



# TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY CENTRAL TEXAS

## POLI 3350: Politics and Propaganda in Media

Section 115 – CRN 60181

Summer 2023: Face to Face

8 Weeks (June 5-July 26)

6 PM – 9 PM Mon/Wed

Heritage Hall 309



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Office Hours: 4:30 – 5:45 PM MW,  
5:10-6:30 PM TR, or by appointment

### Course Description (from the TAMUCT Catalog)

(WI) This course explores the political uses of media and its influence on public opinion. Topics covered include government-sponsored and privately-produced propaganda, the role of media in broader propaganda or political campaigns, and the ethical uses of media in the context of politics.

### Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The core objective of this course is for students to think critically about the politics of nonfiction media, especially documentary films, and the distinctions between information, persuasion, and propaganda. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Define propaganda in a manner that distinguishes it from mere information and other forms of persuasion (*Learning Outcome 1: as stated*)
2. Distinguish between central and peripheral approaches to persuasion in film (*Learning Outcome 2: When shown audiovisual communication, you should be able to identify and critique both the direct message and the use of peripheral cues to persuade the viewer*)
3. Identify the political implications of films, including the unspoken implications of arguments directly advanced by the films (*Learning Outcome 3: as stated, with respect to any documentary film you see*).
4. Analyze and critique documentary films based upon both their qualities as films and their political assumptions and implications (*Learning Outcome 4: as stated, with respect to any documentary film you see*)
5. Dissect, evaluate, and construct political arguments, using your critical thinking skills. Of particular importance are:
  - a. The simplified Toulmin model: A basic model of a valid argument as consisting of a *claim*, accompanied by *evidence*, which supports the claim via a *warrant* (*Learning Outcome 5: You should be able to identify the claim, evidence [if any], and warrants [implied or express] of a given argument*)

- b. Awareness of other basic concepts in logic, particularly common logical fallacies (*Learning Outcomes 6 and 7: You should be able to spot any of the nine fallacies covered in the course in actual arguments [6] and avoid them in your own arguments [7]*)
  - c. The distinction between logos, ethos, and pathos in rhetoric (*Learning Outcome 8: You should be able to identify segments of persuasive communication that rely on each of these three elements*)
6. Construct your own persuasive political arguments using the short documentary film format (*Learning Outcome 9: as stated*)

The film notes assess Outcome 2. The film critiques assess Outcomes 1-5. The short film project assesses Outcomes 5 and 6.

### Course Format

This course meets face-to-face, with supplemental materials made available online through the Texas A&M-Central Texas Canvas Learning Management System [<https://tamuct.instructure.com>]. **We strongly recommend the latest versions of either the Chrome or Firefox browsers. Canvas no longer supports any version of Internet Explorer.**

### Student-Instructor Interaction

I check my email at least once each weekday and strive to reply to students within 24 hours (when they ask a question or otherwise request a response). Reading and response times are longer over weekends and university holidays.

### Writing-Instructive Course Requirements

This is a Writing Instructive (WI) course so writing will be an integral part of my instruction and our interactions. Writing will also be a fundamental way that I measure student mastery of course content. WI means that you will have several opportunities to work on improving your writing skills. In concrete terms, this means engaging in a process of repeated response to the same basic set of guidelines (the film critiques). Grammar and spelling errors will reduce the credit you receive, even for otherwise perfect answers. See Canvas for a link to my grammatical “pet peeves.”

Of course, good writing requires more than correct spelling and grammar, and I look for a thesis, paragraphs with topic sentences, properly-cited, evidence-based argumentation. An argument is complete if it contains a claim (something you are trying to prove), evidence (properly-cited, of course), and a warrant (the evidence logically supports the claim). The citation system we’ll be using in this class is that of the American Political Science Association (APSA), which is a slightly modified form of the parenthetical documentation system in the *Chicago Manual of Style* (**not** the note system found in the same volume). **A guide to APSA citations is available on Canvas.**

### Required Readings

The following textbook is required and available for purchase at the bookstore. You are under no obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

Title	Author(s)	ISBN-13	Ed/Year	Publisher
<i>Propaganda and Persuasion</i>	Jowett & O’Donnell	9781506371344	7 <sup>th</sup> /2018	SAGE

There are other required readings. These, together with the documentaries you need to view before class sessions, are available on Canvas (readings under the Files tab, films under the Pages tab – click View All Pages button to access).

### Technology Requirements

This course will use the Texas A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system. Logon to Texas A&M-Central Texas Canvas [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>] or access Canvas through the TAMUCT Online link in MyCT [<https://tamuct.onecampus.com/>]. You will log in through our Microsoft portal. Username: Your MyCT email address. Password: Your MyCT password

Note that you will also need to use video editing software (which will be installed on some available computers on campus). You will want a set of headphones to hear the audio while editing, since other students will be around. Alternatively, you can use your own video editing software. You should probably procure a USB “thumb” drive (32 GB or greater is recommended) on which to store all of your materials.

### Canvas Support

Use the Canvas Help link, located at the bottom of the left-hand menu, for issues with Canvas. You can select “Chat with Canvas Support,” submit a support request through “Report a Problem,” or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953.

### Other Technology Support

For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central.

24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Email: [helpdesk@tamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamu.edu)

Phone: (254) 519-5466

[Web Chat](http://hdc.tamu.edu): [<http://hdc.tamu.edu>]

*Please let the support technician know you are an A&M-Central Texas student.*

For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

### Course Grades and Rubrics (90/80/70/60, rounded to the nearest percentage)

- *Academic Integrity Exercise*: This consists of watching a brief lecture, taking a quiz, seeing where any mistakes on the quiz came from, and signing a statement. Once you successfully complete this exercise, you will no longer need to do so in my other political science courses.
  - **\*\*\*Completing the Academic Integrity Exercise is a prerequisite to passing this course. It must be completed before the deadline on the course calendar below.\*\*\***
  - **Rubric: You will automatically fail the course if you have not completed the Academic Integrity exercise on or before the deadline in the syllabus.**

If you have already completed this exercise for me in another class, you need not complete it again.

- *Film Notes (18%)*. The single most important thing about your notes is that they must contain the argument(s) of the authors/filmmakers and the evidence presented to support those arguments. Your notes may be handwritten and may contain abbreviations or symbols if you wish. Spelling and grammar are relevant to the notes only if they make them so vague as to impair their usefulness. Ideally, the notes will be prepared as you read or watch the material, with only a few minutes of touch-up work (double-checking the thesis, noting anything from early in the film that now seems odd) required. There are three possible grades:
  - A check mark (full credit – 20 points).
    - For each film assigned, your notes should include the **message(s)** of the film, a list of **major players** in the film (possibly including – or only -- the director), the **actions or**

**characteristics of each** major player, and examples of some of the **techniques of argument/persuasion/propaganda used**. Possible techniques can be grouped into five major categories. Ideally, you will have observed at least one technique in **each** category, but this may vary by film.

