

**San José State University**  
**College of Social Sciences/Department of Political Science**  
**POLS 190 - Senior Seminar, Section 1, Spring 2021**

**Course and Contact Information**

Professor:	James Brent
Office Location:	next to my kitchen
Telephone:	upon request
Email:	james.brent@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Via Zoom (link provided below) Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. PST and by arrangement
Class Days/Time:	Mondays, 1:30 to 2:45 p.m. PST
Classroom:	Via Canvas and Zoom
Prerequisites:	POLS 100W

**Course Description**

Culminating experience for the political science major. Seminar class with significant participation required. Specific course topics vary each semester. The topic for this section is “American Politics in Film.”

**Course Format**

This course will be taught via **Zoom**. Students should have access to a reliable internet connection, as well as a webcam and microphone. During Zoom sessions, your camera should normally be ON, and your microphone should normally be OFF, unless you are speaking. In order to promote candor, Zoom sessions will NOT be recorded. This course also has a **Canvas site** that will be used to administer exams, collect assignments, make announcements and distribute other course materials. [You can find help with using Canvas here.](#)

You will be required to watch a movie each week. Normally, we would watch these movies together in class. Now that the class is online, you will be watching the movie at your own convenience, and we will meet together synchronously via Zoom only once a week, on Mondays from 1:30 to 2:45 PST. Your attendance is expected during these times. The Zoom link can be found at the end of this syllabus. You are also expected to watch one assigned movie each week before class begins. Information on accessing the movies will be given in class.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

This course represents your culminating experience in the SJSU Political Science Department. The main purpose of this course is not to acquire new substantive knowledge, but to showcase your knowledge and talents in crafting professional-level research about politics and government. The Department of Political Science has five learning outcomes for the degree program as a whole. You will be assessed on four (4) of those five outcomes

1. **CLO1: Breadth** Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.

## 2. CLO2: Application

Students should be able to apply a variety of techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.

## 3. CLO3: Disciplinary methods

Student should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, have competence in systematic data gathering using library sources, government documents, and data available through electronic sources, should be able to evaluate research studies, and should be able to critically analyze and interpret influential political texts.

## 4. CLO4: Communication Skills

Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.

### Required Texts/Readings

Haas, Elizabeth, Terry Christensen, and Peter J. Haas. 2015. *Projecting Politics: Political Messages in American Films*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-0765635976

### Accessing the Movies

Many of these movies are available on Netflix, Amazon Prime, and/or other streaming services, and you are free to access them in any form you have available to you. However, I will make ALL movies available using a method that I will explain in class.

### Course Assignments and Weights

Your course grade will be calculated based on the following assignments, with the following weighting:

Assignment (Course Learning Objective)	Due Date	Points
Movie Quizzes (15 @ 1 point each)	every Monday	15
On-Line Movie Reviews (5 @2% each) (CLO 4)	5 Mondays	10
In-Depth Movie Analysis and Review (CLO 2, 3, 4)	May 5	15
Thesis Statement, Film List, & Bibliography (CLO 3)	February 17	5
First Final Draft of Term Paper (CLOs 1, 2, 3 and 4)	April 14	15
Final Final Draft of Term Paper (CLOs 1, 2, 3 and 4)	May 25	20
In-Class Participation (CLO 4)	ongoing	10
Discussion Leader (CLO 4)	assigned	5

**Movie Quizzes** - We will be discussing a different movie each week. In order that we may have a fruitful in-class discussion, you are required to view each movie in advance of our discussion. In order to ensure that you have done so, each week I will post a short (5 question) multiple-choice or short-answer quiz. The quizzes will ask questions about each movie that will be simple to answer if you have watched the movie, but difficult to answer if you have not watched the movie. You will only have 5 minutes to complete each quiz, and each quiz is worth 1% of your overall grade.

**Online Movie Reviews** - There will be an online discussion board for each movie that is screened. You are required to leave a short (200-word) review of five (5) of the fifteen movies screened for this class. This review must be posted BEFORE the class in which we discuss the movie. However, no research is required for these reviews. They are merely movie reviews. Please indicate how many stars you would give the movie, on a scale of 1 to 5 stars. These are worth 2% each.

**In-Depth Movie Analysis and Review** -- You will select (or be assigned to) one of the 15 movies we will screen in this class. You will be asked to write a 10-page paper in which you do two things. In the first part of the paper, you should analyze the film under at least five (5) of the dimensions discussed by Haas, et al in Chapter 2 of *Projecting Politics*. In the second part of the paper, you should analyze the movie for its political or historical accuracy and/or completeness, drawing up academic and other credible sources. It should also discuss any contextual factors or events that the movie might have omitted. You will also be asked to be the “discussion leader” during the class period in which we discuss the movie you have selected or been assigned (see below).

