

**GOV 371U 38125**  
**Politics and Film-WB**  
Spring 2022

Instructor: Shannon Bow O'Brien, PhD  
Meeting Time: Monday, Wednesday 10-11:30am  
Location: online  
Assignments: All papers, assignments and tests will be online to avoid cross-contamination.  
Student Hours: I only have scheduled(booked) 15-minute appointments (not drop in) this semester to help with social distancing.  
Online: I will have scheduled (booked) 15-minute appointments on Tuesday/Thursday from 10:30-noon.

**Book ALL Meetings here:** <https://calendly.com/professorobrien/>

Note: I will add more times if deemed necessary and they will be announced on canvas.

Email: shannonbow@utexas.edu  
*Be sure to include something about the Film class in the subject line. I am teaching American Government, Film and Politics and Urban Politics this semester so an email saying 'question about class' needs to be more specific since I will have about 250 students between the three classes.*

### **Course Description**

Motion pictures were first invented in the 1890s. Thus, the entirety of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was captured on film. Many of us watch movies simply as a way to entertain ourselves and pass time. However, motion pictures are much more than just entertainment. Political life has been captured on film almost since the beginning of motion pictures. William McKinley was the first president captured on film in 1897. Since then, the medium has expanded from just documentary evidence into also passing on values and ideas in a visual format. This class explores the relationship between politics and film. Films function as a time machine for culture. Film from a period can inform us about the culture and priorities of a time. Film looking back onto a period (a film made in 2021 looking at 1980) tells us about how current culture views the past. Films looking into the future tell us about how some may view the direction a culture is changing.

### **Required Readings**

There is ONE Book:

*Projecting Politics*, 2015, 2nd edition, Elizabeth Haas, Terry Christensen, Peter J. Haas, Publisher: Taylor and Francis

**ISBN-10:0765635976 ISBN-13:978-0765635976**

You will also be expected to locate films for the class via Netflix, Amazon Prime, Youtube, Google Play, Itunes, library, etc. The Fine Arts Library has an extensive collection of films. Kanopy streaming via Fine arts library works to stream are free.

I may assign other articles online related to the class. If I do distribute or assign a reading, consider it fair game for a test. I will announce it in class and also post a note Canvas giving the title and source of the reading.

### **Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA)**

The materials for this class are available through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program, a new initiative between UT Austin, The University Co-op and textbook publishers to significantly reduce the cost of digital course materials for students.

You can access your required materials through the “My Textbooks” tab in Canvas. You are automatically opted into the program but can easily opt-out (and back in) via Canvas through the 12<sup>th</sup> class day. If you remain opted-in at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> class day you will receive a bill through your “[What I Owe](#)” page and have until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> class day to pay and retain access. If you do not pay by the 18<sup>th</sup> class day, you will lose access to the materials after the 20<sup>th</sup> class day and your charge will be removed. More information about the LTA program is available at [universitycoop.com/longhorn-textbook-access](#).”

## **Technical Requirements for Politics and Film**

All students are required to have access to a **laptop** or **desktop computer**, running either Windows or macOS operating systems. Tablets, smartphones, and Microsoft Surface devices are not supported. Your computer should meet the following requirements:

- Modern and up-to-date operating system (macOS or Windows)
- Browser: Chrome (highly recommended), Safari or Firefox. If using Safari or Firefox, be prepared to [download Chrome](#) and use it.
- Internet connection speed: 5 Mbps download speed. [Check your speed here](#).
- Functional webcam and microphone
- Zoom installed and configured

Confirm that your computer is able to stream video by visiting <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php>

For the best experience:

- Close all unnecessary browser windows and tabs and programs
  - Streaming music (Pandora, Spotify, etc.)
  - Social media sites
  - YouTube or other video sites
  - Online/Offline Gaming
- Check your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware ([UT recommendations](#))
- Clear the browser's cache before class ([here's how](#).)

## **Technical Support**

If you experience a technical problem, click on the "***Online Course Tech Support***" item in the left-side navigation bar. The Online Course Tech Support chatbot, called "LAITS Bot", will assist with technical problems and can escalate your question to a human if it cannot readily answer your question.

