Course Purpose

This course focuses on the critical evaluation of the presentation of economic theory and/or history, either explicitly or implicitly, in motion pictures. The primary goals of the course are to: (1) develop the student’s ability in writing and speaking, (2) to enhance the student’s ability to work with others using economic theory and data to critically evaluate motion pictures from the perspective of a trained economist; and (3) evaluate the economic policy implications implicit in a given motion picture.

Course Organization

The course is divided into five segments, some of which of necessity will overlap, as follows:

Part One: This is the initial establishment of the course’s structure and introduction of the basic goals of the course. This will take place in the first two meetings of the class.

Part Two: I will present and analyze a film that has several economic themes. This will include time for class discussion. This will encompass five class periods. Towards the end of this segment, teams will be formed, hopefully the result of Hayekian spontaneous order. Teams will consist of approximately three students.

Part Three: A second film, or a combination of films on the same subject, will be shown. This film will be concerned with an important topic of contemporary and/or historical significance. Each student will be required to write a short-paper (5-7 pages plus bibliography) discussing some aspect of the film(s).

Part Four: Each team will select a film, from a list of films provided by the instructor that the team will study and analyze. The team will prepare a written paper on the selected film and present the film and their analysis to the class. The instructor will meet with each team on an individual team basis after Part Three is completed and before Part Five begins.

http://www.colorado.edu/Economics/fall01-syllabi/fall01-4999-008syllabus.htm
Part Five: During the last eight weeks of the semester, each team will present its film and provide an oral economic analysis of the film based on the written paper prepared by the team. The written paper is due on the day that the team begins its presentation. Papers turned in after this deadline will be reduced by one half of a letter grade for each day beyond the due date. For example, an A paper that is one day late will receive a grade of 3.5. The letter grade on the paper will be a team grade.

Grading

Attendance and evaluation of peer presentations: 30%
Individual paper: 20%
Team Paper: 30%
Presentation: 20%

Textbook


References

There are many sources for additional information. Browse in classification PN 1933 in the Reference Room and the Periodical Room of Norlin Library. Some of these sources are:

1. The Holt Foreign Film Guide, by R. Bergan and R. Karney. This is a guide to over 2,000 non-English language films from more than 50 countries. This book covers classics like La Dolce Vita and Z as well as more unusual films and provides credits and appraisals. There are many similar guides available at Barnes and Noble bookstore.

2. Movies Unlimited Video Catalog. Catalog describes over 35,000 movies available on video. The Video Station has a listing of most movies available on VHS or DVD.

3. The Filmgoers Companion, by Leslie Halliwell, in at least ten editions. Published by Harper Collins.


5. Film Comment, published bimonthly by The Film Society of Lincoln Center. Available in Norlin Library and is sold at Barnes and Noble bookstore.

6. Film scripts are available from many sources. Try www.script-o-rama.com.

Writing the Paper

What kind of paper is expected of an undergraduate?

In general, one's paper will be scholarly, but not a research paper. One should discuss the topic in an organized manner—in other words logically. One should first introduce the topic and then examine various arguments or carefully developed positions about how this topic should be understood. Most of the time one will wish to have a face off between two or more prominent positions or explore thoroughly the implications of one position. In either case, one needs to consider objections to the various ways of trying to understand a topic and conclude the discussion only after these objections have been addressed.

This paper must be typed single spaced in a Times Roman Font of 12 points with double spacing between paragraphs. Endnotes and bibliography are to be on pages following the analysis and may be of one to five pages. William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White's The Elements of Style, 3rd edition will be the standard by which the non-economic aspects of the paper will be judged.

An excellent paper will not rely exclusively on hits from the Internet. I expect you to use sources usually found in libraries. However, the Internet can be a very useful tool. If you use the Internet, the following may be useful.

Smart Searching

1. Phrase your search as a question.
2. Think of the important words. Then think of words that are related to the important words.
   Write all the words down.
3. Go to your favorite search engine. E.g., alta vista, yahoo, google, etc.
4. Type in two or three words from your list, making sure that they are spelled correctly, then search. Open a new window, type the words in again, but in a different order and search again.
5. Identify the common links between the two searches. Read the very brief summaries provided.
6. When you open a web site, open the page in a new window so that you can go back to your list of hits.
7. Open a text editor window. Copy and paste the web sites URL (address) into that window and follow it with annotation of your own. Do that for five sites.
8. See if you have found the answer you were looking for. If not, reformulate your question to come up with new key words.

Disability Statement

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office in Willard 322 (phone 303-492-8671).

Professor
Eliot Soloway

University of Michigan

From the New York Times,

August 10, 2000