1. Perspective: The use of multiple perspectives vs. a single perspective, misrepresenting the self (plain folks or claiming the mantle of opposition), use of third person or passive voice to avoid responsibility, omitting intermediate actors to increase responsibility, misrepresenting conflict (decontextualizing violence, omitting the perspectives of victims or perpetrators, dualism and Manichaeism, false inevitability or fatalism, focusing on individual acts rather than structural causes and patterns, leaving the goals of outsiders and media unexamined)
  2. Evidence: The types of evidence offered (anecdotes, personal testimony, statistics, expert testimony) or the omission of contrary evidence
  3. Emotion: Appeals to emotion vs. reason (use or avoidance of loaded words, phrases, or images) or use of sentimental or hated symbols to transfer those feelings to something else
  4. Argument: Presence of logical fallacies (argument from authority, equivocation, false dilemmas, ecological, composition, *ad hominem*, affirming the consequent), the use of tautological (circular) reasoning, vague statements (glittering generalities), distraction (red herring -- answering an argument by raising an unrelated objection), slippery slope (really a subtype of the false dilemma), use of analogies, and/or bandwagoning
  5. Peripheral Cues: aural or visual signifiers (many of which are presented in class)
    - A check-minus (12 points). The notes are largely complete, but still fail to cover all of the film, or they fail to contain at least three of the five elements above.
    - An X (0 points). The notes fail to include the theses and evidence for at least half of the assigned film.
- Film Critiques (24%): A film critique is a 750-1000 word (about 3-4 pages) essay that adds to an informed reader's understanding of a film. The following elements of a critique are adapted from Corrigan (2015) and Chapter 9 of Nichols (2017). Chapter 9 of Nichols is an optional reading on Canvas (in the Files tab's Writing Resources folder); it is recommended because it walks through construction of a film critique, using *Nanook of the North* as the subject of the critique.
    - Preliminary discussion:
      - The writer of this kind of essay presumes that his or her reader has *seen* or is at least familiar with the film under discussion, although that reader may not have *thought* extensively about it.
      - The writer may remind the reader of key themes and elements of the plot, but a lengthy retelling of the story of the film is neither needed nor acceptable (hence, this kind of essay is *less* descriptive and *more* analytical than a mere movie review).
      - The purpose of this essay is not so much to convince his readers to like or dislike the film but to add to their understanding of it.
      - See the Nichols reading in the Writing Resources folder on Canvas regarding: the importance of purpose (p. 194), the distinction between film criticism (your assignment) and a mere review (196), the reasons to use at least two primary or secondary sources besides the film itself and to avoid tertiary sources (198-199), and the need for an academic writing style instead of an indignant or fawning one (207).

- Ideas for arguments:
  - Themes point to the main ideas in a movie. Some questions one can ask about a film's main (or minor) ideas are:
    - Who are the central characters of the action?
    - Is there a coherent message or story? Why or why not?
    - How does the movie make the viewer feel at the end? Happy? Depressed? Confused? Why?
    - Does the movie lead the viewer to new knowledge?
    - What techniques of persuasion are used?
    - Is the film strictly informative, a persuasive argument, or outright propaganda? Why?
  - Another approach is to analyze a film using a specific method or theory of film.
    - Genre: Genre is a category for classifying films in terms of common patterns of form and content, e.g., westerns, musicals, horror, film noir, road movies, melodramas, science fiction, etc. In analytical writing, a discussion of genre is frequently an effective way to begin examining how a film organizes its story and its audience's expectations. What common structures, themes, and stylistic techniques are associated with the subgenres of documentary film?
    - Auteurs: Auteur criticism is one of the most widely accepted and often unconsciously practiced film criticisms today. It identifies and examines a movie by associating it with a director (e.g. Errol Morris in *The Fog of War*) or occasionally with another dominant figure, such as a main character (e.g. Leni Riefenstahl in *The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* or the Friedman men in *Capturing the Friedmans*). This implies that the unifying vision behind what you see on the screen is the director's and that there are certain common themes and stylistic traits that link films by the same filmmaker. Auteur criticism has its historical roots in the claims of literary independence and creativity made by and for certain directors. What are the most distinctive signs of the filmmaker's control over the film: editing? The stories themselves? The themes? The setting? Keep in mind that your critiques are primarily interested in the films themselves, not in the psychology or private life of the filmmakers.
    - Ideology: Ideology is a more subtle and expansive way of saying **politics**. The ideological critic maintains that these movies are never innocent visions of the world and that the social and personal values that seem so natural in them need to be analyzed. Some of the ideological approaches to film include:
      - Studies of *Hollywood Hegemony*, which focus on how classic film formulas dominate and sometimes distort ways of seeing the world.
      - *Feminist Studies*, which investigate how women have been both negatively and positively represented through the movies.
      - *Critical Race Studies*, which concentrate on the depiction of different races in films, such as Latinos, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, etc.
      - *Class Studies*, which analyze social and economic arrangements shown in a movie to show how social power is distributed in and through certain films.

○ Rubric:

Grade	Thesis and Structure (20%)	Argumentation (30%)	Bases of Evidence (50%)
<b>A</b>	If true, it adds to the viewer's understanding of the film and summarizes the conclusions of the essay.	The paper is built up from arguments that make clear claims warranted by the evidence presented. Arguments are presented as paragraphs with topic sentences.	There are at least two primary or secondary sources, from which a substantial portion of the evidence for the critique is drawn. No major source of evidence is ignored (including counter-evidence, which is addressed and shown to be less compelling or more flawed than the evidence supporting the thesis).
<b>B</b>	The thesis is informative if true but some elements of the thesis do not correspond to sections of the paper, or vice versa	The paper is built up from arguments that make clear claims warranted by the evidence presented, but the arguments aren't well-structured or paragraphs lack topic sentences.	There are at least two primary or secondary sources, from which a substantial portion of the evidence for the critique is drawn. Some evidence from the sources or the film is ignored, however, and would if included affect the argument being made by the paper.
<b>C</b>	The thesis is present but weak – so vague or trivial as to be uninformative.	The paper is a set of arguments that proceed without logical order OR many arguments are "naked claims" or otherwise unwarranted assertions.	There is only one primary or secondary source, from which a substantial portion of the evidence for the critique is drawn. OR two sources are present but they are barely touched. OR The evidence, when taken as a whole, fails to support the paper's thesis, with necessary steps in the argument being assumed instead of demonstrated.
<b>D</b>	There is no clear thesis, although there do exist arguments in the paper.	The paper contains little if any of the student's own argument, instead being more of a review or a summary of what others have said OR the paper follows a stream-of-consciousness or "data dump" strategy without clear claims	At least one major element of the essay's argument has substantial evidence from a source other than the film that supports it. However, other references are generally vague, irrelevant, or refuted by obvious counter-evidence. OR The essay's evidence is drawn entirely from the film, but supports the paper's thesis as a whole.

