

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, quizzes, short response papers and a final exam.

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. Attendance and active participation are essential parts of the course. Attendance will be taken at every class. Participation in class, section and online on a regular basis is expected of all students.
- **Video Essay:** (20%): Each week, a small team of about four students will prepare a brief, approximately five to seven minute video essay that will generally be a “close reading” of scenes from the film, typically in conversation with one or more of the readings. Video essays may also focus on aspects of film craft, such the score, lighting, or cinematography. Video essays may also focus on the director or other key participants in the film production. The video essay should *not* be a review of the film or a summary of facts. Instead, aim to critically analyze a section of the film and, typically, assess it in the context of our readings. Bringing in outside readings or other relevant references is acceptable. The video essay can be shorter or longer than five minutes but check with an

instructor if a significantly different length. Submissions should include both a link to the video and the essay script that includes citations.

- **Quizzes** (25%): To ensure students are engaging with the films and readings, short multiple choice quizzes will be given in class (approximately every two weeks). These should be easy for anyone who has watched the films and done the reading. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.
- **Final Exam** (35%): The final exam will include a mix of assessment types (e.g., multiple choice, short essay).

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 (this may be revised)

- Quizzes
 - Week 3, Tues 2/4
 - Week 5, Tues 2/18
 - Week 7, Tues 3/4
 - Week 9, Tues 3/18
 - Week 11, Tues 4/8
 - Week 12, Tues 4/15
- Final
 - Final, TBD

Instructors

- Prof Wasow, Assistant Professor, Political Science. owasow@berkeley.edu, Office: 726 Social Science Building. Office Hours: Wednesday 3:30 to 5:30. Sign up at <https://calendly.com/owasow/office-hours>
- GSI: Andrew Zhao, PhD Student, Political Science, andrew.zhao@berkeley.edu, Office hours: 11–12 on Fridays. Students can sign up in advance at TBD. <https://calendly.com/andzhao/oh>

Technology in the classroom

- Except when taking attendance and during quizzes, there are no laptops, tablets, or cell phones permitted during lecture. Please be prepared for class by bringing a physical notebook or paper to take notes. While we recognize the convenience of using a laptop for note taking, a number of recent academic studies have found significant decreases in students' abilities to absorb information, think critically, and pay attention when using a laptop over written notes (even when the laptops are solely used for note taking). Similarly, the use of laptops in class can serve as a distraction to those sitting around you and, even, to those further away like the lecturer. Thank you in advance for your understanding and if there are any special accommodations or requests that allow you to have a laptop, please send me an email.
- If you are curious about academic research on the use of laptops versus notebooks in the classroom, here are some great sources:
 - Mueller, P. A., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2014). The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking. *Psychological Science*, 25, 1159–1168. <https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.gatech.edu/dist/c/359/files/2014/08/Advantages-of-Longhand-Over-Laptop-Note-Taking-copy.pdf>
 - Flanigan, A.E., Titsworth, S. The impact of digital distraction on lecture note taking and student learning. *Instr Sci* 48, 495–524 (2020). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11251-020-09517-2>

Class Schedule

- **Week 1, Tues 1/21**, Introduction, The Contested State
What makes a state? What makes a people? Why study narrative?
 - Tuesday:
 - * Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Online at: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/battle-algiers-0>
 - * Read pages 167 to 171, beginning with 'Beyond groupism.' Rogers Brubaker (2002). "Ethnicity without groups." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie*. Vol 43 (2). URL: <http://bev.berkeley.edu/Ethnic%20Religious%20Conflict/Ethnic%20and%20Religious%20Conflict/1%20Identity/Ethnicity%20without%20Groups%20Brubaker.pdf>
 - Section:
 - * Read Chap 4 excerpt from *Imagined Communities*. Benedict Anderson (2006). *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
 - Optional:

- * Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe (1998). “Narrative in Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, pp. 315–331
- * Stephen Cornell (2000). “That’s the Story of Our Life.” : *We are a people: Narrative and multiplicity in constructing ethnic identity*. Ed. by Paul Spickard and W. Jeffrey Burroughs. Temple University Press
- * Skim: Fabe (2014) *Glossary*. From Marilyn Fabe (2014). *Closely Watched Films: An Introduction to the Art of Narrative Film Technique*. Univ of California Press.
- * Kahina Amal Djiar (2009). “Symbolism and memory in architecture: Algerian anti-colonial resistance and the Algiers Casbah.” *The Journal of North African Studies* 14.2, pp. 185–202. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629380802343657>
- * 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, Tues 1/28**, Social Dominance and Education

How do the few control the many? How do states make citizens?

