

FYSM 1611
Politics on Netflix
Wednesdays, 8:35-11:25 am
Location: check Carleton Central

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Office Hours: I will send around an office-hours sign-up sheet each week with specific days/times; some in-person and others on Zoom. If those times don't work for you, email me and we can find another time.

Course Description: In this course, we will examine various offerings on Netflix through a political lens. We will ask three main questions: how are political topics dealt with in these works of art and entertainment? What kinds of political messages seep through even when the subject of the work isn't obviously political? How do we ascertain whether a work of film/TV is serving to subvert structures of power and inequality or to maintain them? We are using politics broadly here: we are trying to think about power dynamics and social structures related to issues like race, class, gender, social identities and sexuality, as well as policy issues such as the opioid crisis, immigration and asylum, space exploration, settler colonialism, counter-terrorism and conflict.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Learn how to watch films and TV (streaming) shows critically
2. Understand how politics operates at different levels throughout society
3. Sharpen your critical reading skills
4. Improve your seminar-speaking skills

Evaluation:

In-Class Participation: 20%
Quiz One (class 3; Jan. 21): 15%
Quiz Two (class 6; Feb. 11): 15%
Quiz Three (class 9; March 11): 15%
Quiz Four (class 12; April 1): 15%
Hand-written Journal: 20%

Hand-Written Journal Log: *All semester*, you will keep a hand-written journal detailing your reflections of the shows, films, and readings and the themes covered in the course. You can write in paragraphs or point form or diagrams. You can use black and white, or colours, shapes, doodles; scrapbook cut-outs; glitter; moshi tape; whatever helps you convey to yourself (and to me) that you've engaged deeply and critically with the course material throughout the semester. The final page must be a self-assessment page, whereby you provide yourself with 1 point for every entry that was well done (reflecting excellent engagement with the material), 0.5 points for an entry that is mediocre, and 0 points for no entry. Add it up, divide by 11 (There won't be any material to view/read for week one), and indicate the mark.

To submit: take a photo of each page of your journal, plus your self-assessment page, and paste it all into a Word document which you will upload to Brightspace.

Note: if you are away from home one day, and still want to take notes and don't have your journal with you, use any piece of paper and simply tape, staple or paste it in to your journal when you get home. Lost journals won't be accepted as an excuse. You should take a photo of each page as you go, so as to ensure a backup.

Due: (Do it all semester, and submit it on April 1)

Late Penalties for written submissions: one percentage point deduction per day late.

In-Class Participation: This will come in two parts. The first component is what I call "front row." Each of you must choose one class session in which to sit in the proverbial front row. During this session, you (individually) will have **15 minutes** to share some thoughts from your journal for that week, and to lead the class in discussion about the week's material. I will hand out a sign-up sheet for you to pick which class you will do this in. I will grade this as complete/incomplete. The second component is self-graded. Towards the end of every class session, I'll hand out an index card where you'll record your engagement before handing it back to me: give yourself a 1 for active oral participation; a 0.5 for half-baked participation, and a 0 if you're totally checked out. (For the self-graded component, if you're away, I'll mark a 0; if you need health, family-emergency or religious accommodations let me know and I'll arrange an alternative).

Quiz One: covering material from class 1-3 inclusive
Date:

Quiz Two: covering material from class 4-6 inclusive

Quiz Three: covering material from class 7-9 inclusive

Quiz Four: covering material from class 10-12 inclusive

Purchasing Requirements:

You will need a **Netflix subscription** (\$7.99/month) for the duration of the semester, and a **blank journal** (my personal favourite is dotted Moleskin [\$26.00], but any brand, including a dollar-store notebook, will do), and a **pen** you enjoy writing with (my personal favourite is Staedtler pigment liner). Extra coloured pens and scrapbooking materials are optional.

AI Policy:

This course is intended to be completed without the use of AI. The in-class tests will be paper-based and thus AI tools will be unavailable. The journal will be hand-written / hand-drawn and also must be completed without AI: this is an opportunity for you to reflect on the course material by yourself.

If there's a use for AI that you believe can enhance your learning in this course, please discuss it with me.

CLASS SCHEDULE

All course readings are available through the Carleton library ARES system (also known as course reserves), and are embedded into the Brightspace modules each week.

