cinematic narratives we see on screen? This course will introduce students to the field of political science by placing American and international films in conversation with scholarship on power, politics, and storytelling. Each week we will study a film, read related research, and analyze how one informs our understanding of the other.

The course will cover ethnic politics, broadly conceived with a particular focus on social movements, protests, civil disobedience and political violence. Related topics may include immigration, crime and the state, and urban politics. We will consider a range of questions including, how do stories influence our sense of self, community and nation? How do filmmaking techniques (e.g. cinematography, casting, sound design) influence which people and issues become salient? How do aesthetic and narrative choices affect attitudes about the social order and who is deserving of power? Through close readings of films, social science, and media studies scholarship, this course will enable students to study key political science concepts, the institution of media, and how stories make meaning. In particular, the following themes will be addressed:

- **Hierarchy and myth**

How do stories influence our attitudes about society and who is deserving of power? How do camera angles, lighting, scripts, editing and other aspects of film craft inform our sense of who is central to a narrative and who is peripheral? Social psychologists Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (1999) argue that all societies are organized, in part, through stories or myths that strengthen or weaken existing inequalities. We will look at how films present “hierarchy enhancing” or “hierarchy attenuating” myths that may play an important role in legitimizing or delegitimizing stratified social orders.

- **Culture as law**

How do cultural institutions shape human behavior? How do formal rules, such as laws, and informal rules, such as norms, structure and guide human action? Anthropologist and law professor Sally Falk Moore (2005), argued that culture “often [has] the force of law.” Similarly, lawyer and professor Thomas Stoddard (1997) argued that social progress requires both “rule shifts” and “culture shifts.” Along these lines, we will examine films and the larger film industry as cultural institutions that shape, reflect and reify society’s ideas, values, and conventions.

- **Seeing the state**

Though locations are typically just silent backgrounds, in many films the setting often serves as “an extra character” (Gladwell 2006). In a similar vein, for this course, we will consider the role that state actors, government policies and political institutions play as often unseen “characters” shaping the on-screen narrative. Further, we will consider how making such policies visible, might change our understanding of film’s themes, plot lines and character development as well as the policies themselves.

## Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined by class participation, a presentation, quizzes, a midterm and a final exam \*or\* paper. More detail about the requirements for the paper, including suggested page length (6-8 pages), and the guidelines for grading, will be discussed in class.

Please note, *some films will contain material that is offensive and/or disturbing*. You are encouraged to watch the films in full but it is also acceptable to close your eyes, cover your ears, walk out, etc. if you find material especially challenging. Exceptions to watching films in person either due to scheduling conflicts or content of the film may be accommodated on a case-by-case basis after discussion with the professor.

- **Participation** (20%) Each week we will screen a film, read related scholarship and discuss both in class and online. Though a significant part of cinema involves experiencing films communally on a large screen, due to Covid-19 this semester almost all screenings will be streamed. A few shorter films might be screened in class and, in addition, we may have a few *optional* in-person screenings.
- **Presentations** (20%): Based on the readings and films, you are expected to help lead class presentation and discussion as part of small team: Students will be assigned to a small team of approximately two-to-three people who will need to do things like: (1) summarize the readings in outline form; (2) put together a presentation that addresses both relevant factual information and themes of the week’s readings and film; (3) prepare and co-lead a discussion exercise for the class along with the instructor.

- **Quizzes (10%)**: To ensure students are engaging with the films, short multiple choice quizzes will be given in class (approximately every other week). These should be easy for anyone who has watched that week's film. The quiz grade will be determined by the best five results (e.g., two lowest grades will be dropped).
- **Midterm Exam (20%)**: A midterm exam will serve as a straightforward assessment of whether you have engaged with the films and read the texts. It will likely combine some simpler assessments like multiple choice questions with one short essay.
- **Final Paper or Final Exam (30%)**: For the final, you will have the option of either submitting an original paper or taking an exam. The final exam will be like the midterm (though longer) with a mix of assessment types (e.g., multiple choice, short essay). The paper should be 6 to 8 double-spaced pages. You are free to select whatever topic you prefer as long as it is related to the central themes of the course. We recommend discussing your idea with one of the instructors. We will go over templates for final papers in more detail toward the end of the semester.