Grade	Thesis and Structure (20%)	Argumentation (30%)	Bases of Evidence (50%)
<b>F</b>	The essay is essentially devoid of structure and lacks a thesis.	The paper contains little if any of the student's own argument, instead being more of a review or a summary of what others have said AND the paper follows a stream-of-consciousness or "data dump" strategy without clear claims.	The critique's major arguments lack support. One or more may have some support from the film itself, but not all of them. No research outside the film itself is evident.

- Spelling/grammar/formatting errors will reduce your grade by 1% each, up to a maximum reduction of 20%.
- Propaganda Campaign Analysis (10%). The Jowett and O'Donnell textbook provides a list of ten elements to a campaign analysis. The text also provides four examples of such analyses. Your job is to make a fifth such analysis dedicated to one of the following long-running propaganda campaigns: the National Rifle Association against firearm regulations **or** the American Association of Retired People against cuts to (or even slowing the growth in spending of) Social Security and health care programs.
  - Expectations/Rubric: The campaign analysis should be in the form of a properly-sourced (APSA format) essay with a clear thesis about the goals, nature, and effectiveness of the campaign and an attached works cited page. It should be at least 1000 words long, but feel free to go into as much detail as you need to accomplish the objective of thoroughly analyzing the campaign. Note that some elements are worth considerably more credit than others. All elements are drawn from, and described in more detail in, Jowett and O'Donnell (2019, 268-283).

Element	Expectations	Points
The Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign	The ideology behind the propaganda campaign is clearly specified with supporting evidence. Agitation propaganda should be distinguished from integration propaganda.	5
The Context in Which the Propaganda Occurs	The historical background in which the organization has acted and the current environment in which it operates should both be summarized and related to the content of the campaign itself.	10
Identification of the Propagandist	Given in the assignment itself.	Given
The Structure of the Propaganda Organization	Leadership (and leadership style), goals, means used, membership, culture and rules should be identified.	20
The Target Audience	Does the campaign target a mass audience only, or narrower audiences as well? The answer should be clear in the analysis.	5
Media Utilization Techniques	The analysis should describe the aural and visual content is presented in the campaign, relating it to purposes of information, the use of slogans, and emotional arousal techniques. It should not just describe the content of the message, but also the effects it is likely to have on various audiences.	20

Element	Expectations	Points
Special Techniques to Maximize Effect	There are eleven such techniques listed in Jowett and O'Donnell. Be sure to identify and describe at least four of them used in the campaign you examine. Note that if an important technique is not listed, you can still make the case for including it as one of your four, given that the authors don't regard their list as exhaustive.	20
Audience Reaction to Various Techniques	Describe how the target audience(s) have behaved and to what extent this behavior might plausibly have been conditioned by the propaganda campaign.	5
Counterpropaganda	Identify at least two instances of counter-messaging by those opposed to the group's agenda or methods.	5
Effects and Evaluation	Conclude by drawing together your information to determine to what extent the purposes of the propaganda campaign have been fulfilled to date.	10
Writing Quality	No spelling, grammar, or formatting errors. Works Cited page exists and is in APSA format (-20 if not present, -10 if present but inconsistently formatted, -5 if consistently formatted but not using APSA style). -1 for every 10 words below 1000.	-1 per error or as specified to the left
<b>TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE</b>		<b>100</b>

- Participation (26%). This consists of both engaging in conversation about assigned the films and readings during class and completing the occasional in-class exercise.
  - Discussion: I will note where you are sitting and make marks next to your initials when you make a relevant observation or ask a question demonstrating engagement with the assigned materials. Since I am an imperfect monitor, you should try to do so at least three times during the time available for discussion. If you talk infrequently, it may be useful to briefly note a remark before or after making it, so that if I don't catch it you can remind me of it after class. You will receive 40% credit (8 points) for being there, 80% credit (16 points) for constructively participating at some point in the discussion, and 120% credit (24 points) for constructively participating throughout the discussion.
  - In-Class Work: Sometimes there may be structured in-class exercises. As long as the student actively participates, he/she gets full credit for participation during the period of time occupied by the exercise.
- Short Film (25%). You will need to create a five-minute short political documentary or piece of political propaganda, using at least 3:20 of your own footage (or 2/3 of the film, whichever is greater). Most digital cameras have video capability' low-resolution webcams should generally be avoided due to the very low quality of their video. See the attached Appendix for ideas and some details about the project.
  - Storyboards. The Storyboard Forms are available on Canvas (under Files → Film Project Resources). The most important factor in the storyboard grade is its completeness. If the answer to all of the following question is yes, then the student will receive all 50 points. To the extent that the storyboard falls short of these criteria, that grade will be proportionally reduced.
    - Does it actually represent 5-10 minutes of material?
    - Does each scene get its own box?
    - Has each element of each scene or clip been described – including the source?



- Have the required permissions for interviews (or justifications for non-consensual recording) been submitted? [Forms on Canvas]
- Is it clear from the storyboard that a political element exists to the film?
- Is the thesis of the film clear from the storyboards?
- Does the storyboard estimate that >67% of footage used will be shot by the student?
- If there is voice-over, is the script for those scenes included?
- Rough Cut. Half of the grade (25 points) is based on completeness (the extent to which the film delivers or improves upon what was promised in the storyboard and follows the instructions in the assignment). The other half is based on the following factors:
  - Argument: The quality of evidence used to support the thesis is high (10 points).
  - Material quality: The clips used are clearly visible and audible, with multiple camera perspectives where appropriate (10 points).
  - Pacing: The film neither drags on too long in some places nor touches on others too briefly to keep the audience engaged (5 points).
- Final Cut.
  - Completeness: Student did all that was asked in preparing the final cut (30 points).
  - Argument: The quality of evidence used to support the thesis is high (15 points).
  - Material quality: The clips used are clearly visible and audible, with multiple camera perspectives where appropriate (15 points).
  - Professionalism: The student has made appropriate use of audio balancing and visual transitions to render the film a seamless whole rather than just a string of clips (10 points).
  - Engagement: The film engages its viewers and holds their attention, while using techniques of persuasion or information to shape their attitudes or knowledge about the subject of the film (30 points).

### POLI 3350 Course Rubric

Item	Points	Percent
Academic Integrity Exercise	0 (but required to pass!)	0%
Film Notes	180 (20 points per set)	18%
Film Critiques	240 (60 points per critique)	24%
Propaganda Campaign Analysis	100	10%
Participation	240 (divided evenly between the ten sessions with class discussion or in-class exercises)	24%
Short Film	240 (40 for the storyboard, 50 for the rough cut, 100 for the final film, and 50 for the Q&A during the film festival)	24%
<b>TOTAL POSSIBLE</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>
895+ = A    795-894=B    695-794=C    595-694=D    594 or lower = F		

### Posting of Grades

As soon as materials are graded, grades will be posted to the Canvas grade book. I strive to turn around most assignments within a week, but some may take a bit longer.