**TERM PAPER** -- As befitting the culminating experience of your academic career, a large percentage (40%) of your grade is dependent upon the three stages of a research paper. In this paper, you should choose a governmental institution, political phenomenon, or public policy issue, and you should also choose five (5) movies that to a substantial degree focus on or are relevant to the topic you’ve chosen. You will develop this term paper over the course of the semester, in 3 stages:

**Thesis Statement, Film List & Bibliography** (due Wednesday, February 17 at 12:00 noon) -- The first stage of your paper will have three parts. First, it should include a thesis statement. This should be a statement that presents a point of view that can be supported with empirical evidence. Second, you should list the five (5) films you plan to view. Third, you should present a bibliography with at least ten (10) books and/or academic (peer-reviewed) sources that you could use in constructing your paper. This bibliography should employ a standard bibliographic format. APSA style is preferred but not required.

**First Final Draft** (due Wednesday, April 14 at 12:00 noon) -- The first draft of your paper should be at least 15 typed, double-spaced pages long, exclusive of tables, charts, figures, cover pages, etc. I call this a “first final draft.” It is NOT a rough draft. It should consist of your best effort.

**Final Final Draft** (due Tuesday, May 25 at 12:00 noon) -- The final final draft of your paper should be at least 20 typed, double-spaced pages long, exclusive of tables, charts, figures, cover pages, etc. It should have been revised according to the feedback given on the first final draft. Both drafts will be graded on the criteria typical of any academic paper: strength of writing; quality and breadth of evidence; theoretical and methodological rigor; accuracy; etc.

**In-Class Participation** -- Students will be given points based on the quantity of their in-class oral participation. The more you participate, the higher your participation grade will be.

**Discussion Leader** -- You will be asked to lead the class on the day that we discuss the film that you chose or were assigned for the “In Depth Movie Analysis and Review.”

### Calculating Your Course Grade

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

A = 93 to 100%	A minus = 90 to 92%	B plus = 88 to 89%	B = 83 to 87%
B minus = 80 to 82%	C plus = 78 to 79%	C = 73 to 77%	C minus = 70 to 72%
D plus = 68 to 69%	D = 63 to 67%	D minus = 60 to 62%	F = 59% or less

## **University Policies**

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>), which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

“Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.”

### **Political Science Departmental Writing Policy**

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count! Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at [http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info\\_comp/citing.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm).

For assistance with writing, please see me or visit the SJSU Writing Center located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>.

## POLS 190 / Seminar/ Spring 2021/ Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Movies, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/27	Course Introduction READING: Chapters 1 and 2
2	2/1	TOPIC: Congress MOVIE: <b>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</b> READING: Chapter 5
3	2/8	TOPIC: The Presidency MOVIE: <b>W</b>
4	2/15 2/17	TOPIC: Civil Liberties and the Courts MOVIE: <b>The People vs. Larry Flynt</b> ASSIGNMENT DUE: Thesis Statement, Film List, & Bibliography
5	2/22	TOPIC: Race and Police Reform MOVIE: <b>Fruitvale Station</b> Reading: Chapter 14
6	3/1	TOPIC: Racial Discrimination Movie: <b>Marshall</b>
7	3/8	TOPIC: Gender Discrimination Movie: <b>On the Basis of Sex</b> Reading: Chapter 15
8	3/15	TOPIC: LGBTQ Discrimination Movie: <b>Milk</b>
9	3/22	Topic: The Cold War Movie: <b>Good Night and Good Luck</b> Reading: Chapter 7
10	4/5	Topic: The Media and Politics Movie: <b>Network</b>
11	4/12 4/14	Topic: Campaigns and Elections Movie: <b>The Contender</b> (2000) ASSIGNMENT: First Final Draft Due
12	4/19	Topic: Labor Struggles Movie: <b>Norma Rae</b> (1979)
13	4/26	Topic: War on Terror Movie: <b>Zero Dark Thirty</b> (2012) Reading: Chapter 12
14	5/3 5/5	Topic: War on Terror Movie: <b>Good Kill</b> Assignment Due: In-Depth Movie Analysis and Review
15	5/10	Topic: Political Documentaries Movie: <b>Weiner</b> (2016) Reading: Chapter 13
16	5/17	Topic: Modern American Life and Politics Movie: <b>Idiocracy</b> (2006)
17	5/25	FINAL EXAM PERIOD - <b>FINAL FINAL DRAFT DUE</b>