

COURSE DETAIL

POLITICS THROUGH CINEMA AND LITERATURE: REPRESENTING AND NARRATING POWER

Country

France

Host Institution

Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po)

Program(s)

Sciences Po Paris

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

Political Science Film & Media Studies

UCEAP Course Number

122

UCEAP Course Suffix

C

UCEAP Official Title

POLITICS THROUGH CINEMA AND LITERATURE: REPRESENTING AND NARRATING POWER

UCEAP Transcript Title

POLITICS/CINEMA&LIT

UCEAP Quarter Units

4.50

UCEAP Semester Units

3.00

Course Description

This interdisciplinary seminar explores how literature and film grapple with the complexities of political power, authority, resistance, and representation. Drawing from a range of historical and geopolitical contexts, the course examines how writers and filmmakers narrate, aestheticize, and challenge systems of domination, the dynamics of oppression and liberation, and the moral ambiguities inherent in political engagement. Through lectures, screenings of film excerpts, class discussions, and written assignments, students acquire critical tools to analyze how cultural productions both reflect and shape political realities. The course features close readings of literary texts and critical analyses of landmark films, including *CITIZEN KANE* and *CASABLANCA*. It examines the theatrical staging of power in Shakespeare's *HENRY V* and its contrasting cinematic interpretations by Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh; the construction of the Napoleonic and Lincolnian myths, from Abel Gance to Steven Spielberg; and the expression of American democratic idealism in Frank Capra's cinema. Further topics include the representation of atrocity and memory in works addressing the Holocaust, McCarthyism, the nuclear era, Watergate, the Vietnam War. Emphasis is placed on the aesthetics of authoritarianism and resistance, as well as on portrayals of the presidential figure in American and French cinema. The course interrogates the subdued complicity of the butler (Anthony Hopkins) in James Ivory's *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY* and explore the differences and similarities between Joseph Conrad's *HEART OF DARKNESS* and its adaptation by Francis Ford Coppola in *APOCALYPSE NOW*. Throughout the semester, the course critically engages with propaganda, the narrative construction of ideology, the tension between personal conscience and collective responsibility, and the ways in which historical memory is shaped—or suppressed—by literary and cinematic forms.

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

DSPO 25A79

Host Institution Course Title

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Host Institution Course Details

<https://syllabus.sciencespo.fr/fr/?202510/286215>

Host Institution Campus**Host Institution Faculty****Host Institution Degree**

Seminar

Host Institution Department

Political Science

Course Last Reviewed

2025-2026

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