Class 1 (Jan. 7): Intro

“How to Analyze a Film: The Complete Beginner’s Guide” (short video in class)

Class 2 (Jan. 14): Social Media / Social Capital

Series: *Black Mirror* (S3 e1: “Nosedive”)

Documentary Film: *The Social Dilemma*

Academic Article: Michèle Lamont, "From 'having' to 'being': self-worth and the current crisis of American society," *The British Journal of Sociology* 70, 3 (June 2019): 660-707/

Op-Ed: Sheila Marikar, You Won't Find Your Self-Worth on Instagram," *The New York Times* (2 November 2019)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/02/opinion/sunday/instagram-social-media.html>

Class 3 (Jan. 21): Race & Society Gender, Class, Ethnicity

Film: *Dirty Dancing*

Academic Article: Dunagan, Colleen, and Roxane L. Fenton, 'Dirty Dancing: Dance, Class, and Race in the Pursuit of Womanhood', in Melissa Blaneo Borelli (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen* (2014; online edition, Oxford Academic, 2 Oct. 2014).

Academic Article: Levitsky, Holli. "The Holocaust, the Catskills, and the Creative Power of Loss." *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore*, vol. 39, no. 1-2, spring-summer 2013.

Op-Ed: Lopa Banerjee, "Looking to the Sun: Op-ed: Looking to the sun—Pushing forward for gender equality," UNWomen.org (13 March 2024)
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/op-ed/2024/03/op-ed-looking-to-the-sun-pushing-forward-for-gender-equality>

Editorial: "Abortion is the Last Refuge of the Liberals," *The Globe and Mail* (21 November 2024)
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/article-abortion-is-the-last-refuge-of-the-liberals/>

Show: *Dear White People* (S1, e1 and e2).

Show: *Love is Blind* (S1, e1)

Academic Article: Rosenboom, Helen, and Ralina L Joseph. "'What Makes You Think I'm African American?': Identity Performance, Code Switching and the Strong Black Woman on Love Is Blind."

Critical studies in media communication 41.3 (2024): 276–281.

Interactive Essay: Aisha Harris, "A Brief Guide to 21st-Century Blackface," *The New York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/25/opinion/blackface-tv-movies-race.html>

Op-Ed: Daniel A. Yudkin and Jay Van Bavel, "The Roots of Implicit Bias," *The New York Times* (9 December 2016)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/opinion/sunday/the-roots-of-implicit-bias.html>

Class 4 (Jan. 28): Stand-Up Comedy and Social Change

WATCH THEM IN THIS ORDER:

Special: Dave Chappelle, *The Closer*

Special: Hannah Gadsby, *Nanette*

Academic Article: Caty Borum Chattoo, “A Funny Matter: Toward a Framework for Understanding the Function of Comedy in Social Change,” *Humor* 32, 3 (2019): 499-523.

Op-Ed: Roxane Gay, “Dave Chappelle’s Brittle Ego,” *The New York Times* (13 October 2021) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/13/opinion/dave-chappelle-netflix-trans.html>

Op-Ed: Marci L. Bowers, “What Decades of Providing Trans Health Care Have Taught Me,” *New York Times* (1 April 2023)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/01/opinion/trans-healthcare-law.html>

(Longer op-ed): Lydia Polgreen, “Born This Way? Born Which Way?” *The New York Times* (1 December 2023)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/01/opinion/politics/life-without-regret.html>

Class 5 (Feb. 4): NO CLASS

(Professor away at a research workshop)

***Instead, start watching *Wild, Wild Country* (it’s six one-hour episodes, so watch some this week, and some next).

Class 6 (Feb. 11): Cults & Local Power

6-part documentary series: Wild, Wild Country (6 episodes, spread over this week and last).

Short Academic Article: “Hugh B. Urban on Netflix’s Osho Documentary Wild, Wild Country,” *Religious Studies Review* 47, 4 (2021-12): 455-457.

Magazine Article: Ronit Feinglass Plank, “Beyond the Spectacle of Wild, Wild Country,” *The Atlantic* (25 April 2018)

Blog Post: Steven Taylor, “Why Some People Hand Their Lives Over to Cults,” *Psychology Today* (1 May 2023)
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/out-of-the-darkness/202305/why-some-people-hand-their-lives-over-to-cults>

******Feb. 18 NO CLASS (Reading Week)******

Class 7 (Feb. 25): Power & Corruption

Show: *House of Cards*, S1, e1 and e2

Op-Ed: Joshua Braver, “What ‘House of Cards,’ Gets Wrong,” *Politico* (20 September 2013) <https://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/what-house-of-cards-gets-wrong-opinion-097094>

Op-Ed: Emily St. James, “Donald Trump, House of Cards, and the American Antihero,” *Vox* (26 January 2021) <https://www.vox.com/culture/22233503/antihero-donald-trump-house-of-cards>

Op-Ed: In the Age of Trump, America Should Take a Page from Machiavelli, *The Hill* (27 November 2024) <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/5005123-in-the-age-of-trump-america-should-take-a-page-from-machiavelli/>

Class 8 (March 4): The Opioid Crisis

Series: *Painkiller* (episodes 1 and 2).