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *Sami Blood* (2016), directed by Amanda Kernell. <https://www.kanopy.com/en/berkeley/video/1952606>
- * Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (2001). *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. New York: Cambridge University Press
 - Chapter 1, read Introduction and Conclusion.
 - Read Chapter 2, Sidanius and Pratto (2001)

– Section:

- * Read pages 167 to 177, beginning with ‘Beyond groupism.’ Rogers Brubaker (2002). “Ethnicity without groups.” *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie*. Vol 43 (2). URL: <http://bev.berkeley.edu/Ethnic%20Religious%20Conflict/Ethnic%20and%20Religious%20Conflict/1%20Identity/Ethnicity%20without%20Groups%20Brubaker.pdf>

– Optional:

- * NPR: “How Taiwanese identity has evolved on the island in recent generations,” 1/7/24. <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/08/1223567757/how-taiwanese-identity-has-evolved-on-the-island-in-recent-generations>
- * Chapter 7 of *Social Dominance* section on Education.

- * Agustina S Paglayan (2021). “The Non-Democratic Roots of Mass Education: Evidence From 200 Years.” *American Political Science Review* 115.1, pp. 179–198

· **Week 3, Tues 2/4**, Varieties of Democracy

What kind of state is the United States?

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *12 Years a Slave* (2013), directed by Steve McQueen. Democracy: Israel as an Archetype.” *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2: 198–241. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30246820>
- * Pages 75–84, Desmond S. King and Rogers M. Smith (2005). “Racial Orders in American Political Development.” *American Political Science Review* 99.01, pp. 75–92
- * 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>

– Section:

- * 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>

– 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

· **Week 4, Tues 2/11**, How States Make Race

How do crime, the legal system and social movements influence ethnic identity and politics?

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *Free Chol Soo Lee*, 2017. Directed by Julie Ha and Eugene Yi.
- * Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2, Yen Le Espiritu (1992). *Asian American panethnicity: Bridging institutions and identities*. Temple University Press

– Section:

- * Alexander Kuo, Neil Malhotra, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo (2017). “Social Exclusion and Political Identity: The Case of Asian American Partisanship.” *The Journal of Politics* 79.1, pp. 17–32

– Optional:

- * Jae Yeon Kim, *The Three Tales of Chinatowns: Why Racism Is Not Enough to Create a Race-based Coalition among Marginalized Groups*
URL: <https://canada.berkeley.edu/three-tales-chinatown-why-racism-not-enough-create-race-based-coalition-among-marginalized-groups>
- * Jae Yeon Kim, URL: <https://www.scopeconditionspodcast.com/episodes/episode-34-comparing-asian-coalitions-across-three-chinatowns-with-jae-yeon-kim>

- **Week 5, Tues 2/18**, Ethnicity, Clientelism and Political Competition
Do elections influence in-group identification? Is ‘clientelism’ a useful model for the United States?

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *Street Fight* (2005), directed by Marshall Curry.
- * 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.

– Section:

- * Pages 267–273. Isabela Mares and Lauren Young (2016). “Buying, Expropriating, and Stealing Votes.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19.1, pp. 267–288. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-060514-120923>

– Optional:

- * 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>.
- * Andra Gillespie (2010). *Whose Black Politics?: Cases in Post-racial Black Leadership*. Routledge. Chapter 3.
- * John Street (2004). “Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation.” *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 6.4, pp. 435–452. URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2004.00149.x>

· **Week 6, Tues 2/25**, Crime, Corruption, Inequality and Race

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *Manda Bala* (2007), director Jason Kohn.
- * Read pages 169–177. Charles Tilly (1985). “War making and state making as organized crime.” : *Bringing the State Back In*. Ed. by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge University Press. Chap. 5, pp. 35–60

– Section:

- * Christopher Blattman, Benjamin Lessing, Santiago Tobon, and Gustavo Duncan (2022). “Gang rule: Understanding and Countering Criminal Governance.”

· **Week 7, Tues 3/4**, 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.
- * Introduction, James Q Whitman (2017). *Hitler’s American model: The United States and the making of Nazi race law*. Princeton University Press.
- * Bass, Gary. 2006. “What really causes civil war?” *New York Times Magazine*, 8/13/06. Available online.