## Grading

- Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (e.g., a check becomes a check-minus) for every 24 hours of lateness. If something comes up and you need an extension, it is your responsibility to communicate that fact promptly.

## Important Dates

- Quizzes
  - February, Friday 2/3
  - February, Friday 2/24
  - April, Friday 4/7
  - April, Friday 4/28
- Exams
  - Midterm, Thursday 3/16
  - Final Paper, Monday 5/8
  - Final Exam, Thursday 5/12

## Instructors

- Prof Wasow, Assistant Professor, Political Science. [owasow@berkeley.edu](mailto:owasow@berkeley.edu), Office: 726 Social Science Building. Office Hours Wednesday 4-6pm.

- GSI: Jane Angar, PhD Student, Political Science, email: [angarjanel@berkeley.edu](mailto:angarjanel@berkeley.edu), Office Hours: Mondays from 11 am to 12 pm.

## Class Schedule

- **Week 1, (1/17, 1/19)**, Introduction, the contested state  
What makes a state? Why study narrative?
  - Tuesday:
    - \* Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. On-line at: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/battle-algiers-0>
    - \* Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe (1998). “Narrative in Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, pp. 315–331
    - \* Skim: Dlugan, Andrew, “Ethos, Pathos, Logos: 3 Pillars of Public Speaking,” [http://virtualclassroomsshs.weebly.com/uploads/1/9/1/8/19183653/ethos\\_pathos\\_logos\\_3\\_pillars\\_of\\_public\\_speaking.pdf](http://virtualclassroomsshs.weebly.com/uploads/1/9/1/8/19183653/ethos_pathos_logos_3_pillars_of_public_speaking.pdf)
  - Thursday:
    - \* Read excerpts from *Imagined Communities*. Benedict Anderson (2006). *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
    - \* Read 196-202 (up to “Hypotheses”). Diana C. Mutz and Lilach Nir (2010). “Not Necessarily the News: Does Fictional Television Influence Real-World Policy Preferences?” *Mass Communication and Society* 13.2, pp. 196–217. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205430902813856>
  - Optional:
    - \* Film: *The Report* (2019), directed by Scott Z. Burns. URL: <https://www.amazon.com/Report-Adam-Driver/dp/B07YVKRJ26>
    - \* Video: *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2014). Directed by Jeremy Earp and Sut Jhally. Featuring Jack Shaheen. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/reel-bad-arabs-how-hollywood-vilifies-people>
- **Week 2, (1/24, 1/26)**, Ethnic democracy  
How do the few control the many?
  - Tuesday:
    - \* Film: *12 Years a Slave* (2013), directed by Steve McQueen.
    - \* Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (2001). *Social Dominance: An Inter-group Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. New York: Cambridge University Press

