

SOCI 390: Special Topics in Sociology¹

Cinema and Society

Instructor: Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh

Course Description:

Since its inception as an industry of popular culture in the early 20th century, cinema has dramatically changed human approach to storytelling and imagination. Visual representation, which is at heart of cinematic expression, has not only influenced our cultural learning, it has produced a global language shared across cultural differences. This course uses cinematic expression as way of understanding social issues and approaches to our societal dilemmas. The seven feature-length movies selected for this course speak to specific social issues and topics, and we will read some of the key writings in social theory for the purpose of our sociological analyses pertaining to the films we watch. Please note that, as with any artistic expression, these films may entail violence, sexuality, nudity, coarse language, discriminatory slur, or expressions contrary to one's beliefs. I trust that as adults, each one of us can judge for ourselves whether this course is appropriate to take.

Course Outcomes/Objectives:

The course will provide content analysis, visual literacy, and theoretical analysis. The readings are important in this course. We will learn about the way fiction is reality and vice versa. The expectation is that the assignments reflect how the story told in a film is sociologically significant through analysis and discussion. While this is a "fun" course, it pursues its objectives with rigour and is demanding.

Course Pre/Co-requisites:

None.

Topics May Include:

Memory, hegemony, violence, exploitation, decolonization, loss, racialization, gender, education.

Required Resources May Include:

The assigned readings include articles posted on Brightspace. The average weekly reading is about 3 article-length texts for 7 weeks.

Grading May Include:

The grading may be based on participation, forum submission, and two papers.

Mode of Delivery:

The course is "blended": (1) there is a self-pace component involving watching the films, posting to forums, and reading the assigned readings; and (2) we will hold one class a week (2 hours, 50 minutes) for live lectures and discussions.

¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.