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# UNDERSTANDING POLITICS WITH FILM

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## INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

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Several years ago the state of West Virginia realized that many residents were adult learners who had earned a substantial number of college credits but never received their degrees. Consequently, it launched a statewide consortium whereby participating colleges and universities could offer courses to students throughout the state via an online portal delivered through a state-run learning management system. The program was supported through grant-funded courses that targeted adult learners who could complete the courses as part of their degree completion process.

The course outlined here is one of the courses designed for this program that ran every semester for the past several years. The intellectual motivation for the course is derived from current research which underscores the value films and television series have for teaching success. For instance, recent work highlights the impact that television series have in teaching public administration (Borry 2018) or how films can underscore valuable lessons from political science, economics, and history (Hobbs-Morgan 2017; Lobasz and Valeriano 2016; Marcus et al. 2018; Mateer et al. 2016). This comes at an important time as multiple states and regions have reduced the emphasis placed on civics and American Government in high school and collegiate curricula. This is undoubtedly a concerning trend as citizens' declining knowledge of American Government has unearthed a myriad of worrisome developments. In spite of this, many students remain interested in learning about these topics and this course routinely attracted some of the largest enrollments seen in West Virginia's program. Furthermore, the inclusion of film as a tool to illustrate theories, concepts, and institutions proved to be a well-received respite from the informative yet sometimes unimaginative discussions in many standard American Government texts.

As part of the statewide consortium, the course was designed to meet online accrediting standards set forth by Quality Matters. Many of the assignments used were designed with these standards in mind, which strengthened the link between assessment and learning objectives. The results over the past years have been encouraging based on steady enrollment trends, student performance, and the comments I have received over my years of teaching this course. Consequently, the strategies used in this class have been incorporated in many of my other classes as well.

## WORKS CITED

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Borry, Erin L. (2018). "Linking Theory to Television: Public Administration and *Parks and Recreation*." *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 24(2): 234-254.

Hobbs-Morgan, Chase. (2017). "Climate Change, Violence, and Film." *Political Theory*, 45(1): 76-96.

Lobasz, Jennifer K. and Brandon Valeriano. (2016). "Teaching International Relations with Film and Literature: Using Non-Traditional Texts in the Classroom." In *Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations*, eds. John Ishiyama, William J. Miller, and Eszter Simon. Edward Elgar Publishing: Northampton, MA. pp. 399-409.

Marcus, Alan S., Scott A. Metzger, Richard J. Paxton, and Jeremy D. Stoddard. *Teaching History with Film*. Routledge: New York City, NY.

Mateer, G. Dirk, Brian O'Roark, and Kim Holder. (2016). "The 10 Greatest Films for Teaching Economics." *The American Economist*, 6(2): 204-216.

## SYLLABUS: UNDERSTANDING POLITICS WITH FILM

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### CLASS DESCRIPTION

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This class is designed to help students better understand the primary reasons behind implementing a government and some of the different ways these systems are structured. The course opens with the traits and implications of anarchy and then considers different governmental systems (e.g., democracy and authoritarianism) that populate the world today. From here, the course examines the institutional configurations commonly seen in democratic governments. Special attention is paid to legislative and executive structures (as well as judiciaries). The course closes with an exploration of popular sovereignty's implications. Using primary sources, textbook readings, lectures, and films, students are exposed to ideas and depictions of political society in the United States and in many other societies throughout the world. Finally, this course was designed to comply with Quality Matters' (QM) online course design standards.

### STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

1. **Discuss** why government is necessary.
2. **Identify** various theorists and their explanations of government's necessity.
3. **State** the key elements in film-making.
4. **Describe** at least three film genres.
5. **Explain** how political context can impact film-making.
6. **Describe** the various functions of legislative, executive, and judicial institutions.
7. **Explain** how legislative officials approach their representative responsibilities.
8. **Distinguish** between realistic and nonfictional narratives.

9. **Discuss** whether or not it is the system or the person that leads to corruption in politics.
10. **Elaborate** on the differences in responsibilities between executive and legislative branches.

### **INSTRUCTOR'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

In addition to creating the course map and organizing the course, the instructor is responsible for:

- **Providing** clear instruction as to the learning objectives, assigned readings, and assigned films for the course.
- **Preparing** and supplying original lectures that are intended to help students better understand the political concepts, theories, and institutions discussed throughout the course.
- **Providing** a coherent rubric that will be used to grade submitted work in the class.
- **Monitoring**, responding to, and serving as "devil's advocate" to class discussions on the message board.