## Regrade Policies

I can make mistakes. Don't be shy about checking everything twice. In order to prevent a last-minute search for points long after the original grading has been done, I have two policies for regrades or disputes over grades. Please remember the deadlines in each case. After this time, I am no longer confident that I will be able to remember enough to fairly regrade the material (i.e. using exactly the same standards as those applied to other students).

- **Written Work:** If you believe I have graded written work incorrectly, then you have up to **one week** to return the work to me along with a *brief* explanation or indication of the portion to be regraded.
- **Participation:** **At the end of any class period**, you may request to see your participation grade for that class. If you disagree with the grade, you need to explain your disagreement **then, while the discussion is still fresh in everyone's memory**. I advise you to write down a few words each time you participate so that you might be able to jog my memory after class if you believe I missed your effort.

## Attendance

This is not a self-paced class, and attendance is required. It is exceedingly difficult to do well without a good set of lecture notes – the PowerPoint files I post online don't include the explanations I give in class.

Furthermore, it is rather challenging to complete in-class work or to discuss when one is not in the classroom.

*Beware!* The lectures do not simply rehash the readings – they add new material and help you organize the evidence presented in the assigned readings. The “downside” to this is that you need both a good set of lecture notes and careful examination of the assigned readings to do well in the course. The upside is that lectures are actually worth attending, and if you email me questions about the readings I'll address them in class.

## Excused Absences, Make-Up Work, and Late Work

- Barring some emergency, students must inform the instructor *prior to an absence*. Send me an email stating the dates(s) you will be missing and the reason(s). You should also hand me a written note with this information in class. (Protect yourself! Don't rely on my memory – hand me something written that I can keep in my files). Failure to contact the instructor *prior to class* will normally rule out any sort of make-up.
- Late submissions lose 20% of their credit each day they are late. Exception: The final cut of your short film *cannot* be turned in for credit after the deadline (which is the last session of our class).
- Make-up participation work is also required for each *excused* absence. If the assignment was Film Notes, do a Film Critique instead. If the assignment was Storyboards, do a set of Film Notes in addition to the Storyboards. Finally, if the assignment was a Film Critique, then make a 3-4 page typed outline of the major points and arguments from the *readings* for the week in addition to doing the Film Critique. You must also complete any in-class exercises you missed.

## Incompletes

Grades of incomplete are not to be used when students simply fall behind. Instead, they are used when some event such as a hospitalization or deployment effectively takes the student out of the class after the drop deadline. By university policy, incompletes must be finished in the subsequent semester.

## Drop Policy

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete the [Drop Request](#) Dynamic Form through Warrior Web.

[<https://federation.ngwebsolutions.com/sp/startSSO.ping?PartnerIdId=https://eis-prod.ec.tamuct.edu:443/samlSso&SpSessionAuthnAdapterId=tamuctDF&TargetResource=https%3a%2>

f%2fdynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com%2fSubmit%2fStart%2f53b8369e-0502-4f36-be43-f02a4202f612]

Faculty cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Records and Admissions Office will provide a deadline on the Academic Calendar for which the form must be completed. Once you submit the completed form to the Records and Admissions Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Records and Admissions Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

### **Academic Integrity**

*University Code of Academic Honesty:* Texas A&M University -Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student's academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

For more [information regarding the student conduct process](#), see the following link:

[<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html>].

If you know of potential honor violations by other students, you may [submit a referral](#),

[<https://cm.maxient.com/reporting.php?TAMUCentralTexas>].

*Specific guidelines for this course, which supplement and do not replace University policy:*

- **Violations:** Some common violations of academic integrity that I have observed while teaching similar classes at TAMUCT are
  - **Most Common Violation:** Plagiarism. This comes in two varieties:
    - Use of direct quotes without quotation marks. Even if you are just using three- or four-word phrases, you need to surround them with quotation marks if you didn't create them yourself. This is true even if you cite the source! Remember that changing a few words in a sentence does not transform a direct quote into a paraphrase; instead, it transforms one long direct quote into several shorter direct quotes with a word of your own between each. A true paraphrase is the expression of the cited source's ideas in your own words.
    - Paraphrasing another person's words without citing the source
  - **Second Most Common Violation:** Receiving answers on any coursework from anyone other than the instructor. If you hand your work to someone else and they proceed to copy part or all of it, both of you will be deemed to have violated the policy. A single copied answer on an assignment is sufficient to trigger the policy.
- **Penalties:**
  - The normal penalty for a violation of academic integrity (whether or not it is specifically listed above) in any of my classes is a grade of zero for the work or a deduction of 20% (two letter grades) from your course grade, whichever is **greater**. The infraction will be reported to the TAMUCT

administration, with a recommendation for probation in the case of deliberate violation or no further action in the case of clearly inadvertent violation.

- The (a) outright purchase, download, or completion by others of an exam or assignment, or (b) second or subsequent violation of academic integrity (in this course or other courses) display such serious disregard for academic integrity that either one of them will result in course failure **and** recommendation for maximum disciplinary penalties to the TAMUCT administration.

### **Drop Policy**

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[<https://federation.ngwebsolutions.com/sp/startSSO.ping?PartnerIdpid=https://eis-prod.ec.tamuct.edu:443/samlSso&SpSessionAuthnAdapterId=tamuctDF&TargetResource=https%3a%2f%2fdynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com%2fSubmit%2fStart%2f53b8369e-0502-4f36-be43-f02a4202f612>]

Faculty cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Records and Admissions Office will provide a deadline on the Academic Calendar for which the form must be completed. Once you submit the completed form to the Records and Admissions Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Records and Admissions Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

### **Title IX Rights and Reporting Responsibilities**

A&M-Central Texas is committed to creating a safe and open learning environment for all students. If you or another student has experienced any form of gender discrimination or sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and/or sex-based stalking, help and support are available. Our university strongly encourages all members of our campus community to report incidents and seek support for gender discrimination and sexual misconduct through the Title IX Office. You may contact the Title IX Office at 254.519.5716, [titleix@tamuct.edu](mailto:titleix@tamuct.edu), Founders Hall 317B, or learn more by visiting the [Title IX webpage](#) [<https://www.tamuct.edu/compliance/titleix.html>].