- Skim Chapter 1 with attention to Introduction, Section Overviews (Psychological Theories, Social-Psychological Theories, Social-Structural and Elite Theories, Evolutionary Theory) and Conclusion.
  - Read Chapter 2.
  - \* Skim Fabe (2014) *Glossary*. From Marilyn Fabe (2014). *Closely Watched Films: An Introduction to the Art of Narrative Film Technique*. Univ of California Press.
- Thursday:
- \* Introduction, pages 198-201. Sammy Smootha (1997). “Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype.” *Israel Studies* 2.2, pp. 198–241. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30246820>
  - \* Donn C. Worgs (2006). ““Beware of the Frustrated...”: The Fantasy and Reality of African American Violent Revolt.” *Journal of Black Studies* 37.1, pp. 20–45. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934705282378>
- Optional:
- \* *Ethnic Notions: African American Stereotypes and Prejudice* (1987), directed by Marlon Riggs. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/ethnic-notions-0>
  - \* Morgan, Edmund S., *American Slavery, American Freedom*.
  - \* Anthony Gierzynski and Julie Seger (2011). “Harry Potter and the Millennials: The Boy-Who-Lived and the Politics of a Muggle Generation.” URL: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1902219](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1902219)
- **Week 3, (1/31, 2/2)**, Groups, stories and the state  
Are humans inherently ‘groupish’? What role does storytelling play in shaping our sense of in-group or out-group membership?
- Tuesday:
- \* Film: *Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple* (2006), directed by Stanley Nelson at <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/node/617302/preview>
  - \* Chapters 1 and 2. Jonathan Haidt (2012). *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Religion and Politics*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Thursday:
- \* Chapters 3 and 9. Jonathan Haidt (2012). *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Religion and Politics*. New York: Pantheon Books.
  - \* Elizabeth A. Harris, (2019) “Lights. Camera. Prayer. A Mini-Hollywood Grows in Utah,” 10/13/2019, *New York Times*, <https://>

[www.nytimes.com/2019/10/13/movies/mormon-lds-films-tv.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/13/movies/mormon-lds-films-tv.html).  
Online at bcourses.

– Optional:

- \* Watch: Dimitris Xygalatas, Panagiotis Mitkidis, Ronald Fischer, Paul Reddish, Joshua Skewes, Armin W Geertz, Andreas Roepstorff, and Joseph Bulbulia (2013). “Extreme Rituals Promote Prosociality.” *Psychological Science* 24.8, pp. 1602–1605

· **Week 4, (2/7, 2/9)**, Ethnicity and political competition

– Tuesday:

- \* Film: *Street Fight* (2005), directed by Marshall Curry.
- \* Andra Gillespie (2010). *Whose Black Politics?: Cases in Post-racial Black Leadership*. Routledge. Chapter 3.

– Thursday:

- \* Eifert, Benn, Edward Miguel, and Daniel N. Posner (2010). “Political Competition and Ethnic Identification in Africa.” *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (2):492-510.

– Optional:

- \* Lauren Wright (2019). *Star Power: American Democracy in the Age of the Celebrity Candidate*. Routledge, Chapters 3 and 5.
- \* James Poniewozik (2019). *The Real Donald Trump Is a Character on TV*. *New York Times*, 9/6/19. Online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/06/opinion/sunday/trump-reality-tv.html>.
- \* Emily Nussbaum, “The TV that Created Donald Trump,” *The New Yorker*, July 24, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/07/31/the-tv-that-created-donald-trump>.

· **Week 5, (2/14, 2/16)**, Migration, Labor and Social Movements

How do migration, labor relations and social movements influence ethnic identity and politics?

– Tuesday:

- \* Film: *Dolores*, 2017. Directed by Peter Bratt.
- \* Chapters 1, 4 and 5. Marshall Ganz (2009). *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. Oxford University Press.

– Thursday:

- \* Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2. Cristina Beltrán (2010). *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation Of Identity*. Oxford University Press

· **Week 6, (2/21, 2/23)**, Immigration, Competition and Mobility

– Tuesday:

- \* Film: *Bisbee '17* (2018), directed by Robert Greene. <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/bisbee-17>
- \* Introduction, Chapter 1 James Q Whitman (2017). *Hitler's American model: The United States and the making of Nazi race law*. Princeton University Press.
- \* A.V. Krebs (1992). *Bitter Harvest*. *Washington Post*, Feb 2, 1992. Online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1992/02/02/bitter-harvest/c8389b23-884d-43bd-ad34-bf7b11077135/>

– Thursday:

- \* Eunji Kim (2023). “Entertaining Beliefs in Economic Mobility.” *American Journal of Political Science* 67.1, pp. 39–54.

– Optional:

- \* *Night and Fog* (1956), directed by Alain Resnais
- \* Film: *Harlan County USA* (1976), directed by Barbara Kopple. <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/en/berkeley/video/10947169>

· **Week 7, (2/28, 3/2)**, How do states make race (and ethnicity)?