Class discussion is vital to online education, and higher education more generally, and thus the instructor may "push" students to elaborate on points made or to rethink certain points from other perspectives.

### **ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

Course grades are based on three types of assignments: medium-length writing assignments, discussion board postings (i.e., discussion questions and responses), and film summaries. The assignments are designed to promote familiarity with the assigned materials, enhance understanding of concepts, which should, in turn, result in well-reasoned essays.

Another benefit of employing these assignments, and one that meshes with QM's standards, is to ensure three types of class interactions: student-to-course materials, student-to-student, and student-to-faculty. The second interaction, student-to-student, is particularly desirable in online coursework when such interaction may be otherwise lacking.

The grade breakdown for the course is contained in the following table.

<b><i>Course Grades:</i></b>	
<b>Writing Assignment #1 (Introductory Assignment)</b>	100 points
<b>Writing Assignment #2 (Think Piece #1)</b>	100 points
<b>Writing Assignment #3 (Think Piece #2)</b>	100 points
<b>Writing Assignment #4 (Think Piece #3)</b>	100 points
<b>Discussion Board Posts &amp; Responses</b>	8 units X 20 points per Unit = 160 points total
<b>Film summaries</b>	7 summaries X 10 points per film = 70 points total
<b>Total points</b>	<b>630 points</b>

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## **ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS**

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### **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS ARE WORTH 400 POINTS OF YOUR SEMESTER GRADE:**

There are two specific writing assignments that students will complete: the introductory writing assignment and three think pieces. The introductory assignment is an application exercise whereby students are assigned two chapters to read. The chapters outline film genres, film elements, and provide original examples to support the genres and elements the students wish to discuss. The think pieces, by contrast, are more in line with the aforementioned discussion where students will formulate an argument that synthesizes class readings, lectures, and assigned films.

### **HOW YOU ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK:**

Each writing assignment should respond to writing prompts provided by the instructor. These prompts are designed to have students (1) formulate an argument based on the prompt that, (2) uses the assigned films, readings, and lectures to (3) logically support the argument. These assignments should reference, in detail, the assigned films, readings, and lectures (though outside references are permitted). The assignments' length should be between 5-10 double-spaced pages. Specific details of the respective writing assignments are supplied in the course module section.

### **DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS ARE WORTH 160 POINTS OF YOUR SEMESTER GRADE:**

The discussion board posts are included to promote interaction among students in the virtual classroom. These interactions will help students better grasp the material by encouraging exchanges whereby students offer insights and experiences that reflect and shape the class's understanding of the material. Most of all, the discussion board posts offer students an opportunity to synthesize the materials used in the course.

### **HOW YOU ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK:**

The discussion board postings will consist of two open-ended questions from each student as well as two thoughtful responses from each student. The discussion board postings should reflect the readings or lectures of each unit.

### **FILM SUMMARIES ARE WORTH 70 POINTS OF YOUR SEMESTER GRADE:**

The third and final graded component of the class are the film summaries. These summaries should be concise but explicitly detailed writings of the assigned film's plot.

### **HOW YOU ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK:**

Each summary should be approximately 150 words in length and additional points will be awarded for those writings that make connections between a unit's films, readings, and or lectures.

All assignments are due by the dates posted on Blackboard site calendar.

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**GRADING SCALE**


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<i>Point Range</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>
567+	90+	A
504-566	80-89	B
441-503	70-79	C
378-440	60-69	D
377 & below	59 & below	F

\*Rounding Policy: grades are rounded at the .5 level, so an 89.5% would be rounded to an "A" while an 89.4% would be a "B".

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**REQUIRED CLASS TEXT**


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Douglas A. Van Belle, *A Novel Approach to Politics*, 5th Edition. Sage Publishing, 2018.

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**OPTIONAL/REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS**


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You will find your required textbook information in the course's Blackboard page (or other learning management system). All other required readings and videos are included in each of the modules.

Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, 12th Edition. Allyn & Bacon, 2011.

Phillip L. Gianos, *Politics and Politicians in American Film*. Praeger, 1999.

Ernest Giglio, *Here's Looking at You*, Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

\*\*additional supplemental readings are listed throughout the course modules.