## **Grades:**

*Grades will based on the following:*

<b>Test 1</b>	<b>Released on March 7</b>	<b>30%</b>
	<b>Due Date: March 9 by 11:59pm</b>	
<b>Test 2</b>	<b>Released on May 4</b>	<b>30%</b>
	<b>Due Date: May 6 by 11:59pm</b>	
<b>Paper Assignments</b>	<b>(2 papers, 7% each due: February 2 &amp; February 28)</b>	<b>14%</b>
	<b>Must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59pm</b>	

<b>Term Paper Prospectus</b>	<b>February 23</b> <b>Must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59 pm</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Term Paper</b>	<b>April 11</b> <b>Must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59pm</b>	<b>25%</b>

**All Tests, Paper Assignments and Quizzes will be ONLINE in Canvas this semester.**

If attendance/participation/interest becomes extremely low, or if I think pop quizzes are in order, I may begin to take attendance or give quizzes. If I do exercise this option, I will announce it in class and on Canvas as well as with the re-weighted grade scale. However, attendance is NOT required for this course.

I also reserve the right to make any changes to the grading system I see fit during the semester. This may include, but is not limited to additional paper assignments (if I determine they are needed), or moving the test dates to accommodate unforeseen circumstances (think hurricanes and natural disasters, not doctor's appointments).

If you become ill and are unable to participate in the course, you need to contact the professor and/or the Dean of Students office about your situation.

**Grade Scale:**

The University uses a plus/minus system. Here is the scale I will use for the class for grades. I do NOT round up or negotiate grades. You will receive your earned grade based on performance.

A: 93-100	C: 73-76.99
A-: 90-92.99	C-: 70-72.99
B+: 87-89.99	D+: 67-69.99
B: 83-86.99	D: 63-66.99
B-: 80-82.99	D-: 60-62.99
C+: 77-79.99	F: Less than 60

The test days are fixed and announced the first day of class. They will not be changed or negotiated. If these test days do not fit your personal schedule, do **NOT** enroll in this course. There are too many students in this course to work with you to make these dates fit vacations, trips, or other such matters. While I will abide by university approved absences and work with students, make up exams are only given for approved absences.

All assignments must be turned online. They will be uploaded to Canvas (or another system if necessary). There will be due dates and due times for each assignment. You will be assessed a late penalty if you do not turn it in on time. If there is an emergency or other extenuating circumstance, the professor and TA have the authority to waive it with documentation or reasonableness.

Assignments are always accepted early if you choose to turn it in. If papers are late without an acceptable excuse, they lose 1/4<sup>th</sup> a grade for every day they are late (and yes, weekends, non-class days, and breaks count!... email the paper to stop penalties! Day one late: top grade is 4.75 or 95%, Day two: 4.5 or 90%, etc.). While I do not make it a point to accept late papers without penalty, I will listen to any pressing reasons you have for not having it ready to turn in on the assigned day. All papers are due in class. I stop late penalties at 50%. All papers turned in past 10 days late start at 50% regardless of when they are turned in for the rest of the semester.

Late assignments are only accepted until April 25, 2022. No late assignments will be accepted after that day.

All assignment grades can only be questioned or challenged for 2 weeks after the date they are made available to the class on Canvas. If the grade is not questioned or challenged in this time frame, it stands as recorded. This is designed to encourage students to retrieve their papers and also to not question grades in May that were handed back in March because they decide they do not like their final class grade.

***Two exams will be given.*** They will cover material presented in lectures and in the readings from the text, as well as any other material assigned/presented in class (including videos and lecturers). The exams are **NOT** comprehensive. However, most of concepts in this course build upon each other so you will be expected to retain information from earlier portions of the class. If you ask me in class if the final is comprehensive, I reserve the right to raise my eyebrow at you and/or roll my eyes.

Your exams will be ONLINE this semester. I will announce the format prior to the exam. They will likely be at least partial essay format. All work should be your own with no collaboration (on either exams and papers).

