



Lakehead University
Democracy and the Law in Film
POLI-4150 WA (2021 Zoom)
M/W 10-11:30

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Office hours: M/W 11:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES

This course is a seminar. Its primary aim is not to convey specific information or material. Rather, it is designed to facilitate, develop and enhance students' ability to freely partake in the art of thoughtful and reasoned discussion about the most fundamental human questions, through the careful consideration of important and complex films.

With these objectives in mind, we will work together to appreciate how dramatic masterpieces contribute to our understanding of how the law is connected to the fundamental questions of human and political life. Of special interest is how morality, virtue, the rule of law, and human freedom are related to one another. We will also attempt to gain a deeper appreciation for how various political/legal orders are related to individual virtues and vices, and to the diverse and sometimes competing ways of life pursued by human beings. In sum, we seek to better understand the connection between law, justice, and the human person.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Course Materials:

Films and Readings

The Lakehead Library has a subscription to the *Criterion Collection* that is free to all students (see link on Course Website). A number of the assigned films can be found in this collection. Most of the other assigned films are available through streaming services such as Prime Video or Netflix. Depending on streaming options, films may need to be rented or purchased.

YouTube Playlist

The instructor has developed a YouTube playlist that has discussions and various interpretations of films and filmmakers. Students are expected to watch the videos associated with each Wednesday class (for example, watch the videos on *Jaws* and/or the director Steven Spielberg in time for our Wednesday discussion of that film). The playlist can be found at:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvwwlIteVYGGhXdR1nfrJviTjUh0LR-4d>

Podcast and Readings

Readings and podcast episodes associated with films are linked to in the Course Schedule (below).

Grading:

Quizzes: 2% X 7 = 14%

Paper and Presentation # 1 = 20% (10% paper + 10% presentation)

Paper and Presentation # 2 = 30 % (17.5% paper + 12.5% presentation)

Seminar Participation: 16%

Final Exam: 20%

Assignment Details:

Quizzes

There will be ten in-class camera-on quizzes, which will not be announced in advance. Each quiz will be based on the films assigned for the class times and are especially designed to develop and measure each student's: (a) preparation for class time; and (b) ability to comprehend assigned material independent from the instructor's guidance. Therefore, quizzes cannot be made up. However, to allow some leeway for unavoidable (including excused) absence or tardiness, the three lowest quiz scores will be dropped, with students' top seven scores counting toward their final grade. Quizzes will typically be given at the very beginning of class time.

Paper and Presentation Guidelines

Papers

Students will sign up for two films: one from Part #1 of the Class Schedule (below) and one from Part #2. Students will prepare a paper for each of these films. Sign-ups for Papers and Presentations #1 and #2 will be done live during the first class time, with an opportunity to make changes at the beginning of the second class time.

On each paper's due date, students will submit their paper through the course website (under Assignments), before class begins. Paper #1 should be 1500-1800 words. Paper #2 should be 1800-2000 words. Late papers will receive a penalty of 10% for the first day late, and a penalty of 0.5% for every day late thereafter.

Papers will be graded on the basis of (a) the success with which the paper articulates and defends a thesis about the assigned film that addresses and answers themes and questions of the course (especially as identified in the Course

Description); (b) the depth and accuracy of analysis; (c) the thoughtfulness and cogency of analysis; (d) writing quality (including organization, and mechanics). Students should follow the guidelines from the two videos on essays from the course's YouTube playlist. Secondary sources are not expected. Quotes from the assigned film do not need to be cited throughout the paper. Instead, students should simply include the film as a source in a Works Cited section at the end of the paper.

Presentations (Experiential Learning Component)

During class time, on their papers' due dates, students will present condensed versions of their papers, and then field questions from fellow students and the instructor. Presentation #1 should be 7 minutes long. Presentation #2 should be 9 minutes long. In their presentation, and during the question and answer period, presenters should be prepared to clearly present their argument and interpretation of the film, expand on their arguments in an organized and clear fashion, and defend their argument against any objections.

Participation

For class meetings all students are expected to:

1. Watch and read assigned material carefully
2. Come prepared to discuss the assigned materials.
3. Discuss the assigned materials with fellow students during class time
4. Stay focused on the class discussion (ignoring other apps, texts, etc.)
5. Avoid: (a) excessive absences and tardies; (b) private conversations; (c) being inattentive and/or appearing inattentive
6. Have their Zoom camera on (unless a break is indicated to instructor through chat or symbol, students with off cameras will be exited out of the class session.)