Please be aware that that under [Title IX](#), [Texas Senate Bill 212](#), and [System Regulation 08.01.01](#), [<https://policies.tamus.edu/08-01-01.pdf>] all university employees are mandated reporters and are required to disclose information about suspected or alleged violations as listed above and defined in System Regulation 08.01.01. If the Title IX Office receives information about an incident, they will reach out to offer information about resources, rights, and procedural options as a member of the campus community. Although I have an obligation to report, you will, in most cases, control how your case will be handled. When working with the Title IX Office you will have access to resources and accommodations but also have the opportunity to express if you wish to move forward with an investigation. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the options available to you as a student. Community members are not required to respond to this outreach. If you or another student wishes to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the [Student Wellness & Counseling Center](#), [<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-counseling.html>], 254.501.5955, or [swacc@tamuct.edu](mailto:swacc@tamuct.edu), located in Warrior Hall Room 207L or the Student Support Advocate, 254.501.5978 or [ssa@tamuct.edu](mailto:ssa@tamuct.edu), located in founder Hall Room 317D.

### **Student Resources**

[Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas \(SAFEZONE\):](#)

- . SafeZone provides a public safety application that gives you the ability to call for help with the push of a button. It also provides Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate emergency

information quickly via push notifications, email, and text messages. All students automatically receive email and text messages via their myCT accounts.

Downloading SafeZone allows access to push notifications and enables you to connect directly for help through the app.

You can download SafeZone from the app store and use your myCT credentials to log in. If you would like more information, you can visit the SafeZone website [[www.safezoneapp.com](http://www.safezoneapp.com)].

- To register SafeZone on your phone, please follow these 3 easy steps:
  1. Download the SafeZone App from your phone store using the link below:
    - iPhone/iPad: [<https://apps.apple.com/app/safezone/id533054756>]
    - Android Phone / Tablet [<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.criticalarc.safezoneapp>]
  2. Launch the app and enter your myCT email address (e.g. {name}@tamuct.edu)
  3. Complete your profile and accept the terms of service

### COVID information:

For updates, please monitor the University website [<https://www.tamuct.edu/covid19/>]

### Academic Accommodations:

At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier-free education. The Warrior Center for Student Success, Equity and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the university's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations, please contact the Office of Access and Inclusion, WH-212; or call (254) 501-5836. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. For more information, please visit our Access & Inclusion Canvas page (log-in required) [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717>]

- **Pregnant and/or Parenting Students Rights and Accommodations:** Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant, experiencing pregnancy-related conditions, and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of [Title IX and related guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights](#), the Associate Dean in the Division of Student Affairs, (254) 501-5909, can assist students who are pregnant, experiencing pregnancy-related conditions, and/or parenting by provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodations. Students should seek out assistance as early in the pregnancy as possible through the [Pregnancy & Parenting webpage](#) [<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/pregnant-and-parenting-students.html>]. For more information, please visit [Student Affairs](#) [<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/pregnant-and-parenting-students.html>]. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines](#) online, please visit the website [<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf>].
  - [Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972](#) specifically prohibits discrimination against a student based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions [<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.html>].
  - Students experiencing any form of discrimination due to any of these conditions are encouraged to reach out to the Title IX Coordinator, 254.519.5716, [titleix@tamuct.edu](mailto:titleix@tamuct.edu), Founders Hall 317B, or the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, 254.501.5909, Warrior Hall 105

## Tutoring and Success Coaching:

Tutoring and success coaching services are available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both virtually and in-person.

- To schedule tutoring sessions or view tutor availability, please contact [Warriorcenter@tamuct.edu](mailto:Warriorcenter@tamuct.edu) or visit Warrior Hall, 111.
- If you have questions about these or other academic support services or are interested in becoming a tutor, please contact the Warrior Center for Student Success, Equity and Inclusion at (254) 501-5836, email us at [WarriorCenter@tamuct.edu](mailto:WarriorCenter@tamuct.edu). You are welcome to visit the Warrior Center at Warrior Hall, suite 212.
- *Chat live with a remote tutor 24/7 for almost any subject from on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log in and receive online tutoring support at no additional cost. This tool provides tutoring in over 40 subject areas except writing support. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.*

## University Library & Archives:

- The University Library & Archives provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 350 electronic databases containing approximately 631,525 eBooks and 75,149 journals, in addition to the 97,443 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.
  - Research assistance from a librarian is also available 24 hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place virtually through WebEx, Microsoft Teams or in-person at the library. [Schedule an appointment here](https://tamuct.libcal.com/appointments) [https://tamuct.libcal.com/appointments]. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.
  - Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group workspaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](https://tamuct.libguides.com/index) [https://tamuct.libguides.com/index]

## University Writing Center:

- University Writing Center: For the summer semesters, all University Writing Center (UWC) tutoring services are entirely online. The hours of operation are from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday with additional hours Monday through Thursday nights from 6:00-9:00 p.m. The UWC is also offering hours from 12:00-3:00 p.m. on Saturdays.
  - Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process.
  - While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process.
  - In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides.

- Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the UWC is here to help!
- Students may arrange a one-to-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by making an appointment via [WCOOnline](https://tamuct.mywconline.com/) [https://tamuct.mywconline.com/]. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) if you have any questions about the UWC, need any assistance with scheduling, or would like to schedule a recurring appointment with your favorite tutor.

**Important University Dates** (From <https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/academic-calendar.html>)

June 1, 2023	Educator Preparation Program (Teacher and Principal) Application Deadline
June 13, 2023	Deadline for Scholarship Applications for the Fall Semester
June 23, 2023	Priority Deadline for International Student Admissions Applications
July 1, 2023	School Counselor Program Application deadline (Fall)
July 22, 2023	Priority Deadline for VA Certification Request (Fall)

**Amendments**

Not all exigencies can be foreseen. I reserve the right to amend the syllabus at any time. Any such amendment will be provided to the students in writing in the form of a revised syllabus uploaded to Canvas.

**Copyright Notice**

Students should assume that all course *readings*, *videos* and *images* are copyrighted by their respective creator(s). Reproduction of such material is prohibited without consent from the creator of a work and verification of that permission by the course instructor. Violation of copyright is against the law and Texas A&M University-Central Texas’ Code of Academic Honesty. All alleged violations will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

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***Instructor’s Personal Statement (not required reading, but may be of interest)***

I strive to provide my students with a liberal arts education. Such an education is intended to expand human potential by emphasizing critical thinking skills, strong writing and oral communication skills, and perceptive responses to others’ arguments. These goals enable students to become lifelong learners, community members, and ultimately to lead rewarding lives. Therefore, under the broad rubric of a liberal arts approach to teaching, I emphasize four objectives in my teaching: development of critical thinking skills, advancement of writing and speaking skills, moral development, and mastery of what in my judgment constitutes the “core” of the area under study. These goals determine how I construct course syllabi, which materials I use, and how I manage the classroom.

***Critical Thinking Skills***

Students should learn to think critically about the material in the course (primarily films and readings, but also lectures and the occasional handout). This is a difficult skill to learn, but one that pays dividends in every other class and in the outside world. After all, we want educated and critical citizens.