The short paper assignments will be 2-3 pages each, double spaced, Times Roman (or equivalent) 12 point font, with 1 inch margins. (Honestly, I don't care exactly what font you use, but I expect it to be at a minimum 2 full pages (not one and a half, not one and three quarters). Also, if you turn in a Courier 14 font paper with 1.5 margins with triple spacing, don't be surprised to see it heavily penalized. I stop reading after 5 pages on the short paper assignments. You will be given a list of movies (think 2-3) for each short paper assignment. You will select one of them to watch and write the paper. It is not designed to be comprehensive. They will be selected for specific reasons. The films selected will all (or partially... meaning at least on one format) be available on Netflix, Amazon Prime, Youtube (for some of the early ones), the library, or another similar service. You will be expected to watch the film and write a short paper discussing aspects of the film which will be included in the question prompt. The idea behind having a short list of films in each section is to facilitate class discussion while respecting not all students have the same tastes in movies.

**Longer Term paper assignment.** You will have three options for the final paper assignment. You will have to submit a short paper prospectus on **February 23, 2022**. It will be a short form where you indicate if you are doing option 1, 2, or 3 for the final paper with a short description. All final papers must be pre-approved by Dr. O'Brien or your TA in order to turn them in for grading. Please note, this prospectus is going to be approximately one paragraph where you say what you are planning on doing. The idea here is to force you to give the assignment a modicum of thought beforehand and not start it the night before it is due.

**Option 1:** You will need to watch at a minimum 2-3 separate films from 2-3 different decades. (for example, 1940s, 1970s, 1990s, 2010s... I don't care which decades you choose) You will select one thematic topic and write a 7-8 page paper (Times Roman, 12 font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, cited where appropriate) about how that topic has changed or been treated over time via the lens of these movies. For example, war, elections, women, homosexuality, racial or ethnic minorities, media, politicians, satire, other countries, or another topic you are interested in (this is why we need to approve the papers btw). For example, you could write a paper selecting films about war from the 1940s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and today. The depiction of soldiers and war from 1920s to today is extremely different. Films like Apocalypse Now, Deer Hunter, Platoon, and Full Metal Jacket (and others all largely about Vietnam) changed how we see war as a culture. Your prospectus will include your topic and at least 2 films you are considering. Your professor will be happy to work with you to help develop a list of potential films if needed.

**Option 2:** This option is a modified version of Option 1 (based upon student feedback). You will need to select a thematic topic and watch several films within that theme to develop how it is portrayed on film. This paper would be a 7-8 page paper (Times Roman, 12 font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, cited when appropriate). In a previous semester, a student asked for special permission to look at how race was portrayed in Disney films. Another wanted to explore how white actors historically played minority characters and how that impacted

messages. The big difference is it is not bound by decade, but you may need to watch more than 2-3 films and you have to discuss how the theme is addressed while option 1 asks you to examine change over time. Mostly, I'm trying to give students a bit more leeway with this option if they have a specific topic they are interested in but most of the films came out in a specific period of time.

Option 3: You will have to select a book that has been made into a movie. Let me be clear here. Book to movie adaptation, NOT book adaptation of a movie. You will read the book in its entirety. You will then watch the movie made from the book. If the book has had multiple movies or remakes, you will need to watch them all (within reason... if you select A Christmas Carol for example, you and I jointly will decide how many and which movie adaptions you will need to watch... it has about 24 film adaptations...). Most books have only 1 film adaptation... I'm thinking 1-3 films are reasonable here for remakes. You will then write a 7-8 page paper (Times Roman, 12 font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, cited where appropriate) comparing the book to the movie or in some cases, movies. You will discuss what the original author was writing about thematically in the book and how it translated in the movie. What was lost, what was included, how the message was either retranslated or reinterpreted in a completely different context and also why do you think it happened and how did it change the work? Another example would be H.G. Wells's book War of the Worlds(1897)... how was it interpreted in the 1953 version and again in 2005? Another would be All the President's Men (1974) made into the 1976 movie of the same name? If you choose the Great Gatsby, you have to watch the 1974 and 2013 versions at a minimum (there have been 4 adaptations on films).