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**MINIMUM TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ONLINE RESOURCES**


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In addition to a web browser (e.g., Firefox) that is Blackboard-compatible (or with other learning management systems), you will need the following software in order to complete the activities in this class:

1. Word processing package capable of reading and creating .doc, .docx or rich text formatted (rtf) documents.
2. *Adobe Acrobat Reader*: If you do not have *Adobe Acrobat Reader*, you can download it free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>.

3. PDF Creator Software: If you are using a MAC or do not have software capable of saving a file as a .doc or .docx file and do not have the capability on your campus to print files to PDF, you can download a free version of *CutePDF* at <http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/writer.asp>. This software installs a virtual printer on your PC that allows you to print files to the PDF format.
4. Virus Protection Software: This course requires you to download and upload files from your PC. Virus protection software protects your computer.

## **COURSE MODULES**

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### **MODULE ONE: INTRODUCTORY UNIT (FILM BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INTRODUCTION)**

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#### **MODULE ONE CHECKLIST**

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** Phillip Gianos' selected book chapters from *Politics and Politicians in American Film*.
3. **Read** Chapter 1 from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.
4. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
5. **Post** two discussion questions and two responses to your peers' discussion questions in the course message board.
6. **Complete** Writing Assignment #1.

#### **MODULE ONE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Navigate** the online classroom.
- **Explain** four or more elements of film experience.
- **Provide** examples of three or more elements of the film experience evident in at least two films.
- **Identify** three or more genres of film.
- **Describe** how various examples of films fit into different film genres.
- **Define** political science and politics.

#### **FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1**

1. From what we have read from the Gianos text (i.e., chapters 1 and 2) please address the following:

- a. **Part #1 (Chapter 1):** Select and introduce three film genres discussed in the Gianos or Gianetti readings and then offer two film examples that reflect this genre. Be sure to explain how and why the selected films reflect the genres chosen.
  - b. **Part #2 (Chapter 2):** Select and explain three film elements and provide two examples of films or film aspects (e.g., lighting, characters, filmography, subject, etc.) that effectively illustrate these elements. Be specific and detailed in your discussion.
2. As you complete writing assignment 1, be sure to provide detail to support your explanation that a particular film does in fact fit into the genre you are addressing. In other words, tell your instructor what film you chose, the genre that it fits into, and, most importantly, why it fits into that genre. Then, as you read Chapter 2, be sure to pay close attention to the various elements described and come up with your own examples of films or aspects of films that serve as effective examples of at least three different film elements.
  3. As well, be sure to follow the formatting guidelines:
    - a. Students should use 12 point, Times New Roman font.
    - b. Margins should be 1" on all sides.
    - c. Page numbers should appear on each page.
    - d. Students' first and last names should appear on the first page.

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## MODULE TWO: ANARCHY, DEMOCRACY, AND GOVERNMENTAL RULE

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### MODULE TWO CHECKLIST

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** Chapter 3 ("Nonfiction Film") from Ernest Giglio's *Here's Looking at You*.
3. **Read** Chapter 2 from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.
4. **Read** Chapter 13 "On the Natural Condition of Mankind" from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*.
5. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
6. **View** the required film, *Lord of the Flies* (1963).
  - a. Additional suggested films: *The Purge* (2013); *V for Vendetta* (2005); *Zero for Conduct* (1933)
  - b. *Lord of the Flies* questions to consider:
    - i. How does the film portray anarchy?

- ii. Does this film mesh with Hobbes' discussion of anarchy and the natural state of mind? Why or why not?
  - iii. Does this film mesh with other views on anarchy as discussed in the instructor's lecture? Why or why not?
7. **Post** two discussion questions and two responses to your peers' discussion questions in the course message board.

### MODULE TWO LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Define** anarchy and democracy.
- **Compare** and contrast different philosophers' conceptualization of anarchy and opportunities or challenges that stem from anarchy.
- **Explain** how political context impacts film-making.
- **Discuss** the purpose, function, and expectations of government.
- **Analyze** how films improve our understanding of what anarchy looks like and why we need government.

