**Course Description:**


This course reviews the intersection between the genre of science fiction and the academic study of politics. The course explores the political themes of various films, television shows, and novels. Topics covered include the exercise of power, the role of authority in society, institutional structures and arrangements, and conceptualizations of democracy. In addition, the course examines issues such as gender roles, racial politics, and civil right and liberties as examined by science fiction.

**General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes:**

This course is associated with the major and minor in political science. The course is not part of the general education core curriculum. No general education objectives or outcomes are addressed in this course.

**Program Learning Objectives:**

The following program learning outcomes for the political science major are addressed in this course:

- The student will demonstrate oral communication skills.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

- To explain how authors and creators of science fiction explore politics
- To discuss concepts of power and authority found in political science as expressed in science fiction
- To explain how science fiction addresses issues like economic development and political development
- To evaluate concepts of international relations like balance of power, deterrence, terrorism and war
- To examine concepts of citizenship and civil liberties explored in science fiction

**Textbooks:**

Two books are required for this course:

Atwood, Margaret. 1985. *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart)

The professor reserves the right to add other readings at any time during the semester.

**Grades:**

Grades for the course will be drawn from the following sources:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaction Papers</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Course grades will be converted to letter grades using a standard 90%--80%--70% scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90.0% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80.0% to 89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70.0% to 79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60.0% to 69.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.9% and below</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Course grades are for the entire class are not curved or adjusted at the end of the semester. Extra credit work is not permitted.

**Reaction Papers:**

You will write a series of four (4) reaction papers during the course from the list of options below. In each paper, you will identify the political content, themes, and messages in the assigned work. The reaction paper is due at the beginning of class on the day after the associated movie or television show is shown in class. Late papers are not accepted.

These papers should be approximately two pages in length. Reaction papers are graded based upon content as well as spelling and grammar. So, be sure to check the grammar and spelling before submitting the paper. Papers with more than seven (7) grammatical errors will be penalized one letter grade, and papers with greater than fifteen (15) errors will be returned with a zero (0) for the grade. These assignments are due at the beginning of class, and you should be prepared to discuss your reaction paper in class.

The following is a list of paper topics and due dates.

- Paper #1 – Review of Episodes of *Star Trek: The Original Series*; **Due May 15.**
- Paper #2 – Review of *Divergent* (2014); **Due May 16.**
- Paper #3 – Review of *Star Wars: Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977); **Due May 17.**
- Paper #4 – Review of *Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005); **Due May 18**
- Paper #5 – Review of *Minority Report* (2002); **Due May 22**
- Paper #6 – Review of *Battlestar Galactica* (1978); **Due May 23**
- Paper #7 – Review of *Battlestar Galactica* (2003); **Due May 25**
- Paper #8 – Review of *Star Trek: Beyond* (2017); **Due May 29**

Your paper must be typed, double-spaced, using an appropriate font (e.g. Times New Roman 11 or 12 point). The following is a list of Dr. Galatas’ pet peeves. You should avoid the following errors and issues in your paper.

- Use of contractions
- Ambiguous pronoun references
- Dangling prepositions
- Incomplete sentences and sentence fragments
- Using the word “feel” when you mean “believe” or “think”

Collectively, the reaction papers are worth 30% of your final grade in the course.

**Oral Presentation of Research:**

In addition, to the assigned books listed above, you will select one additional science fiction book. You may select on your own, or if you need assistance, your instructor may offer suggestions. You will read the book outside of class time, on your own. As you read the book, you should take notes on the key political themes of the book. Possible themes include:

- Who has power and how is power exercised?
- How does the society in the book govern itself?
- How are resources allocated?
- Does the book focus on individual rights or collective identities?
- How does the book address issues such as majority rule and rights of the minority?
- Are there other key political ideas addressed in the book?

You will prepare an oral presentation of approximately five (5) to seven (7) minutes addressing one or more of the political themes in the book. You should prepare for the oral presentation by practicing and observing the time limits. Going too long or not long enough will negatively impact your grade for the oral presentation. You may prepare a Power Point or similar slideshow for the presentation.
Your presentation will be graded based upon the following criteria:

- Your language is clear and avoid colloquialisms
- Your language is clear, precise, and effective
- Your presentation is practiced and polished with professional body language and eye contact
- Your presentation is well-organized and coherent
- You are appropriately dressed for the presentation

Your oral presentation is worth 25% of your grade for the course.

**Participation:**

Participation consists of two types of participation. The first type is your participation in general classroom discussions. You are expected to come to class prepared. Being prepared involves having read the assigned materials or written a reaction paper when assigned. Participation also means participation in classroom discussions by offering your thoughts on the subject matter, engaging in debate, relating material to current events, etc.

Participation also entails group activities related to the assigned readings, television shows, and movies. You will be assigned to a group based upon one of the Battlestars from *Battlestar Galactica*. Each group will be given time to discuss the course materials. Collectively, you will reach agreement on the political themes, concepts, and ideas conveyed in the day’s materials. Then, the group will present its ideas to the whole class. Each member of the group is expected to serve as the moderator of the group during the term.

Participation counts as 25% of your final grade in the course.

**Attendance:**

You are expected to come to class. Because the Maymester is relatively short, at 12 days of instruction attendance is required for this course. Moreover, regular attendance makes a clear statement about your personal responsibility. Habits formed during a student’s career at SFA carry over into the post-University world of employment. As a result, daily attendance is taken.

During each class session, a sign-in sheet is passed around. You are expected to sign her or her name only. Students who sign the attendance sheet for another student are penalized 5% points from their final grade for each infraction.

Furthermore, class begins promptly at the time scheduled. You are expected to be present for the entire class period. Late arrivals and early departures are not tolerated. Tardiness is distracting to fellow students in the class. If late arrivals and early departures become a problem, the instructor may take remedial action including but not limited to circulating two attendance sheets, one at the beginning and one at the end of each class session. Students who do not sign both sheets are considered absent for the day.

Collectively, attendance counts for 20% of the final grade for the course.

**Student Academic Dishonesty:**

The following is taken from SFASU’s *Policy Manual* (2018), section on “Student Academic Dishonesty.”

“Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism as well as the appeal process.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or exam; falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or; helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to: submitting an assignment as one's own work when it is at least partly the work of another person; submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and/or, incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author credit.”

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf).
All cases of academic dishonesty will be handled according to University policies and procedures in the SFASU Policy Manual and other sources of policy. The consequences for academic dishonesty may range from a score of zero (0) on the assignment to an “F” for the course. For details, students should refer to the SFA Policy Manual (2018), the relevant sections of the University’s General Bulletin, 2017-2018, and other sources of University policy.

Withheld Grades:

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2018), “Course Grades”

“At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities:

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Acceptable Student Behavior:

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the early alert program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.