I divide critical thinking skills into three components. First, students must be perceptive viewers, readers and listeners. Even where the course readings consist largely of a standard textbook, I try to model this skill in class discussions by initially responding to many questions with “Are you asking X, Y, or Z?” This isn’t evasion or stalling – rather, understanding the nuances of an argument is a prerequisite to analyzing it.

Second, students should have the ability to challenge and dissect arguments made by the course materials, fellow students, or myself. There are some students who are looking for “the way it is” to be handed to them from on high. I aim to challenge those students by presenting concrete, unsolved puzzles, and then presenting a number of possible solutions, requiring them to compare the evidence for each. Since the questions I ask in class are usually open questions within the discipline of political science, there are no easy answers. When I open a class discussion, engage with students doing discussion exercises, or grade homework assignments, I play “devil’s advocate” for each student or group, taking a different position as I interact with each student. It is therefore disappointing when students simply parrot back what they believe the professor wants to hear. Their own thoughts count.

Just as important as the ability to analyze an argument is the ability to construct and defend one, choosing one among several imperfect explanations as the “best bet” for explaining a phenomenon or the superior normative framework. There are some students who are very good at critiquing existing explanations, but who then use this skill as an excuse to avoid argument altogether: “None of these explanations are perfect, so it’s all just a matter of opinion.” This is illustrated by Russian dissident Gary Kasparov (2017):

*"The point of modern propaganda isn't only to misinform or push an agenda. It is to exhaust your critical thinking, to annihilate truth. Modern dictatorships have become far more sophisticated still in how to achieve their ends. They learned that by constant bombardment, your senses become overwhelmed. You start to doubt, to shrug your shoulders, to tune out, and that makes you vulnerable. Instead of pushing one lie, one fake, they can push a dozen, or a hundred, and that's pretty good odds against one lonely truth. They win when you say: 'Who can be sure what really happened?'"*

So I do push students to weigh the strengths and flaws of each competing explanation and identify the one which is most likely to be correct. In sum, I try to combine the focus on argument dissection that one finds in academic debate with the focus on puzzle-solving that one finds in science and philosophy.

### *Communication Skills*

As a former debater and debate coach, I appreciate the importance of being able to write and speak clearly. Of course, one of the most important ways to accomplish this is by assigning writing (and, in some courses, speaking) activities that require effective argument. In order to help students proofread their work, I set up a page on the Canvas course site illustrating the most common student grammatical errors: word mix-ups, sentence fragments, agreement of subject and verb, and improper comma or apostrophe usage. I am then able to simply write the number of the error next to it on the page so that the student can look up the error and the solution. This technique allows me to focus my comments on the thesis, structure, and style of students’ essays.

Oral communication skills are roughly as important as written communication skills. People need to be able to make public arguments and defend them while remaining poised and persuasive. The short film project in this course is really designed to give the students new tools to express themselves and to make arguments. Film is a powerful medium, and even the shyest of people can use it to express what they may not be able to coherently communicate in person.



### *Moral Development*

One goal of a liberal arts education is to render students more capable of self-reflection and positive development. Moral education is essential to this process, yet may be the most difficult task facing an educator. Students must first be convinced that the ethical life is the best life. Fortunately, most students already have a set of values, albeit sometimes under-examined and often inconsistent ones. The task of the professor is to challenge their moral beliefs in such a manner that students have to choose between competing values and become more consistent in their moral judgments. It is not the task of the professor to ensure that students adhere to a particular value system or ideology; instead, the ideal professor will challenge students of any ideology and make them more consistent in their judgments.

For this to be possible, students need to recognize their own underlying assumptions (often their religious faith, combined with a cynical view of human behavior) that make a system of values possible. They must then be able to defend the connections between those assumptions and their value choices. In short, political science needs to be seen as part of a broader liberal arts curriculum which prepares students to do justice (as students understand it) in the world. Otherwise, we risk training sophists who simply use their skills to manipulate others.

### *Subject Mastery*

Finally, each class I teach has a certain “core” of material I expect students to master. This material is the necessary data for intelligent discussion of the questions posed by the course. Mastery is different than memorization; it means being able to apply the material to an unanticipated question or situation. The nature of these questions determines the type of pedagogy used. In this class, I combine lectures, large-group discussion, occasional small-group discussions, and learning-by-doing, especially in the cases of film criticism, propaganda campaign analysis, and documentary construction.

## Course Schedule

Dates	Topic	Readings and Films	Due
June 5	Techniques of Persuasion	None	
June 7	What is Documentary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: <i>Nanook of the North</i> (79 min)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>American Dream</i> (94 min)</li> </ul>	Film Notes x 2 <b>Academic Integrity Exercise</b>
June 12	What is Propaganda?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Jowett and O'Donnell, <u>Propaganda and Persuasion</u>, Chapters 1-3</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Triumph of the Will</i> (104 min)</li> <li>• <b>Extra Credit:</b> Watch <i>The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl</i> (181 min) next, and turn in film notes for it <u>in addition to</u> those for <i>Triumph of the Will</i> (up to 30 extra points)</li> </ul>	Film Notes ( <i>Triumph of the Will</i> )
June 14	What Makes a Documentary "Political?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: <i>Boys State</i> (109 min)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Who We Are</i> (117 min)</li> </ul>	Film Notes x 2
June 19	NO CLASS: Juneteenth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	No Class
June 21	What Ethical Rules Apply to Documentaries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Rabiger and Hermann, <u>Directing the Documentary</u>, Excerpts (Canvas)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Capturing the Friedmans</i> (107 min)</li> </ul>	Film Notes
June 26	"In Their Own Words:" Whose Voices are Amplified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: <i>Jesus Camp</i> (87 min)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Obsession</i> (77 min)</li> <li>• <b>Optional</b> (suggested): Read Nichols, <u>Introduction to Documentary</u>, Chapter 9 (On Canvas, Files tab → <i>Writing Resources</i> folder), prior to writing your critique.</li> </ul>	Film Critique I: Compare how <i>Jesus Camp</i> and <i>Obsession</i> represent their subjects using "their own words."
June 28	Does Propaganda Work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Jowett and O'Donnell, <u>Propaganda and Persuasion</u>, Chapters 4 and 8</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Electoral Propaganda</i> (102 min)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Boogie Man</i> (89 min)</li> </ul>	Film Notes x 2
July 3	How Should Documentaries Portray War?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Jowett and O'Donnell, <u>Propaganda and Persuasion</u>, Chapter 5</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Desert One</i> (107 min) – <b>contains graphic images of American casualties</b></li> <li>• Watch: <i>No End in Sight</i> (102 min) – <b>contains footage of IED explosions in Iraq</b></li> </ul>	Film Critique II: Compare <i>Desert One</i> and <i>No End in Sight</i> as war documentaries.
July 5	How Do We Analyze a Propaganda Campaign?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Jowett and O'Donnell, <u>Propaganda and Persuasion</u>, Chapters 6-7</li> <li>• Read: Soules, "Toward a Rhetoric of Film" (Canvas)</li> <li>• Select a Propaganda Campaign on Canvas (NRA or AARP) and View its Materials</li> </ul>	Propaganda Campaign Analysis