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### MODULE THREE: ALTERNATIVES TO ANARCHY AND DEMOCRACY: AUTHORITARIANISM

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#### MODULE THREE CHECKLIST

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** Chapter 8 ("Story") from Louis Giannetti's *Understanding Movies*.
3. **Read** Chapter 3 from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.
4. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
5. **View** the required films, *Lives of Others* (2006) and *A State of Mind* (2004 documentary)
  - a. Additional suggested films: *1984* (1984); *The Last King of Scotland* (2006); *The Matrix* (1999); *The Violin* (2005)
  - b. *Lives of Others/A State of Mind* questions to consider:
    - i. How are authoritarian states' control evident in everyday life?
    - ii. In what ways do non-democratic states differ in governance from democracies?

- iii. Under what conditions might authoritarianism be preferable to democracy?
6. **Post** two discussion questions and two responses to your peers' discussion questions in the course message board.
7. **Complete** Writing Assignment #2.

### MODULE THREE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Distinguish** between realist and non-fictional approaches to stories in film-making.
- **Define** authoritarianism and non-democracy.
- **Discuss** the purpose, function, and expectations of government in an authoritarian, totalitarian, and theocratic government.
- **Analyze** how films improve our understanding of what authoritarianism looks like and why we need government.

### WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2

1. From what we have read (assigned readings and lectures) and viewed (from the assigned films), please respond to one of the following prompts:
  - a. **Prompt #1:** Is government necessary? Why or why not?
  - b. **Prompt #2:** Are authoritarian structures and systems inherently problematic? Or, can they be sufficiently improved to be acceptable to most people?
  - c. **Prompt #3:** How can politics impact film-making? Describe ways in which films may respond to, or conform to, the underlying political context.
2. **Include** at least two references to lectures, five references to the assigned readings, and at least five references to the assigned films.
3. As well, be sure to follow the formatting guidelines:
  - a. Students should use 12 point, Times New Roman font.
  - b. Margins should be 1" on all sides.
  - c. Page numbers should appear on each page.
  - d. Students' first and last names should appear on the first page.

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**MODULE FOUR: ELEMENTS OF A DEMOCRACY – LEGISLATURE**

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**MODULE FOUR CHECKLIST**

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** "Chapter 7: The Confederacy of Dunces: The Legislative Function" from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.
3. **Read** Article I of the United States Constitution.
4. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
5. **View** the required film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939)
  - a. Additional suggested films: *Advise and Consent* (1962); *Bob Roberts* (1992); *Charlie Wilson's War* (2007)
  - b. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* questions to consider:
    - i. What representative styles are portrayed in this film? How does this match up the lecture discussion?
    - ii. What powers listed in Article I (in the U.S. Constitution) are portrayed in this film?
    - iii. What are some ways this film is still realistic today?

**MODULE FOUR LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **List** four or more of the primary powers given to Congress by the Constitution.
- **Compare** and contrast the powers and characteristics of the Senate and House of Representatives.
- **Explain** why popular representation is an important element in democratic systems.
- **Discuss** whether or not Congressional representation, as seen in the readings and required film, is preferable to anarchic and authoritarian systems.

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**MODULE FIVE: ELEMENTS OF DEMOCRACY – PRESIDENCY AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

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**MODULE FIVE CHECKLIST**

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** "Chapter 8: Brazilian Bureaucracy..." from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.

3. **Read** Article II of the United States Constitution.
4. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
5. **View** the required film, *13 Days* (2000)
  - a. Additional suggested films: *Article 99* (1992); *Dr. Strangelove* (1964); *Fail-Safe* (1964); *Seven Days in May* (1964); *Thank you for Smoking* (2005)
  - b. *13 Days* questions to consider:
    - i. What connections are evident from Van Belle's discussion of the executive and how this branch is portrayed in the film?
    - ii. Bureaucracy is not always considered to be a positive attribute of democracy. Does this film support or challenge this mindset?
    - iii. How does the film support responsibilities or powers listed under Article II?
6. **Post** two discussion questions and two responses to your peers' discussion questions in the course message board.
7. **Complete** Writing Assignment #3.

#### MODULE FIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Discuss** the various roles of the executive (both the presidency and the bureaucracy) office.
- **List** the basic requirements to become US President and compare these with the informal requirements to become US President.
- **List** three powers or responsibilities given to the President under Article II of the Constitution.
- **Discuss** at least two agencies of the bureaucracy that were (or are) involved with US security.
- **Explain** the 'presidency' as an institution and describe other aspects of the bureaucracy or the executive branch.