– Section:

- * 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>

– Optional:

- * Daniel Duane, *New York Times*, “The Long, Strange Tale of California’s Surf Nazis,” https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/surf-racism.html?unlocked_article_code=1.Mk0.u10r.4BVKWRoLiUZX&smid=url-share, Sept. 28, 2019
- * 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>

· **Week 8, Tues 3/11**, Forging Identity

Should we think of racial and ethnic identity as more ‘fixed’ or ‘constructed’? What roles do law, discrimination, violence and other forces play in shaping identity?

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *Europa, Europa* (1990), directed by Agnieszka Holland.
- * Claire L. Adida and Amanda Lea Robinson (2023). “Why (Some) Immigrants Resist Assimilation: US Racism and the African Immigrant Experience.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 18.3, pp. 295–338.

– Section:

- * Wendy D. Roth (2016). “The multiple dimensions of race.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39.8, pp. 1310–1338

– Optional:

- * *Night and Fog* (1956), directed by Alain Resnais
- * Content Warning: includes repeated references to sexual violence. Zipperstein, Steven J., “Anatomy of a Pogrom,” <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/anatomy-of-a-pogrom>
- * Lauren Davenport (2020). “The Fluidity of Racial Classifications.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 23.1, pp. 221–240

· **Week 9, Tues 3/18**, Immigration, Competition and Mobility

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *Bisbee ’17* (2018), directed by Robert Greene. <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/bisbee-17>
- * Read pages 1303–1314 and Implications and Conclusions (pps. 1328–1329), Susan Olzak (1989). “Labor unrest, immigration, and ethnic conflict in urban America, 1880-1914.” *American Journal of Sociology* 94.6, pp. 1303–1333
- * 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:
 - * Film: *Harlan County USA* (1976), directed by Barbara Kopple. <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/en/berkeley/video/10947169>
- **Spring Recess**
- **Week 10, Tues 4/1, Indigeneity and Conflict**
 - Tuesday:
 - * Note: Film: *Sugarcane* (2024), directed by Emily Kassie and Julian Brave NoiseCat.
 - * Andrew Zhao (2025), “The Political Legacy of Indian Residential Schools.”
 - Section:
 - * Donald A Grinde (2004). “Taking the Indian out of the Indian: US policies of ethnocide through education.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 19.2, pp. 25–32
- **Week 11, Tues 4/8, 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>.
 - * 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
 - * Skim Omar Wasow (2020). “Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting.” *American Political Science Review* 114.3, pp. 638–659
 - Section:
 - * Broockman, D. and J. Kalla. “Durably reducing transphobia: A field experiment on door-to-door canvassing,” *Science*, 352(6282):22–224, 2016.
 - Optional:
 - * 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>
 - * Film: *BPM (Beats Per Minute)* (2017), directed by Robin Campillo. URL: <https://berkeley.kanopy.com/video/bpm-beats-minute>.

- * 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>
- * McClendon, Gwyneth H. "Social Esteem and Participation in Contentious Politics: a Field Experiment at an LGBT Pride Rally." *American Journal of Political Science* 58: 279–90.
URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/ajps.12076>

· **Week 12, Tues 4/15**, Culture, disability, 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.
- * Read pdf pages 1–16 (article pages 967–982), Stoddard, Thomas B. 1997, "Bleeding heart: Reflections on using the law to make social change." *New York University Law Review*, 72(5):967–991.

– Section:

- * Susan Schweik (2013). "Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504." : *Foundations of Disability Studies*. Springer, pp. 105–123

– Optional:

- * Lisa Schur, Todd Shields, Douglas Kruse, and Kay Schriener (2002). "Enabling democracy: disability and voter turnout." *Political Research Quarterly* 55.1, pp. 167–190

· **Week 13, Tues 4/22**, Land, War and Memory

How do identity and memory interact to shape our sense of self?

– Tuesday:

- * Film: *Tantura* (2020), directors Alon Schwarz. <https://www.kanopy.com/en/berkeley/video/14020563>
- * Read pages 1-25 (up to "State-Structured Society"). Young, Richard and Jeffrey Meiser, "Race and the dual state in the early American republic," in *Race and American Political Development*.

– Section:

- * TBD

– Optional:

* TBD

· **Week 14, Tues 4/29**, Criminal justice and protest

How do criminal justice systems and social movements shape our sense of citizenship?

– 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.

– Section:

* TBD

– 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>.