**POLS 190: Media and Politics**

Benjamin Schrader

MWF: 9:30-10:20

Location: Saunders 244

Office: Saunders 617

Office Hours: MW 10:30-11:30

**Course Description**

This class will examine the relationships between media and politics through a number of different themes and mediums, such as: Film, blogs, YouTube, music, and more. The themes of the course include violence, resistance, war, class, racism, sexism, dystopian politics, religion, and the environment. The course will enable us “see” the ways in which various media practices inform our everyday lives and political life-worlds in new and more un/common ways. By actively engaging a variety of media sites, particularly film/documentaries, and by exploring them together through the key concepts outlined in the class, this course enables students to “move forth” from the course with a critically-oriented capacity for treating media’s political effects in contemporary U.S. and global politics at large.

**Course Standards**

Every student at UH has the ability to succeed in my course. The difference between success and failure in my class is a matter of attitude, effort, and initiative. There is a difference between passively listening to lectures and critically engaging with complex texts. There is a difference between regurgitating facts and actively applying new concepts, just as there is a difference between taking multiple-choice tests and writing sophisticated papers. In this sense, successful students will be those who embrace growth and hard work. They will overcome self-defeating behavior (i.e. skipping class, not reading, writing half-baked papers), make use of available resources, and turn freely to others for help.

The course will demand that its members read critically, participate actively, and write effectively. Most of all, it will ask students work with their fellow members to create an environment where ideas and arguments matter. On a more mundane note:

* Students are expected to attend every class, as attendance will be taken. I know unexpected things happen therefore each student is allotted 3 absences, no questions asked, except when slotted for a presentation. Beyond the 3 “free” absences, you will lose 5% of your final grade for every absence.
* Papers must be submitted via Laulima mail in a Word or pdf attachment before the start of class on the specified dates. Work submitted after that time will be penalized 10% per day.
* Student Blogs will be submitted on Laulima, by 11:59 PM every Saturday night. Late blogs will not be accepted for credit. Comments on other peoples blogs are to be completed by 5 PM the following Monday. No credit will be given beyond this time.
* Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner (i.e., respect your classmates, turn off cell phones, no outside work or reading, no sleeping in class, etc.). Those who fail to adhere to these basic guidelines will be removed from class.

**Reading Materials**

All texts will be made available on Laulima, including texts from Johan Galtung, David Campbell, Benedict Anderson, Walter Benjamin, and many more. You will need to have a well-marked hard copy or electronic copy in front of you to succeed in class.

**Grading Criteria**

This course is designed to enable students to become sophisticated political science thinkers, speakers, and writers. As such, course grades will be comprised of four elements: Attendance (25%); Blogs (25%); In-class participation (25%); Final Project (25%).

**Attendance:** As outlined above, Students are expected to attend every class, as attendance will be taken. I know unexpected things happen therefore each student is allotted 3 absences, no questions asked, except when slotted for a presentation. Beyond the 3 “free” absences, you will lose 5% of your final grade for every absence. Furthermore, because every week a movie or documentary will be shown in class, students are expected to stay awake through the entirety of the movie, if a student falls asleep in class they will be asked to leave and they will be counted as absent.

**Blogs:** The Blog grade will consist of two parts: 1) Blog entry; 2) Responding to other students Blogs. Starting on week 2, students are expected to write a Blog entry on Laulima by Saturday evening 11:59 PM. After this time students will not receive credit for the week. The Blog is to tie together the movie/documentary of the week, the in-class discussion, the weeks reading, and at least one current event from the news. This is to bring together theory and practice; it also helps to ensure that you are reading the required materials, while staying informed on current events. Each Blog is worth 10 points.

The Blog response to other students is to create a conversation and to learn from one another. As mentioned above, Blog responses are to be submitted by 5 PM the following Monday. After this time students will not receive credit for the week. Each student is expected to respond to 2 other students Blogs. The response should be more than basic, “I liked your Blog,” generic responses like this will receive no credit. Responses are to be thoughtful critiques that help expand upon the Original Blog’s content. Each response is worth 5 points, with 10 points maximum each week.