July 10	What Modes of Documentary Have Been Created?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Nichols, <u>Introduction to Documentary</u>, Chapter 6 (Canvas)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>This is What Democracy Looks Like</i> (72 min)</li> <li>• <b>Optional Reading:</b> Nichols, <u>Introduction to Documentary</u>, Chapter 7 (Canvas)</li> </ul>	Storyboards (Forms on Canvas)
July 12	How Do You Make an Argument Through Documentary Film?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: <i>We Were Here</i> (89 min)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>How to Survive a Plague</i> (109 min)</li> </ul>	Film Critique III: Compare the two films' arguments
July 17	How Do Research Projects Make Political Arguments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: <i>7 Up</i> (29 min) and then <i>28 Up</i> (136 min)</li> <li>• <b>Extra Credit:</b> Also watch <i>63 Up</i> (143 min) and turn in a <i>film critique</i> about the <i>Up</i> Series (up to 60 points), <u>in addition to</u> the assigned Film Notes.</li> </ul>	Film Notes ( <i>7 Up</i> and <i>28 Up</i> may be combined, using the chart handed out in class)
July 19	How Should a Politician be Interviewed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: <i>The Fog of War</i> (107 min)</li> </ul>	Rough Cut (Don't forget to <i>render</i> the video first – ideally as an H.264-encoded mp4 file)
July 24	Can We Distinguish Information and Persuasion from Propaganda?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Jowett and O'Donnell, <u>Propaganda and Persuasion</u>, Appendix</li> <li>• Read: Donbas War Handout (Canvas)</li> <li>• Watch: <i>Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom</i> (102 min)</li> </ul>	Film Critique IV: Analyze the degree to which <i>Winter on Fire</i> is itself propaganda
July 26	Short Film Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	Final Film



## Appendix: Film Project Guide

Goal: To create a 5-10 minute political documentary, implementing techniques of information, persuasion, and/or propaganda learned in class.

Learning Objectives: By making your own political documentary, you will actually experience (rather than simply see or read about) approaches to persuasion, how best to communicate a political message, the ethical boundaries between propaganda and persuasion other than propaganda, and how to construct an argument in a new medium. Just as importantly, you will learn some technical skills that will permit you to do things you would not otherwise be capable of doing – being able to create short films or other video presentations will help make you a better artist, businessperson, lawyer, political analyst, scholar, teacher, etc.

Directions (see the syllabus for the rubrics for individual assignments):

1. Select an idea for your film. Note that definitions of “political” are fairly broad, including not only government and what we traditionally call “politics,” but also individual and social responses to collective political or social problems.
  - a. Things to avoid:
    - i. Topics that cannot be addressed in ten minutes. Examples: General films about “big,” extensively-argued issues such as abortion, the death penalty, marijuana/drugs, taxes, the economy, evolution, the War on Terrorism, etc. You could address any of these by focusing in on one argument or subset of the issue, but give up hope of persuading people on the entire issue in ten minutes.
    - ii. The film cannot be directly about me, your classmates as classmates (as opposed to interviewing them as employees of their employer or members of particular social groups), or the class itself. You have my consent to film my lectures, but not to record your fellow students without their express consent. Also, I cannot be an interviewee, for then I would have to evaluate myself when evaluating the film.
    - iii. Don’t simply copy someone else’s film (i.e. remake it). If another (short- or long-form) film inspires an idea, explain that to me so that we can think of ways to make your film distinct from previous work.
  - b. You are free to create your own topic and thesis, but be sure you can answer the question, “What political argument are you making?”
  - c. Here are some reasonable (political and feasible in Killeen) ideas to get you thinking. Note the vagueness of many of the topics. You will need to be much more specific, since you need to fit a complete argument into 5-10 minutes:
    - A campaign ad for the politician/cause of your choice. Use the examples and types on the Living Room Candidate website [<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>] to get ideas for simple storyboards.
    - The “human vs. nature” documentary. Something is threatened – native plants or animals by invasive species or ornamentals, cute puppies by puppy mills, or the environment by pollution. In most cases, you don’t need to film the actual bad stuff. It’s enough to have a voice-over while you’re showing pretty flowers or cute puppies.
    - The pro-business (or pro-government) documentary. Show the workers doing things that benefit people we care about (like us). Meanwhile, tell us how the government is treating the business, or how the government should treat the business.
    - The anti-business documentary. As above, but show the business doing bad things like overpricing or polluting. Interview a disgruntled former worker. Show how some lobbyist

managed to kill meaningful regulation (perhaps by saying so while you show a picture of some CEO or lobbyist, then a picture of the Capitol).

- A film exposing sexism, racism, or discrimination of any kind, from local businesses to family life. An easy one is to film a couple going about their family routine. Show that one does housework while the other one sits on his/her butt. A voice-over can describe how common the problem is and what changes need to happen (individual, social, or policy changes).
- A film about the funding or other political elements of education. Interview a teacher, show the lack of technology, in a classroom, etc. Alternatively, show teachers living high off the hog at taxpayers' expense and ignoring student needs.
- A film about city government doing something wrong (example: film a pile of garbage if you think its waste management stinks). Getting them on film telling you to shut down the camera is always nice, since it makes anyone look guilty.
- A film about any aspect of TAMUCT, using the above techniques. Remember that there must be a political aspect to the film. For example, you could examine the impact of Texas education laws or federal financial aid rules on TAMUCT.
- A film about some volunteer organization, church, or other social actor doing good or bad (as an example of what happens in the absence of government control, for example). You can always interview one of the members, then go over to some opposing church and interview them. The result may cast one of them in a bad light, or it may highlight the importance of religious freedom.
- A film about poverty in Killeen, and how some programs are insufficient to meet the needs of the poor or how some programs are being abused by people who don't need them.
- A film about the effects of war or military service on soldiers or the mismanagement of resources (human or material) by the Army.
- A film about shortcomings in military capabilities and how to remedy them.
- A film about the political battle to establish TAMUCT (hint: UMHB spent millions lobbying against plans for a 4-year college in Killeen during the early 1990s).
- A film analyzing the claims/consequences of another political film. Example: a film assessing the accuracy of campaign ads – local, state, or national.
- A film about obstacles people face and how they might be overcome (personal initiative, community support, changes in the law – all have political implications).
- A film about the Taliban, using an interview from someone who fought them in Afghanistan combined with video clips of Taliban actions or speeches.
- Observe whether most people obey (or just how many people disobey) a frequently-violated, easily observable law (seatbelt, child restraints, lawn maintenance, noise control ordinances, parking laws, etc) in Killeen. Your footage should suggest a cause or solution.
- Check the local papers for local political news. Any public controversy is suitable material for a documentary, provided that the controversy is political in some sense. For example, check the headlines on <http://www.kdhnews.com/>

2. Have a thesis. Be able to state your political argument in one sentence, if asked in class.
  - a. Your film must answer a question or solve a problem, which must be political in nature. In terms of your film, your thesis includes both the question/problem and the proposed answer/solution. Both of these should be things that can actually be visually depicted, although some voice-over may be necessary.
  - b. Your film does not need to directly state your political argument (i.e. rely on the central route of persuasion). It can use peripheral cues to indirectly support the thesis or influence the

audience in the direction of the thesis. For example, showing the happy life of a child born with serious genetic problems can be a way of arguing about abortion and/or prenatal genetic testing without ever actually mentioning these (controversial, salient) issues. Be creative about how to persuade the audience.