What role does policing and the carceral state play in group identity and civic engagement?

– Tuesday:

- \* Film: *Free Angela and All Political Prisoners* (2012), directed by Shola Lynch.
- \* Chapters 1-7. Heather Ann Thompson (2016). *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy*. Pantheon.

– Thursday:

- \* Ariel White (2019). “Misdemeanor Disenfranchisement? The Demobilizing Effects of Brief Jail Spells on Potential Voters.” *American Political Science Review* 113.2, pp. 311–324. DOI: 10.1017/S000305541800093X
- \* Chapters 8-18. Heather Ann Thompson (2016). *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy*. Pantheon.

– Optional:

- \* Video: Democracy Now! “‘Terrorism is Part of Our History’: Angela Davis on '63 Church Bombing, Growing up in ‘Bombingham’” URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFrV178Qs\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFrV178Qs_Y)

- \* Film: Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler (2010). *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe*. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/william-kunstler-disturbing-universe-0>
  - \* Film: *Hunger* (2008), directed by Steve McQueen.
  - \* Film: *Thin Blue Line* (1988), directed by Errol Morris.
- **Week 8, (3/7, 3/9)**, How states make race (and ethnicity), continued  
What role does state repression play in group identity and political participation?
    - Tuesday:
      - \* Film: *The Work* (2017), directed by Gethin Aldous and Jairus McLeary. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/work-0>
      - \* Chapters 19-29 (pages 159–268). Heather Ann Thompson (2016). *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy*. Pantheon.
    - Thursday:
      - \* Vesla M Weaver and Amy E Lerman (2010). “Political Consequences of the Carceral State.” *American Political Science Review* 104.04, pp. 817–833
    - Optional:
      - \* *#FreeMeek* (2019), directed by Patrick Reardon and Isaac Solotaroff.
      - \* Film: *The Central Park Five* (2012), directed by Ken Burns.
      - \* Film: *Quest* (2017), directed by Jonathan Olshefski.
      - \* Jennifer L. Hochschild and Brenna M. Powell (2008). “Racial Reorganization and the United States Census 1850-1930: Mulattoes, Half-Breeds, Mixed Parentage, Hindoos, and the Mexican Race.” *Studies in American Political Development* 22.1, pp. 59–96
      - \* Marx, Anthony W. 1996. “Race-Making and the Nation-State.” *World Politics*, 48(2), 180-208.
  - **Week 9, (3/14, 3/16)**, Political violence and war  
What role does inter-group violence play in ethnic division?
    - Tuesday:
      - \* Film: *The Act of Killing* (2012), directed by Joshua Oppenheimer.
      - \* Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr (1988). “Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases Since 1945.” *International Studies Quarterly* 32.3, pp. 359–371. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600447>
      - \* Bass, Gary. 2006. “What really causes civil war?” *New York Times Magazine*, 8/13/06. Available online.



- Thursday:
  - \* Midterm Exam
- Optional:
  - \* Radio: Bob Mondello (2021). “How Movies Have Shaped The Perception Of 9/11.” <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/09/1002261083/how-movies-have-shaped-the-perception-of-9-11>. September 9, 2021.
  - \* Elizabeth Levy Paluck (2009). “Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: a field experiment in Rwanda.” *Journal of personality and social psychology* 96.3, p. 574
  - \* Chapter 13, “The Biology of War and Genocide.” Avi Tuschman (2013). *Our Political Nature: The Evolutionary Origins of What Divides Us*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
  - \* Radio: Ari Shapiro (2017), “Some Indonesians Fear Country’s Religious Intolerance Is Growing,” NPR, October 31, 2017. URL: <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/31/561246126/some-indonesians-fear-countrys-religious-intolerance-is-growing>
  - \* “Interrogating 24: Making Sense of US Counter-terrorism in the Global War on Terrorism.” URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07393140903105991>
- **Week 10, (3/21, 3/23)**, Ideology and Terror  
How do ideology and political violence influence ethnic identity and politics?
  - Tuesday:
    - \* Film: *Oklahoma City* (2009), directed by Barak Goodman.
    - \* Chapters 1-3. *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, by Kathleen Belew.
  - Thursday:
    - \* Chapters 7-9. *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, by Kathleen Belew.
- **Spring Recess (3/27–3/31)**
- **Week 11, (4/4, 4/6)**, Culture, law, incorporation  
How do culture and law interact to shape how marginalized groups gain or lose power and equality?
  - Tuesday:
    - \* Film: *Crip Camp* (2020), directors Nicole Newnham, James LeBrecht.
    - \* Susan Schweik (2013). “Lomax’s Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504.” : *Foundations of Disability Studies*. Springer, pp. 105–123