#### WRITING ASSIGNMENT #3

1. From what we have read (assigned readings and lectures) and viewed (from the assigned films), please respond to one of the following prompts:
  - a. **Prompt #1:** Have elections in America lost their salience or utility? Should we disband elections and electoral campaigns?
  - b. **Prompt #2:** Could *Mr. Smith* exist or succeed in *Thank You For Smoking*? Why or why not?

2. **Include** at least two references to lectures, five references to the assigned readings, and at least five references to the assigned films.
3. As well, be sure to follow the formatting guidelines:
  - a. Students should use 12 point, Times New Roman font.
  - b. Margins should be 1" on all sides.
  - c. Page numbers should appear on each page.
  - d. Students' first and last names should appear on the first page.

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### **MODULE SIX: ELEMENTS OF A DEMOCRACY – THE PRESIDENCY AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

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#### MODULE SIX CHECKLIST

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** "Chapter 6: El Grande Loco Casa Blanca" from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.
3. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
4. **View** the required film, *Nixon (1995)*
  - a. Additional suggested films: *The Contender (2000)*; *Lincoln (2012)*; *Primary Colors (1998)*; *Wag the Dog (1997)*; *The War Room (1993)*; *House of Cards (selected excerpts 2014-2018)*.
  - b. *Nixon* questions to consider:
    - i. Does the film's perception of Nixon undermine its discussion of presidents as individuals? Why or why not?
    - ii. What can we learn from depictions, such as *Nixon*, that place so much emphasis on presidents as individuals?
    - iii. This film was released in 1995—long after Nixon was president. In what ways did American political context impact the decision to produce and release the film then? How does releasing the film more than two decades after Nixon left office affect our viewing of this film?
5. **Post** two discussion questions and two responses to your peers' discussion questions in the course message board.

MODULE SIX LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Discuss** early forms of executive leadership (e.g., authoritarianism, oligarchy, etc.).
- **Compare** and contrast studying the presidency as an institution versus as an individual.
- **Identify** the various types of presidential character and how they impact presidential performance.
- **Make** an argument as to whether Hollywood has generally approached portrayals of the President—as an institution or individual—and to offer supporting evidence to make their case.

MODULE SEVEN: ELEMENTS OF A DEMOCRACY – JUDICIARY (LAW AND SOCIETY)MODULE SEVEN CHECKLIST

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** "Chapter 9: Courts and Law..." from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.
3. **Read** Article III of the United States Constitution.
4. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
5. **View** the required film, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)
  - a. Additional suggested films: *A Time to Kill* (1996); *The Hurricane* (1999); *Inherit the Wind* (1960); *The Rainmaker* (1997)
  - b. *To Kill a Mockingbird* questions to consider:
    - i. Atticus Finch is one of the most iconic film characters in American cinematic history. What is so redeeming or inspiring about this character?
    - ii. How does the political context (either in real life or as portrayed in the film) enhance Finch's traits?
    - iii. In terms of the judiciary, what connections are evident between the film's depictions of the judiciary as a reflection of law or society and the readings (either the Constitutional excerpts or the Van Belle chapter)?
6. **Post** two discussion questions and two responses to your peers' discussion questions in the course message board.

MODULE SEVEN LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Discuss** three primary roles of the judiciary.
- **Discuss** the main findings in Barnum's article that examines public opinion and the judiciary.
- **Distinguish** between the adversarial and inquisitorial models in court proceedings.
- **Identify** the type of court proceedings featured in the films.
- **Discuss** how political context impacts a film's messaging.

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### MODULE EIGHT: ELEMENTS OF A DEMOCRACY – JUDICIARY (RULE OF LAW & CIVIL LIBERTIES)

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#### MODULE EIGHT CHECKLIST

1. **Read** the learning objectives.
2. **Read** "Chapter 5: Structures and Institutions" from Van Belle's *Novel Approach to Politics*.
3. **Read** and review the instructor's lecture.
4. **View** the required film, *Twelve Angry Men (1957)*
  - a. Additional suggested films: *Enemy of the State (1998)*; *The Insider (1999)*; *Minority Report (2002)*; *The Siege (1996)*
  - b. *Twelve Angry Men* questions to consider:
    - i. Why are due process and trial by jury rights integral in a democracy? How do they support democratic rights?
    - ii. What other factors are essential to the rule of law or civil liberties?
    - iii. How does the assigned film reflect the broader democratic process?
5. **Post** two discussion questions and two responses to your peers' discussion questions in the course message board.
6. **Complete** Writing Assignment #4.

