

GEOPOLITICS IN FILM

GEO 470: SPECIAL TOPICS

Tuesday, 6:30-9:15 p.m., Dr. Ian Muehlenhaus



Welcome to Geo 470: Geopolitics in Film

Geopolitics is the study of the *geography of power and politics*. It is one of the oldest subdisciplines in geography. Due to certain abuses of its tenets around World War II, however, until recently geopolitics was largely persona non grata in geography departments around the world. Today, however, it is coming back!

Film is a form of media (i.e., motion picture). All types of media communicate information and arguments. Film can be, and almost always is, used to proliferate dominant norms, beliefs, and values to the public. It can also be used to posit counter-discourses to contest those in power. Film is never neutral.

In this class, we will study geopolitical theory by watching many different films. You will critique the films' narratives using geopolitical theory, as well as contextualize the film's role within broader society at large. By combining both film and geopolitics, you will learn a bit about film theory and a lot about geopolitical discourse.

Course Learning Objectives

Surely a course on geopolitics where you watch movies will be fun, right? Absolutely! That being said, you will be assessed on six learning objectives this semester. Beyond watching movies, *doing well in this course will require critical thinking, reading, and writing.*

- 1) Acquire **core knowledge** of geopolitical theory.
- 2) Explain the geography of **political situations**.
- 3) Apply **geopolitical concepts** to examine and assess real world events.
- 4) Situate film within the context of **media communication** and history.
- 5) Evaluate the role of film in promoting particular **geopolitical codes**.
- 6) Critically evaluate film based using different **film theories**.



By the end of this course you should be able to critique films as social discourses; understand political events using geopolitical theory; and be able to critique current events from a geographic perspective.

Boring Info (i.e., the Fine Print)

Do not cheat! Cheaters will suffer severe consequences and depending on the egregiousness of the crime, may receive an F in the class. **Laptops are to be used for taking notes, not for entertainment.** Please don't come and expect to surf through class. Turn off your cell phone ringers, please! I reserve the right to ridicule any obnoxious Lady Gaga ringtones. **Read what I ask you to.** Not reading will hurt your grade in this course. **Attend class each week; in this class it is mandatory.** You must come to class to pass.

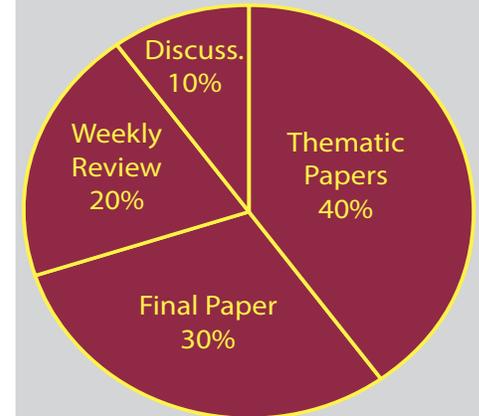
Participate regularly! Unfortunately, attendance does not equal participation. I know it can be very difficult to raise one's hand in class and speak in front of a bunch of people, but I want the class to be open and fun, not dreary and boring. So speak up and say what you are thinking. **Come ready to think!** Please don't come to class as a passive learner. Engage with the material and try to relate it to your own life. **I do not accept late assignments** unless you were abducted by a Canadian terrorist organization, in which case I will need a ransom note and a written analysis of the incident using the concepts you have learned in this class. If you would like to dispute a grade, see me as soon as possible; do not wait for several weeks. **If you have a documented disability**, please inform me. I will be happy to accommodate. Anything not listed here will be decided on the fly by me. My decisions are final and carry the full weight of law.

KEY COURSE INFO

WEEKLY CALENDAR

	Mon	Tues	Wednes	Thurs	Fri
09					
10					
11					
12	Teaching		Teaching		
13			Office Hours	Office Hours	
14	Office Hours				
15		Teaching		Teaching	
16					

FINAL GRADE BREAKDOWN



FINAL GRADE EVALUATION



WEBSITES & RESOURCES

Course Website: www.uwlax.edu/d2l
Course Hashtag: #uwlgeopol
Ian's Email: [imuehlenhaus@uwlax...](mailto:imuehlenhaus@uwlax.edu)
Textbook: Flint, C. Introduction to Geopolitics. 2nd Ed. Routledge.