- Thursday:
  - \* William A Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld (1993). “Movements and Media as Interacting Systems.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528.1, pp. 114–125
- Optional:
  - \* Stoddard, Thomas B. 1997, “Bleeding heart: Reflections on using the law to make social change.” *New York University Law Review*, 72(5):967–991.
  - \* Lisa Schur, Todd Shields, Douglas Kruse, and Kay Schriener (2002). “Enabling democracy: disability and voter turnout.” *Political Research Quarterly* 55.1, pp. 167–190
  - \* Lecture: Hamilton Gregory, “McNamara’s Folly: The Use of Low-IQ Troops in the Vietnam War.” URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_J2VwFDV4-g&t=2188s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_J2VwFDV4-g&t=2188s)

· **Week 12, (4/11, 4/13)**, Protests, conflict and identity salience

- Tuesday:
  - \* Film: *How to Survive a Plague* (2012), directed by David France. <https://www.kanopy.com/en/berkeley/video/12157233>.
  - \* Maria J Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (2008). “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.” en. *International Security* 33.1, pp. 7–44. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/isec.2008.33.1.7>. URL: <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/isec.2008.33.1.7>
- Thursday:
  - \* Broockman, D. and J. Kalla. “Durably reducing transphobia: A field experiment on door-to-door canvassing,” *Science*, 352(6282):22–224, 2016.
- Optional:
  - \* Film: *Brother Outsider: The Life of Freedom Fighter Bayard Rustin* (2002), directed by Bennett Singer, Nancy Kates. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/brother-outsider>
  - \* Film: *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP: The Grassroots Movement to End the AIDS Crisis* (2012), directed by Jim Hubbard. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/united-anger-history-act-0>
  - \* Omar Wasow (2020). “Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting.” *American Political Science Review* 114.3, pp. 638–659

· **Week 13, (4/18, 4/20)**, Protest under authoritarianism

- Tuesday:
  - \* Film: *Hooligan Sparrow: A Champion for Girls' and Women's Rights in China* (2016), directed by Nanfu Wang. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/hooligan-sparrow-0>
  - \* Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E Roberts (2014). “Reverse-Engineering Censorship in China: Randomized Experimentation and Participant Observation.” *Science* 345.6199, pp. 1–10.
- Thursday:
  - \* Chapter 3. Danielle L McGuire (2010). *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance*. Alfred a. Knopf.
- **Week 14, (4/25, 4/27)**, Political geography and identity  
How does our sense of place shape our sense of self?
  - Tuesday:
    - \* Film: *LA '92* (2017), directed by Dan Lindsay and TJ Martin. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaotkHlHJwo>.
    - \* Claire Jean Kim (1999). “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans.” *Politics & Society* 27.1, pp. 105–138.
  - Thursday:
    - \* Final lecture
  - Optional:
    - \* Ryan Enos, Aaron Russell Kaufman, and Melissa L. Sands (2019). “Can Violent Protest Change Local Policy Support? Evidence from the Aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot.” *American Political Science Review* 113.4. URL: <https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/renos/files/enoskaufmansands.pdf>
    - \* Film: *5 Broken Cameras* (2011), directed by Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/red-pines>.