In addition to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the assigned materials, to achieve a high participation mark, students should participate with regularity, integrating their interpretation of the films into the discussion in a way that responds to the contribution of others and moves forward our consideration of the topic and the issues at hand.

Preparation for Class Time: The films assigned in this course involve complicated ideas and difficult arguments. Moreover, the presentation of these ideas and arguments sometimes takes forms that may not be familiar to students. Students should therefore be prepared to watch the assigned films several times (at least once before each class) in order to grasp their content.

Other Policies:

Class Recordings

No audio or video recording of the class is allowed without the permission of the instructor. Any permitted recording is strictly for private use and cannot be shared or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.

Accessibility and Accommodation

To arrange needed accommodations, students should contact Student Accessibility Services: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

Plagiarism involves presenting another's work, ideas, theories, or interpretation as one's own.

It is also academically dishonest to share one's own work in order that someone else may commit plagiarism,

To avoid plagiarism, writers should always:

1. Put quotation marks around any words from sources
2. Paraphrase material completely; changing or rearranging a few words or the tense of a verb is not paraphrasing.
3. Give accurate and complete citations for all material *including paraphrased material.*
4. Avoid borrowing entire arguments or approaches to a subject from another writer. Make it 'original' while staying faithful to the assignment parameters

CLASS SCHEDULE

Our schedule will be adjusted throughout the year in response to the fruitfulness and pace of class discussion. If the schedule is changed, please note that presentation dates will be adjusted accordingly so they remain lined up with the films we are discussing (due dates will never be adjusted to an earlier date).

Introduction to Course Themes

1/11 Course Outline: Introduction to Course Themes, Questions, Expectations, and Requirements
Sign-up for Papers and Presentations

1/13 Spielberg, Jaws (1975)

1/18 Jaws

Part One: Justice and the Legal/Political Order

1/20 Zinnemann, *High Noon* (1952)

1/25 *High Noon* (1952)

Paper and Presentation #1 (four students)

1/27 *High Noon*

Paper and Presentation #1 (two students)

2/1 Ford, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962)

Paper and Presentation #1 (four students)

2/3 *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*

Paper and Presentation #1 (two students).

American Cinema Foundation Movie Podcast (or ACF Movie Podcast), May 18, 2018

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/acfmovie-podcast/id1302805257?i=1000412686947>

OR

<https://soundcloud.com/user-77539699/acf35-the-man-who-shot-liberty-valance>

2/8 Eastwood, *Unforgiven* (1992)

Paper and Presentation #1 (four students)

2/10 *Unforgiven*

Paper and Presentation #1 (one student)

2/15 STUDY BREAK

2/17 STUDY BREAK

2/22 McDonagh, *In Bruges* (2008)

Paper and Presentation #1 (four students)

2/24 *In Bruges*

Paper and Presentation #1 (one student)

Part Two: The Human Person and the Legal/Political Order

3/1 Zinnemann, *A Man for all Seasons* (1966)

Paper and Presentation #2 (four students)

3/3 *A Man for all Seasons*

Paper and Presentation #2 (one student)

- 3/8 Hitchcock, *I Confess* (1953)
Paper and Presentation #2 (four students)
- 3/10 *I Confess*
Paper and Presentation #2 (one student)
- 3/15 Donnersmarck, *The Lives of Others* (2006)
Paper and Presentation #2 (four students)
- Carl Eric Scott, "Communist Moral Corruption and the Redemptive Power of Art in *The Lives of Others*," *Perspectives on Political Science*, 40:2, 78-86
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10457097.2011.560544>
- 3/17 *The Lives of Others*
Paper and Presentation #2 (one student)
- 3/22 Miller, *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015)
Paper and Presentation #2 (two students)
- 3/24 *Mad Max: Fury Road*
- 3/29 Malik, *A Hidden Life* (2019)
Paper and Presentation #2 (four students)
- 3/31 *A Hidden Life*
Paper and Presentation #2 (one student)
- 4/5 Easter Monday—No Class
- 4/7 Nolan, *Tenet* (2020)
- 4/12 *Tenet*

FINAL EXAM (date TBA)