NOTE: if you want to do something that has a multi-film adaption (Harry Potter, Hunger Games, Lord of the Rings, etc.), if you can make a case for a specific thematic issue across multiple books and films, we will consider it on your prospectus. For example, if you wanted to look at race, governmental structure, child welfare, social justice, etc. in Harry Potter and made a strong case, we would consider it.

Movie adaptations are often notorious for changing/compressing/streamlining material to fit into a short two hour setting. Keep in mind this is a Film and POLITICS class so if you want to do this on Harry Potter, Hunger Games or Lord of the Rings, you will be focusing upon how thematically the adaptations changed the context of the movies (for example, the Potter movies don't have much on squibs, s.p.e.w, or Voldemort's family and what does that mean for social justice or inequality versus the book's treatment of it?) I don't want to see lists of what was in the movie and what taken out like a laundry list. That's buzzfeed's job, not mine.

One final comment: There needs to be political/social content here to examine/explore. There are many fields of political science with faculty who study race relations, elections, psychology, sociology, history, presidents, developing countries and the list goes on and on. While Clifford, the Big Red Dog has indeed been made into a movie, I seriously doubt I'm going to sign off on that as a project.

Your prospectus will include the book you select and the film(s) you are planning to watch. Your professor and/or TA will be happy to help guide you in this project.

**Class Recordings:** Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

### Academic Dishonesty/Cheating

You will be expected to adhere to the UT Honor Code: *The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.*

Though obvious, cheating is not allowed on any assignments. Plagiarism is prohibited. It refers to copying any work from any source (electronic, paper, etc.) without noting/citing its original source. It is important to note

that using ideas (and not just quotes) from other sources without proper citation also counts as plagiarism. For additional information on these items, see the University General Information Catalog at:

<https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/> and <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>. Any assignments turned in will be assumed to be the final version of the assignment and any inappropriate material will be considered intentional and not accidental.

Any class materials may not be uploaded onto 3<sup>rd</sup> party websites without the professor's explicit permission. If you do so, it will be considered a violation of the honor code. The professor has the right (even after the class is completed) to submit these violations to Judicial Affairs for adjudication.

**Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited:** No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>

## **Canvas**

I will attempt to use Canvas as a way to provide information to the class. In the past, I have regularly made RTF versions of my Powerpoint slides available prior to class. However, if I encounter problems utilizing Canvas, I may shift my materials (including test guides and other things) to another website devoted to making material available to the class. I will announce any changes of this sort to the class.

**I will try to post on Canvas review sheets prior to each exam.** These sheets should not be considered the definitive study guide for the test. Rather, they are a list of major concepts and ideas you should definitely know for the exam.

## **Additional information**

Do NOT phone or email me about a grade (i.e. "What did I get?"). We will post grades electronically as soon as practical.

**If you need extra time on a test and/or require special physical accommodations, please contact me in confidence as soon as possible at the beginning of the course.** Every effort will be made to accommodate your needs within the guidelines set forth by the University.

**Accessible, Inclusive, and Compliant Statement:** The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information:<http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered

with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

### **Course Instructor Survey/Evaluation:**

An evaluation of the course and instructor will be conducted at the end of the semester using the approved UT Course/Instructor evaluation forms.

### **Undergraduate Student Drop Policy**

From the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> class day, an undergraduate student can drop a course via the web and receive a refund, if eligible. From the 13<sup>th</sup> through the university's academic drop deadline, a student may Q drop a course with approval from the Dean, and departmental advisor.

**Religious Holy Days:** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable period after the absence. A reasonable accommodation does not include substantial modification to academic standards, or adjustments of requirements essential to any program of instruction. Students and instructors who have questions or concerns about academic accommodations for religious observance or religious beliefs may contact the Office for Inclusion and Equity. The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

**Restricting Information:** If you want your personal information restricted in the directory, the information is located here: <https://registrar.utexas.edu/students/records/restrictmyinfo>

### **Make-up exams/Excused Absences**

Absences on exam days may be excused if the student provides verifiable documentation of accident, illness, or university or legal obligation. Unexcused absences from examinations will result in a score of zero for that exam.

