



## RPOL301 – Politics and Film

### Master Course Syllabus

#### **Course Overview (QM Standards 1.2)**

This course is cross-listed with the RBA Today and is administered via the WVROCKS program and therefore is presented in a condensed, online format. In other words, the course will last for 8 weeks (2 weeks per unit) and finish earlier than conventional courses. This also means that you should anticipate a heavier workload given the compressed format and plan accordingly.

#### **Course description**

This course examines politics through the medium of film as seen through fictional portrayals as well as the burgeoning documentary genre. For decades now, Hollywood has increasingly relied on Washington DC and the political scene for movie fodder. In this vein, it is important to clarify this relationship and to better understand how movies help us relate to ourselves as citizens, to politics, political actors, and key issues. We will touch on a number of relevant topics including, but not limited to: how do these films portray the need for government, how do films illustrate key political institutions, and how do the various governmental branches shape policymaking and politics. We will rely on both written materials and movies (broadly defined) over the past several decades to answer these questions.

#### **Course Goals and Objectives**

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Discuss why government is necessary.
- Identify various theorists and their explanations of government's necessity.
- Explain the role elections play in democratic societies.
- Identify the key election types.
- Describe the various functions of legislative, executive, and judicial institutions.
- Explain how legislative officials approach their representative responsibilities.
- Distinguish between presidential and parliamentary governments.
- Discuss whether or not it is the system or the person that leads to corruption in politics.
- Elaborate on the differences in responsibilities between executive and legislative branches.
- Discuss how the judiciary shapes politics, public policy, and governmental activity

#### **Pre-Requisites (QM Standard 1.6)**

No pre-requisites are required for this course.

#### **Minimum Technical Requirements and Online Resources (QM Standards 1.5 & 1.7)**

In addition to a web browser (preferable Firefox) that is Blackboard compatible, you will need the following software in order to complete the activities in this class:

1. Word processing package capable of reading and creating .doc, .docx or rich text formatted (rtf) documents.
2. *Adobe Acrobat Reader*: If you do not have *Adobe Acrobat Reader*, you can download it free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>
3. PDF Creator Software: If you are using a MAC or do not have software capable of saving a file as a .doc or .docx file and do not have the capability on your campus to print files to PDF, you can download a free version of *CutePDF* at <http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/writer.asp> This software installs a virtual printer on your PC that allows you to print files to the PDF format.
4. Virus Protection Software: This course requires you to download and upload files from your PC. Virus protection software protects your computer and my computer.

### **Online Resources**

This course makes use of many online resources. I have made every effort to make sure the links I have are up-to-date. However, due to the changing nature of the web, you may find that a resource is temporarily unavailable or has been removed. If this should happen, please send me an email and I will find an alternative resource or modify the assignment accordingly.

### **Instructor Information (QM Standards 1.8 & 5.3)**

Individual instructors complete this information.

### **Virtual Office Hours**

I am available in my virtual office by appointment only. Send me an email to set up an appointment.

### **Personal Commitment**

My personal commitments to you as a participant include:

I will reply to course mail messages within 24 hours;

I will read all discussion postings and will reply where appropriate within 3 days

I will acknowledge my receipt of every course mail message immediately upon reading it. If I am unable to respond to the request or concern at the time of initial reply, I will give you an estimated time for my next reply.

If I am going to be away from the course space for more than a day or two, I will send a message to you indicating the length of my absence.

I will regularly update information regarding due dates in the course announcements.

### **Optional/Required Course Materials (QM Standard 4.6)**

You will find your required textbook information in the course catalog at <http://ilearn-wvrocks.wvnet.edu>. All other required readings and videos are included in each of the modules.

### **Grading Policy (QM Standard 3.2)**

Each module consists of a series of assignments, discussions and/or written assignments, each having specific point values. For each assignment or discussion you will be given the rubric or grading criteria from which you will be evaluated.

**Course Grades:**

Assignment #1 (Introductory Assignment)	100 points
Assignment #2 (Think Piece #1)	100 points
Assignment #3 (Think Piece #2)	100 points
Assignment #4 (Think Piece #3)	100 points
Discussion Board Posts & Responses	8 units X 20 points per Unit = 160 points total
Film summaries	7 summaries X 10 points per film = 70 points total
<i>Total points</i>	<i>630 points</i>

\*Rounding Policy: grades are rounded at the .5 level, so an 89.5% would be rounded to an “A” while 89.4% would be a “B”.