Each student is allotted 10 “Free” points, in which they can either skip on one Blog entry, or one week of Blog responses. There will be 13 weeks in which there will be Blog entries and responses required, making the project in all worth 250 points.

**Class Participation:** Only a portion of what you will gain from this course will be drawn from the instructor as the course has been designed to put students in charge of their learning (no spoon-feeding here). I expect that your classmates—via class discussions and group work—will play an instrumental role in your learning experience. To encourage this collaborative approach to learning, your participation grade is comprised of two categories: group discussants and daily contributions.

* Group Discussants
  + Readings: Beginning with Week 4, class discussions will be headed by teams of two or three students, depending on the size of the class. Each student will be required to do one presentation throughout the semester. Each team will be responsible for presenting a reconstruction of the reading, unpacking (or minimally identifying) challenging sections and concepts, and posing provoking questions. Creativity is encouraged provided the aforementioned criteria are met. To be clear, THESE SHOULD NOT BE PLOT SUMMARIES; please engage critically with the text and create ways of drawing the class into a vibrant discussion. I will model this in the first two weeks so that student will have an idea as to what I want their presentations to look like. Students will be graded for their presentations, but also those who are not presenting will be graded on their participation (see daily contributions section below). Each Presentation will be worth 100 Points.
  + During Mid-term week, students will each choose a piece of music, play it in class, and will give a presentation as to how the song is political. Furthermore, the student will research the claims made within the song in order to show the ways in which the song is true or false. This will be worth 100 Points.
* Daily Contributions: One of the shortcomings associated with student-led discussions is that non-presenters can be duped into thinking they have the day off. I will help you avoid this pitfall by working to call upon each student in every class. Therefore, it is in your best interest to not only read thoroughly, but also come prepared with insightful questions and comments. While I do not demand that students have THE correct answer, you will need to offer a response that evinces a sufficient level of forethought. Daily contributions are worth 50 Points of your final grade.

**Final Group Project:** Towards the end of the semester, students will organize into groups of 3 or 4 and will choose an event and begin to look at it through a number of different mediums. Each student will examine it from a different perspective from the themes used in the course. Each student will write a 4-5 page paper that discusses the perspective they are examining; this will be worth 100 points (Due May 6th, every day late will result in 10% off of your grade for this project). Groups will also give a presentation about the event, highlighting the different perspectives examined; this will be worth 100 points. Finally, students will fill out a group evaluation, which will be worth 50 points (Due May 6th, every day late will result in 10% off of your grade for this project); making the final project worth 250 points.

One example of a project includes the Iraq war, whereas one student can analyze a movie like *The Hurt Locker*, while another can examine a documentary like *Standard Operating Procedure*, while another can look at the ways in which religion is differentiated by the popular media during the war, etc… There are a number of different possibilities this is but one example.

**Extra Credit:** Students are allowed to do two extra credit project, that is worth up to 25 points. To do so, students will have to write a 4-5 page movie review, in which they abstract the way contemporary political issues are linked to the movie.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CONDUCT**

Students are required to follow the UH Manoa campus policies as listed in the course catalog or found here: <http://www.catalog.hawaii.edu/about-uh/campus-policies1.htm>. Students are required to be respectful of their classmates and refrain from disruptive behavior in the classroom and on campus. If you engage in cheating or plagiarism, you will receive an F (0.0) grade for the course and I will be forced to report you for academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to, submitting, to satisfy an academic requirement, any document that has been copied in whole or in part from another individual’s work without identifying that individual; neglecting to identify as a quotation a documented idea that has not been assimilated into the student’s language and style; paraphrasing a passage so closely that the reader is misled as to the source; submitting the same written or oral material in more than one course without obtaining authorization from the instructors involved. If you can find it online, so can I. If you have questions regarding what does and does not constitute plagiarism, please ask me.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities, including reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please let me know and contact the KOKUA Program in *Queen Lili‘uokalani Center for Student Services* or call them at (808)956-7511.