I **STRONGLY** encourage you not to miss an exam. The makeup may be different from the exam given to the rest of the class and the exam format is at my discretion.

**One more thing:** If a true emergency occurs that you know you can document, take care of yourself first and we will sort it out later. You do not need to call me from the ER or jail to let us know you won't be there. In those situations, you have bigger problems than this class at that moment in time.

### **Class Calendar**

**Please note:** *The readings for this day are the readings I expect you to have done PRIOR to that day. They are the readings we will discuss in class that day, not the readings assigned to read on that day and discussed on the following day. The schedule may change depending on the class and how quickly or slowly we get through material.*

January 19 Wednesday	Syllabus/Introduction, Chapter 1 start if time	
January 24 Monday	Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: A Theory of Film and Politics\\ Chapter 2 The Making of Message: Film Production and Techniques, and Political Messages	
January 26 Wednesday	Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: A Theory of Film and Politics\\ Chapter 2 The Making of Message: Film Production and Techniques, and Political Messages	

<b>January 31 Monday</b>	Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: A Theory of Film and Politics\\ Chapter 2 The Making of Message: Film Production and Techniques, and Political Messages Chapter 3 (if time)	
<b>February 2 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 3 Causes and Special Effects: The Political Environment of Film	<b>Short Paper 1 due</b>
<b>February 7 Monday</b>	Chapter 3 Causes and Special Effects: The Political Environment of Film	
<b>February 9 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 3 Causes and Special Effects: The Political Environment of Film/Chapter 4	
<b>February 14 Monday</b>	Chapter 4 Politics in the Silent Movies	
<b>February 16 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 4 Politics in the Silent Movies/Chapter 5: The 1930s	
<b>February 21 Monday</b>	Chapter 5: The 1930s	
<b>February 23 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 5: The 1930s/Chapter 6 The 1940s	<b>Term Paper prospectus due</b>
<b>February 28 Monday</b>	Chapter 6: The 1940s	<b>Short Paper 2 due</b>
<b>March 2 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 6: The 1940s	
<b>March 7 Monday</b>	Chapter 7: The 1950s <b>Test 1 released (Chapters 1,2,3,4,5,6)</b>	<b>Test 1 released</b>
<b>March 9 Wednesday</b>	<b>Test 1 Due</b> Chapter 7: The 1950s	<b>Test 1 due</b>
<b>March 13 Monday</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>	
<b>March 15 Wednesday</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>	
<b>March 20 Monday</b>	Chapter 8: The 1960s	
<b>March 23 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 8: The 1960s	
<b>March 28 Monday</b>	Chapter 9 The 1970s	
<b>March 30 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 9 The 1970s	
<b>April 4 Monday</b>	Chapter 10 The 1980s	
<b>April 6 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 10 The 1980s	
<b>April 11 Monday</b>	Chapter 11 The 1990s	<b>Term Paper Due</b>
<b>April 13 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 11 The 1990s	
<b>April 18 Monday</b>	Chapter 12: 2000-now	

<b>April 20 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 12: 2000-now	
<b>April 25 Monday</b>	Chapter 13: True Lies? The Rise of Political Documentaries Chapter 16 White House Down? Politics in Disaster	<b>All late assignments due (no exceptions)</b>
<b>April 27 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 13: True Lies? The Rise of Political Documentaries Chapter 16 White House Down? Politics in Disaster	
<b>May 2 Monday</b>	Chapter 13: True Lies? The Rise of Political Documentaries Chapter 16 White House Down? Politics in Disaster	
<b>May 4 Wednesday</b>	<b>Test 2(Chapters 7,8,9,10,11,12,13,16) released</b>	<b>Test 2 released</b>
<b>May 6 Friday</b>	<b>Test 2 Due (not a class day)</b>	<b>Test 2 due</b>