About Dr. Muehlenhaus

Ian adores maps, but he also loves geopolitics! His publications on the topic include studying the role of hackers in the decline of US world power, NATO expansion in Central Europe, and the Hungarian diaspora. Ian is also a bona fide film junkie. Thus, this class should be bliss!



Contact Info: imuehlenhaus@uwlax.edu // www.ian.muehlenhaus.com // @imuehlenhaus // Office: 2020 Cowley Hall

Semester Schedule

Week	Lecture Topic	Film	Readings
1	Intro to Film Studies	Film Analysis Sampler	PDF Readings
2	Critical Media Theory	Film Analysis Sampler	PDF Readings
3	Classical and Critical Geopolitics	Dr. Strangelove	Flint, <i>Prologue + Chapter 1</i>
4	Agency and Geopolitical Codes	Fog of War	Flint, <i>Chapter 2</i>
5	Core & Periphery	District 9	Flint, <i>Chapter 3</i>
6	Structures and Political-Economies	City of God / Slumdog Millionaire	PDF Readings
7	Scale and Identity	Persepolis	PDF Readings
8	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break
9	Religious Extremism	Religulous / Jesus Camp	PDF Readings
10	Geopolitics of Nationalism	Starship Troopers / Hotel Rwanda	Flint, <i>Chapter 4</i>
11	AAG Conference	Movie Selection for Final Paper	AAG Conference
12	Territorial vs. Network Geopolitics	We Steal Secrets	Flint, <i>Chapter 5 & Chapter 6</i>
13	Geopolitics of Resistance	V for Vendetta	PDF Readings
14	Risk and Surveillance Society	Lives of Others	PDF Readings
15	Prime Modernity and Film	American Beauty	Flint, <i>Chapter 7</i> and PDF Reading

Final Paper Due

5pm, Thursday, May 8th

Active learning guide

The process for getting an "A" in this course is easy. However, it will require a lot of work and participation on your part. You might consider referring to this throughout the semester to make sure you are doing everything possible to do well in this class:

- Never miss class
- Take lots of notes (with pen and paper) both during the lectures and films. When they relate, jot down lecture concepts in your film notes.
- Stay focused during the lectures and the films
- Complete *all* of the readings
- Begin critiquing every film and news event you see using the knowledge you have gained in class

Useful Resources

MOVIE INFORMATION AND REVIEWS

International Movie Database: www.imdb.com

Wikipedia: www.wikipedia.org

MRQE: www.mrqe.com

MOVIE STREAMING OPTIONS (BEYOND TORRENTS)

Netflix: www.netflix.com

Amazon Prime: www.amazon.com/Prime-Instant-Video

Weekly Film Review

Each week you will be expected to write a one-to-two page synopsis of the key geopolitical aspects covered in each film, tying the film to your book chapters, classroom discussions, and lecture material. These papers will not be overly rigorous, but will demonstrate your ability to make connections and help you when you are writing your thematic and final papers.

Thematic Papers

You will write two thematic papers throughout the semester. Each paper will deal specifically with one film viewed in class. These papers will be four-to-five pages each (double-spaced). More information will be provided when the papers are assigned. The main gist of each paper will be to critically analyze the film using a geopolitical theory discussed in your book, discussion, or lecture.

Final Paper Project

Your final paper project will be a critical analysis of a single film or a genre of films. You will write an eight-to-ten page paper evaluating the narrative, geopolitical meaning, and social context of these films. More information about your final project will be handed out midway through the semester. You will need to receive my approval for your film choice(s), as I do not want to read 23 papers about *Elysium*!

Contact Info: imuehlenhaus@uwf.edu // @iMuehlenhaus // www.ian.muehlenhaus.com // Office: 2020 Cowley Hall