Academic Article: Keith Humphreys et al., “Responding to the opioid crisis in North America and beyond: recommendations of the Stanford–*Lancet* Commission,” *The Lancet* [Volume 399, Issue 10324](#), 5–11 February 2022 Read the “Executive Summary” section (up until, and including, the sentence, “The gains of such polices will be long lasting if they curtail the power of health-care systems to cause addiction and maximise their ability to treat it.”)

Op-Ed: Lincoln Anthony Blades, “The Opioid Crisis Only Became a Crisis When It Affected White People,” *Teen Vogue* (30 October 2017)

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/the-opioid-crisis-only-became-a-crisis-when-it-affected-white-people>

Class 9 (March 11): The American Dream

Film: *Annie* (the 1982 version)

Essay: Anna Leszkiewicz, “Annie (1982): A Bizarre, Patriotic Portrait of Capitalist White America,” *The New Statesman* (22 August 2017; updated 4 April 2022) <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2017/08/annie-1982-bizarre-patriotic-portrait-capitalist-white-america>

Op-Ed: David Leonhardt, “Reviving the American Dream,” *The New York Times* (24 October 2023) <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/24/briefing/the-american-dream.html>

Class 10 (March 18): Investigative Journalism & Uncovering Power

Film: *Cover-Up*

Academic Article: Elizabethada A. Wright, “The Specter of War: Memorialization at the Site of the 1968 My Lai Massacre,” *CEA Critic* 86, 3 (2024): 250-255.

Magazine Article: Seymour Hersh, “Torture at Abu Ghraib,” *The New Yorker* 80, 11 (2004-05).

Class 11 (March 25): The Politics of Israel-Palestine

Show: *Fauda* (S1, e1)

Show: *Mo* (S1, e1)

Web explainer: Nicole Narea, “A Timeline of Israel and Palestine’s Complicated History,” *Vox* (19 October 2023) <https://www.vox.com/world-politics/23921529/israel-palestine-timeline-gaza-hamas-war-conflict>

Article: Tom Brocket, “From ‘In-Betweenness’ to ‘Positioned Belongings’: Second Generation Palestinian-Americans Negotiate the Tensions of Assimilation and Transnationalism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43, 16 (December 2020): 135-154.

Op-Ed: Sayed Kashua, “Fauda Creators Think Arabs are Stupid,” *Haaretz* (12 January 2018) <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2018-01-12/ty-article/.premium/fauda-creators-think-arabs-are-stupid/0000017f-e48f-d9aa-afff-fdd180a0000>

Op-Ed: Saeed Teebi, “To be Palestinian is to Constantly Have Basic Facts of Your Existence Denied,” *The Globe and Mail* (17 October 2023).

Class 12 (April 1): Teen Sexuality

Show: *Sex Education* (S1, e1, e2, e3)

Academic Article: Debra Dudek, Giselle Woodley, and Lelia Green, “Own Your Narrative: Teenagers as Producers and Consumers of Porn in Netflix’s *Sex Education*,” *Information, Communication & Society* 25, 4 (2022): 502-515.

Op-Ed: Andrea Barrica, “How to Make Sex More Dangerous,” *The New York Times* (11 March 2019) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/11/opinion/sex-ed-children-danger.html>

Op-Ed: Matt Richtel, “It’s Time to Talk About Pornography, Scholars Say,” *The New York Times* (12 December 2024) <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/12/science/pornography-adolescents-teenagers.html>

Political Science Course Outline Appendix

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

<https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing:
<https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services:
<https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre:
<https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC):
<https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS):
<https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities:
<https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region:
(613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550,
<https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991,
<http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389,
<https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>

ood2Talk: 1-866-925-5454,
<https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic:
<https://walkincounselling.com>

Academic consideration for medical or other extenuating circumstances: Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University. Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive

learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the

intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)

For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#). Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with

the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview

with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.

**RESOURCES (613-520-2600,
phone ext.)**

Department of Political Science (2777)

B640 Loeb

Registrar's Office (3500)

300 Tory

Centre for Student Academic Success

(3822) 4th floor Library

Academic Advising Centre (7850)

302 Tory

Paul Menton Centre (6608)

501 Nideyinàn

Career Services (6611)

401 Tory