3. Keep the following rules in mind. Rewrite your thesis if necessary to comply.
  - a. Don't do anything illegal or ask others to do so. Filming someone else's public activities is OK, as long as you aren't encouraging them to do anything illegal (perhaps by the mere presence of a camera).
  - b. If your film is likely to endanger someone's job (a teacher complaining about funding, a worker claiming discrimination, etc) then film them in silhouette or with their back to you. Then voice-over their words so *their* voice is not heard.
  - c. In all cases, assume that your film will eventually make its way onto YouTube. Political documentary is not a genre for truly private reflection.
  - d. Don't lie. If you want to create propaganda, then use the more subtle tools of the trade. But don't outright lie.
4. Think about a storyboard. For a documentary, there is no "script" containing plot and dialogue (except for voice-overs, which do require scripting). Instead, the storyboard is a series of clips to be shot or inserted into the documentary. Before you settle on a storyboard, ask yourself some questions:
  - a. Why do I need to film this? If your visuals are just a little decoration for a voice-over argument, then you might as well be doing a podcast. The visuals should make part of your argument for you.
  - b. Do I really have the access I need? Most people don't like being filmed. Students often plan to interview people who are not permitted to give interviews, or who will decline to be filmed. Cameras are banned in some places.
  - c. What percent of the material is film I can shoot myself? It must be more than 2/3, but ideally it would be 100% since it can be tough to download or extract video clips and get them in the proper format to mix with your own. To repeat, two-thirds of the film must be your own footage, which can include either video you shoot or text/pictures/a slideshow with voice-over that you create on a computer. However, the footage does not necessarily have to have been shot for this class. Perhaps you already have some footage from home movies or whatnot that is relevant to your argument.
5. Write the storyboard – **DUE ON July 10 (Hand in storyboard forms including planned scripts for voice-overs)**. The storyboard identifies the scenes, the purpose that each scene serves, how the scene will be filmed (or found), and the order in which scenes will be presented.
  - a. Very few films require only one clip/scene. Unless you've struck gold, you probably need more than one clip and a bit of video editing to make the film.
  - b. Identify some external clips (three are required, absent an explicit exemption given by the instructor) that you can use. I can show you how to capture and trim a streaming video clip, for example. Keep these short and sweet, since the bulk of the film is your own footage.
  - c. Remember the 5-10 minute requirement, as well as the requirement that you must film at least two-thirds of the final product. To identify the length of a clip you haven't shot yet, use a watch and describe what is being shown. For example, "I'm showing cars passing by. One, two, three, four, five cars." If you think that's going to be one minute long, you're probably mistaken. It's likely to be closer to 15 seconds. On the other hand, interviews can easily take a minute per question, depending on the depth of the responses.
  - d. Use the forms posted on Canvas (just print/photocopy extra copies if needed).
6. Bring any external clips which you wish to trim and use to class on **July 12**. Use a CD-R, a USB thumb drive, or a file server to ensure that you can access the clips during that day's class. You can bring stuff

that wasn't on the storyboard if you didn't realize it would be useful or didn't know it existed before now.

7. Plan for audio.
  - a. The built-in microphones on digital cameras and camcorders might be adequate for your indoor needs if the subject is very close. But outside, wind noise can render them useless. Even inside, you may have difficulty dealing with background noise or distance. The department and library have audio recorders that can be checked out.
  - b. If you record audio separately, allow yourself some extra time to import the audio into your film and sync it with the video. This can be done in Camtasia Studio and virtually all other video editing programs.
8. Shoot the footage you need.
  - a. Prioritize interviews, since interviewees are notorious for missing film dates or deciding not to participate. These are due with the rough cut on **July 15** (bring the forms to class).
  - b. Be prepared to re-shoot some footage. Footage doesn't always come out the way you anticipated.
9. Assemble the rough cut – **DUE on July 19**.
  - a. Be sure you have all of your clips.
  - b. Be sure that each clip is trimmed properly (it shows what you want and no more).
  - c. Now add titles, subtitles, and credits using video editing software. Do be sure to double-check spelling and grammar.
  - d. A rough cut is created by simply dropping in your trimmed clips in the proper order to see what you have. Play it and identify the weak spots (often audio or inadequate lighting).
  - e. Render the rough cut as H.264 (mp4) video and bring it with you on a CD, DVD, USB stick, or memory card (that I can keep for the next week).
  - f. Remember your interview forms, if any.
10. Edit the final cut – **DUE on July 26**.
  - a. Add or subtract material to get within the time limits.
  - b. Add a voice-over or background music if needed
  - c. Select transitions between scenes
  - d. Mix the soundtrack to even out the volume, make it easier to hear interviewees, etc.
  - e. Make changes suggested by the instructor.
  - f. You can now drop external clips and/or the interview if you don't believe that they improve your argument.
  - g. Render and bring the film to class so we can watch it during the film festival. Be prepared to answer questions about your film and its argument (the Q&A grade).

<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Subcomponent</b>	<b>Possible</b>	<b>Points</b>
<i>Completeness</i>	Student did all that was asked in preparing the final cut: a five-minute short political documentary or piece of political propaganda, using at least 3:20 of your own footage (or 2/3 of the film, whichever is greater)	Documentary Short	5	
		Political Focus/Thesis	5	
		Duration is 5-10 minutes	5	
		Used own footage (2/3 or 3:20)	15	
<i>Argument</i>	The quality of evidence used to support the thesis is high	Persuasive; not necessarily academic	15	
<i>Material quality</i>	The clips used are clearly visible and audible, with multiple camera perspectives where appropriate.	Visibility	10	
		Audibility	5	
<i>Professionalism</i>	The student has made appropriate use of audio balancing and visual transitions to render the film a seamless whole rather than just a string of clips.	Audio is level – no sudden increases or decreases in volume	5	
		Visual transitions exist between each clip	5	
<i>Engagement:</i>	The film engages its viewers and holds their attention, while using techniques of persuasion or information to shape their attitudes or knowledge about the subject of the film.	Holds the attention of viewers	10	
		Persuasive/informative techniques used	20	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	