Course Description

Broadly this class focuses on how media is used to facilitate and sustain exploitative political and economic practices – e.g. how media helped facilitate imperialism – and, dialectically, how media has been used by individuals and groups to contest or speak back to power. Our focus traverses history but increasingly comes to focus on the present moment, which is characterized by rapid changes in media practices such as the relatively recent emergence of social media and complexly related transformations in political and economic practices and systems (e.g. the election of Donald Trump, the “Brexit” referendum, the rise of new forms of “popular” nationalism, and new practices of propaganda.) The course has developed over the period we have been teaching it together to focus more closely on these contemporary transformations as they happen in front of our eyes with bewildering pace. Our goals are to foster interesting explorations and conversations about media and our political and economic realities. Our (expansive) goals are to understand the role film and media plays in the orchestration of power, and how this has been contested and transformed. The film material and scholarship will also enable us to learn about political struggles mostly occluded in mainstream corporate media.

In the midst of these broad agendas, the class pursues some pragmatic objectives: it will expand knowledge of cinema history, including different histories of production, distribution, and exhibition. (We understand “cinema” here broadly to refer to the production and dissemination of moving pictures, and cinema to be a form of mass media that is inherently inter-medial.) It will explore different forms of this cinema (documentary, experimental, propagandistic, fictional) and lead us to examine the politics of form cross history. It will explore the writings of cultural activists and academics as they examine questions about media, power, and influence. It will produce knowledge about past political struggles as mediated through film (and push us to learn about the socio-political contexts in which the films were made and circulated). Plus it will necessarily prompt questions about how different state systems engage with media and how the production and regulation of media are political acts that shape the possible public sphere. In pursuing these lines of enquiry our work will necessarily be inter-disciplinary, and we will draw in particular (but not exclusively) from scholarship in political history and political science, public policy, film, media, and cultural studies, history, and broadly progressive traditions of historical, cultural, and media analysis. The class contributes to the larger curricular goals of the Film
Studies Major at the University of Pittsburgh in various ways: it explores the international history of cinema, in its political contexts in particular, draws on concepts across the Humanities and Social Science of use to the study of cinema, and it will encourage and foster the production of scholarly work that clearly and coherently addresses issues important to the study of cinema and the modern world.

Two final notes: 1) Many of the films we will watch will be of poor quality, on various levels, and some of them will be from video copies and some from low quality digital versions. There is a politics to the high-cost of film production, to what is archived, and what is made available, that merits reflection. But do bear in mind that many of the films will not necessarily be “entertaining” or “interesting” as aesthetic objects – but then the films are sometimes the least interesting part of these stories. 2) We would advise reading this book to provide a useful backdrop for some of our discussions: Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Extremes, 1914-1991 (London: Abacus, 1994). But for further exploration, see also (for example): Giovanni Arrighi, The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times (London: Verso, 1994), in particular 58-73 and 269-299; David Harvey, A Brief History of Neo-liberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Harvey, The New Imperialism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Perry Anderson, “Imperium,” New Left Review, 83 (Sept.-Oct. 2013). These are not “easy” things to read but they are richly informative. You will find it useful also to watch Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, currently available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzufDdQ6uKg. You will likely notice that this syllabus asks you to do a lot of reading, in subjects often far from “film.” Suck it up. The world is a complex place, and we have little hope of understanding it – let alone helping change it – if we do not read and view as widely as possible. The philosopher and historian Michel Foucault once said that history requires relentless erudition. We know of no other route to that than through curiosity and hard work. You are required to read all the “What you have to read” section before class; and explore the other materials when possible.

Requirements and Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for this class.

Field Components
CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City in which you are currently living. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

Assessment/Grading Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>75+</td>
<td>93+</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>66-69</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>63-65</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>56-59</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>53-55</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average /</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>50-52</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>46-49</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>60-66</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;40</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particular</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation, including presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Essay</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignments

Written assessment is in the form of one short essay focused on a topic specifically covered by the class, and one long essay, on a relevant subject of the student’s choice. Essay topics will be determined in tutorial sessions.

Students will be asked to undertake practical work in the form of an editing project focused on current political media practices.

Students will also be asked to watch material in advance and present on it in class.

It is vital that students come to class having read the set texts carefully and with ideas to contribute to the discussion. Screenings will be treated as classroom time: attendance is a course requirement. The attached syllabus should be understood as a provisional plan for what we will do in class.

Short Essay and Long Essay

Each student will complete one short essay of four pages, and one long essay of 10 pages. Papers should be analytical rather than descriptive and based on a clearly-stated thesis. Whilst the primary source will be student’s analysis of their chosen topic, written analysis must be supported by a minimum of five secondary sources, which should be cited in the text and in a final bibliography. Specific assignment details and questions will be provided in advance.