**Grading scale:**

<i>Point Range</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>
567+	90+	A
504-566	80-89	B
441-503	70-79	C
378-440	60-69	D
377 & below	59 & below	F

**Module Objectives and Assessments (QM Standard 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.4, 3.5, 5.1)**

**Module 1**

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Navigate** the online classroom. [M1A1: Course Introduction Discussion]
- Identify three or more genres of film [M1A2: Film Assignment]
- Identify four or more elements of film experience [M1A2: Film Assignment]
- Provide examples of films that fit into a minimum of three different film genres [M1A2: Film Assignment]
- Provide examples three or more elements of the film experience in at least two films, and [M1A2: Film Assignment]
- Define political science through basic terminology. [M1A2: Film Assignment]

**Module 2**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- Define anarchy and democracy [M2A1: Anarchy Discussion]

- Discuss the purpose, function, and expectations of government [M2A1: Anarchy Discussion]
- Analyze how films improve our understanding of what anarchy looks like and why we need government. [M2A2: Film Summary]

### **Module 3**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- Define authoritarianism and non-democracy [M3A1: Authoritarianism Discussion]
- Discuss the purpose, function, and expectations of government in a dictatorship, totalitarianism, oligarchy, theocracy, and monarchy [M3A1: Authoritarianism Discussion, M3A2: Film Summary]
- Analyze how films improve our understanding of what authoritarianism looks like and why we need government. [M3A3: Think Piece #1]

### **Module 4**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- Student will list four or more of the primary powers given to Congress by the Constitution. [M4A1: Legislature Discussion]
- Student will list the two chambers of Congress. [M4A1: Legislature Discussion]
- Student will explain why popular representation is an important element in democratic system. [M4A1: Legislature Discussion]
- Student will discuss whether or not Congressional representation, as seen in the readings and required film, is preferable to anarchic and authoritarian systems. [M4A2: Mr. Smith Goes to Washington Film Summary]

### **Module 5**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- Student should be able to discuss the various roles of the executive (both the presidency and the bureaucracy) office. [M5A1: Presidential/Executive Discussion, M5A2: 13 Days Film Summary]
- Students should list the basic requirements to become US President. [M5A1: Presidential/Executive Discussion]
- Students should list three powers or responsibilities given to the President under Article II of the Constitution. [M5A1: Presidential/Executive Discussion]
- After reviewing the URL to the White House, students should discuss at least two branches of the bureaucracy that were (or are) involved with US security. [M5A1: Presidential/Executive Discussion]
- After completing this unit, the student should be able to explain the 'presidency' as an institution and describe other aspects of the bureaucracy or the executive branch. [M5A1: Presidential/Executive Discussion]
- Students should discuss how the president is held accountable by the general public or the electorate. [M5A1: Presidential/Executive Discussion]

### **Module 6**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- Discuss early forms of executive leadership (e.g., authoritarianism, oligarchy, etc.) [M6A1: Presidency Discussion]
- List the primary traits of executives and, particularly, presidents [M6A1: Presidency Discussion, M6A2: Nixon Film Summary]
- Describe what it means to study the president as an individual [M6A2: Nixon Film Summary]
- Compare and contrast studying the presidency as an institution (Module 5) versus as an individual (Module 6). [M6A3: Think Piece #2]

### **Module 7**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- Discuss the main findings in Barnum's article that examines public opinion and the judiciary [M7A1: Judiciary Discussion]
- Distinguish between the adversarial and inquisitorial models [M7A1: Judiciary Discussion, M7A3: Think Piece #3]
- Explain which judicial model is evident in the week's film [M7A2: To Kill a Mockingbird Film Summary]
- Discuss three key functions of the judiciary. [M7A1: Judiciary Discussion]

### **Module 8**

After you have complete the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- Explain the impact of the judiciary system on American politics [M8A1: Law and Civil Liabilities Discussion, M8A2: Twelve Angry Men Film Summary]
- Explain the three key functions of the judiciary system [M8A1: Law and Civil Liabilities Discussion]
- Discuss the elements expressed in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments to the US Constitution [M8A1: Law and Civil Liabilities Discussion]
- Explain why civil liberties are important for the functioning of democracy. [M8A1: Law and Civil Liabilities Discussion, M8A2: Twelve Angry Men Film Summary]