**Course Breakdown**

**Section 1: Mediums of Media**

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

Jan 7th- Introductions/Going over the Syllabi

Jan 9th- What is Media? What is Politics?

Jan 11th- Johan Galtung: *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*

Week 2: Art & Film

Jan 14th- Movie: *Picasso and Braque Go To the Movies*

Jan 16th- Reading: Walter Benjamin: *The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction*

Jan 18th- Continue talk about Walter Benjamin

(BLOG week)

Week 3: Internet

Jan 21st-**NO CLASS: MLK DAY**

Jan 23rd- Movie: *PressPausePlay*

Jan 25th-Continue film: *PressPausePlay*

(BLOG week)

Week 4: News

Jan 28th- Movie: *Page One: Inside the New York Times*

Jan 30th- Continue film: *Page One: Inside the New York Times*

Feb 1st- Reading: Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities* (Intro & Chapter 3)

(BLOG week)

**Section 2: Identity Politics**

Week 5: Class

Feb 4th- Movie: *Capitalism: A Love Story*

Feb 6th- Continue Film: *Capitalism: A Love Story*

Feb 8th- Reading: David Harvey: *The Enigma of Capital*

(BLOG week)

Week 6: Race

Feb 11th- Movie: *Black Skin, White Mask*

Feb 13th- Continue Film: *Black Skin, White Mask*

Feb 15th- Reading: Edward Said: *Orientalism* (Intro)

(BLOG week)

Week 7: Gender & Sexuality

Feb 18th- **NO CLASS: PRESIDENTS DAY**

Feb 20th- Movie: *Tough Guise*

Feb 22nd- Continue Film: *Tough Guise*

(BLOG week)

Week 8: Gender & Sexuality

Feb 25th- Movie: *Boys Don’t Cry*

Feb 27th- Continue Film: *Boys Don’t Cry*

Mar 1st- Reading: Jack Halberstam: *The Transgender Look*

(BLOG week)

Week 9: Religion

Mar 4th- Movie: *What’s the Matter with Kansas*

Mar 6th- Continue Film: *What’s the Matter with Kansas*

Mar 8th- Reading: William Connolly: *Capitalism and Christianity American Style*

(Intro: pgs 1-16)

(BLOG week)

Week 10: Environment

Mar 11th- Movie: *Climate Refugees*

Mar 13th- Continue Film: *Climate Refugees*

Mar 15th- Reading: Vandana Shiva: *Conflicts of Global Ecology: Environmental Activism in a Period of Global Reach*

(BLOG week)

Week 11: MUSIC MID-TERM WEEK

Mar 18th: Student Presentations

Mar 20th: Student Presentations

Mar 22nd: Movie: *Dreamworlds 3*

**MARCH 24th- 31st SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES**

**Section 3: Applications of Politics and Media**

Week 12: War

Apr 1st: Movie: *Full Metal Jacket*

Apr 3rd: Continue Film: *Full Metal Jacket*

Apr 5th: Reading: Arundhati Roy: *War is Peace*

(BLOG week)

Week 13: Democracy & The Imaginary

Apr 8th: Movie: *Manufacturing Consent*

Apr 10th: Continue Film: *Manufacturing Consent*

Apr 12th: Arjun Appadurai: *Here and Now*

(BLOG week)

Week 14: Dystopian Politics

Apr 15th: Movie: *V for Vendetta*

Apr 17th: Continue Film: *V for Vendetta*

Apr 19th: Reading: 1984

(BLOG week)

Week 15: Group work & Final Presentations

Apr 22nd: Group Discussions

Apr 24th: Group 1 Presentation

Apr 26th: Group 2 Presentation

Week 16: Final Presentations

Apr 29th: Group 3 Presentation

May 1st: Group 4 Presentation

May 6th: Final Group papers & Group Evaluations due