Class Presentation

Class presentations will focus on an assigned topic, and students are encouraged to use audio-visual materials and to be creative in approach. However, it is important to remember that the presentation itself should address the topic and should summarize the main issues or aspects of the topic as part of class learning. Presentations should aim to generate class discussion: students are encouraged to raise further questions that may have arisen out of their research for the class to consider and debate.

Editing Project

The editing project may take current screen media of any form as its object. Students will be expected to produce a short essay film that will analyze the way that their chosen media source both encodes and conveys political information.

ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Integrity

- Academic Integrity Policy

  Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh’s policy on academic integrity. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Everything you write in your exams and papers must be your own work, unless you quote someone else’s work and provide full citations. This includes material you may have found online. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below from the Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score or F for the paper or exam will be imposed.

  The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The educational process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perforce involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve – without penalty-reasoned exception by students to the data or views offered by faculty. Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom, February 1974

Helpful Resources and Tips on how to avoid Plagiarism

1. You quote it, you note it! An interactive tutorial guide on how to avoid plagiarism and how to cite sources:
   - http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/
   - http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/citation.html
If you scroll down, you’ll find links to all major styles and formats for citing and referencing.

2. How to cite and write a bibliography: Ask your instructor to tell you which citation format to use (the most common are APA, MLA and Chicago.) The most important thing is to use one citation and referencing format consistently and accurately throughout your paper.

**Behaviour during Examinations**
During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.

**Required Readings:**
Weekly readings will be made available in Xerox or electronic format when possible; some texts will need to be borrowed from a library or purchased in advance (most can be found online relatively cheaply). It is imperative that students do the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned, as they will be required to discuss and evaluate these ideas in the sessions. Readings will be supplemented with screenings which are equally if not more critical to the course objectives. Any screenings set in advance must be watched before the class.

**SUNY-Oswego On-line Library Resources**
Students are advised to review assignments and readings. If you do not have access to sufficient additional resources from your home institution to complete the coursework for this class, you may request access to the on-line library resources of SUNY-Oswego: [http://libraryguides.oswego.edu/c.php?g=500670](http://libraryguides.oswego.edu/c.php?g=500670). To access this resource, you must request access during the first week of the program.

**Weekly Course Schedule**

**Session 1: Introduction**

**Screening:** Zero Dark Thirty (Columbia, USA, 2012.)

**What you have to read:**

- *Zero Dark Thirty* was subject (briefly) of a Senate investigation into the ways the CIA shared classified information with the filmmakers, resulting in a letter criticizing the film sent to the CEO of Sony (the corporate owners of Columbia) by Diane Feinstein, the Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Carl Levin, the Chair of the Senate Armed Service Committee, and John McCain, Ranking Member Senate Armed Service Committee, available here: [http://documents.latimes.com/feinstein-mccain-levin-statement-zero-dark-thirty/#sthash.z5EUlaWL.dpuf](http://documents.latimes.com/feinstein-mccain-levin-statement-zero-dark-thirty/#sthash.z5EUlaWL.dpuf)
What you might also read and watch:

- Judicial Watch obtained almost 300 pages of documents detailing how the Department of Defense and CIA worked together with scriptwriter Mark Boal and director Kathryn Bigelow as they made the movie. The details of that are available here: http://www.scribd.com/doc/94447731/Judical-Watch-Bin-Laden-Movie-CIA

What you have to read:

- Harvey, The New Imperialism, 137-182.

What you might also read and watch if interested:

- David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-38.

Session 2 Imperium and the Shock of Capital


What you have to read:


What you might also read:

- Apologies of an Economic Hitman (dir. Stelios Louloglou, Greece/USA, 2008), currently available here (but perhaps elsewhere in better copies): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUDTRfbs-oM (the book the film is based on is available here: https://archive.org/details/ConfessionsOfAnEconomicHitman_257); Stealing Africa (dir. Christoffer Guldbradsen, 2013), currently available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNYemuiA0fU

What you have to read:

What you might also read:

Session 5 People Have Had Quite Enough of Experts
Screening: HyperNormalisation (Adam Curtis, BBC, 2016).

What You Have to Read:
- If you have not already read this essay, read it: Perry Anderson, ‘Imperium,’ New Left Review, 83 (Sept.-Oct. 2013), 5-111.

Session 6 People Get Ready; or, How to Be Radical
Screening: selections from the Mosireen collective (Egypt) and Abounaddara collective (Syria); plus other materials to be collectively decided, though likely to include moving image materials from the Black Lives Matter movement, and more.

What You Have to Read and Watch
- Abounaddara collective, “The Right to the Image,” extract available here: https://slought.org/resources/the_right_to_the_image

What You Might Read and Watch If Interested

Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

Attendance: CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unless otherwise expressed by your instructor, the first time a student has an unexcused absence for a class, his/her grade will not be impacted.
Use of electronic equipment in class: All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are NOT allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

Use of Electronic Translators: In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

Late Submission: Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after
feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behaviour during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.