#### MODULE EIGHT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have completed the readings and content for this module you will be able to:

- **Explain** the impact the judiciary system has on American politics.
- **Explain** the three key functions of the judiciary system.
- **Explain** why civil liberties are important for the functioning of democracy.

- **Describe** how this film reflects realism or non-fictional story-telling.

**FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENT #4**

1. From what we have read (assigned readings and lectures) and viewed (from the assigned films), please respond to one of the following prompts:
  - a. **Prompt #1:** Now that we have watched a variety of films, what are the primary problems that you see (from the lectures, films and readings) in a political system (e.g., what problems arise in the legislature, executive, judiciary, the electoral process, etc.)? And, what are some possible solutions to these problems?
  - b. **Prompt #2:** Does the judiciary reflect or respond to public opinion? If so, how? If not, why not? Also, should the judiciary respond to public opinion? Why or why not?
2. **Include** at least two references to lectures, five references to the assigned readings, and at least five references to the assigned films.
3. As well, be sure to follow the formatting guidelines:
  - a. Students should use 12 point, Times New Roman font.
  - b. Margins should be 1" on all sides.
  - c. Page numbers should appear on each page.
  - d. Students' first and last names should appear on the first page.

## APPENDIX

### THINK PIECE RUBRIC

This course requires students to compose Think Pieces, which are essays that require students to formulate an argument and support this assertion using materials from the class. To support one's argument, students must reference the lectures, readings, and films; failure to do so will result in a significant forfeiture of points. In addition, the argument and supporting materials should be presented in a cogent and logically consistent manner.

As for the mechanics of the paper, each Think Piece is to be 5 or more pages in length. The body of the paper should use 12 point, Times New Roman font, with double-spaced text, and 1" margins on all sides of the paper. At the top of the first page, students should include their name (First Name Last Name), the instructor's name, the Course Name, and the last line in the heading should be the due date of the assignment. Page numbers are also required.

The Rubric below presents a framework for how students will be graded. Look at this carefully so you understand my expectations for these assignments.

Introduction	Argument	Lecture and Film References	Reading References	Citation Style	Grammar	Paper Structure
<b>9-10 points</b> The paper has a clear topic, cogent introduction, and an explanation for what will be discussed.	<b>19-20 points</b> Student provides an excellent argument that is logical and well-supported.	<b>19-20 points</b> Student provides several references to class lectures and films. References demonstrate solid understanding of all materials.	<b>19-20 points</b> Student provides several references to class lectures and films. References demonstrate solid understanding of all materials.	<b>9-10 points</b> No mistakes.	<b>9-10 points</b> No mistakes.	<b>9-10 points</b> Student has followed the stated format in all areas.
<b>7-8 points</b> The paper has an above-average topic, rather cogent introduction, and some explanation is provided for the ensuing discussion.	<b>16-18 points</b> Student provides an above-average argument that is logical and well-supported.	<b>16-18 points</b> Student provides some references to class lectures and films. References demonstrate above-average understanding of all materials.	<b>16-18 points</b> Student provides some references to class lectures and films. References demonstrate above-average understanding of all materials.	<b>7-8 points</b> 1-2 mistakes.	<b>7-8 points</b> 1-2 mistakes.	<b>7-8 points</b> Student generally follows the format though a few mistakes are present.
<b>5-6 points</b> The paper has a topic, average cogent introduction, and lacks an explanation for why the paper is being written.	<b>12-15 points</b> Student provides an average argument that suffers from some minor problems.	<b>12-15 points</b> Student provides few references to class lectures and films. References demonstrate average understanding of all materials.	<b>12-15 points</b> Student provides few references to class lectures and films. References demonstrate average understanding of all materials.	<b>0-6 point(s)</b> 3 or more mistakes.	<b>0-6 Point(s)</b> 3 or more mistakes.	<b>0-6 points</b> Student commits several mistakes in the body of the paper.
<b>0-5 points</b> Introduction is deficient in multiple areas	<b>0-11 points</b> The argument is hard to follow or logically inconsistent.	<b>0-11 points</b> Student provides no references to class lectures and films or references demonstrate limited understanding of all materials.	<b>0-11 points</b> Student provides no references to class lectures and films or references demonstrate limited understanding of all materials.			