Capital Screens (Lee Grieveson)

I am interested in this class in exploring screen media and political economy in the neo-liberal era beginning in the 1970s and extending to the current mutations of neo-liberalism and new forms of fascism. I mean the and above principally in two ways: 1) as a history of the economies of screen media and related policy frameworks from the corporate reconstruction of Hollywood beginning in the 1970s to the emergence of new forms of digital networked media beginning in the 1990s and expanding thereafter when it becomes “social,” mobile and convergent across filmic, televisival, and computer screens. 2) as a history of the ways screen media has been shaped and used to facilitate and sustain the political and economic principles and practices of advanced, de-regulated, capital integral to the accelerated globalization and new imperialism of the neo-liberal era and culminating in the surveillance capitalism fundamental to digital media. Our explorations will include watching screen media and new media forms produced in the service of these agendas, as well as reading materials about screen media and global political economy (e.g. governmental policy documents shaping media ownership; the place of screen media in global trade agreements; the lobbying, economic plans, and records of corporate media entities from film studios to Google/YouTube.) Capital Screens, then, pursues a genealogy of our current configuration of media and political economy, focusing in particular on the ways in which screen media has been shaped and used to sustain exploitative political and economic practices that have been deeply damaging to people around the world and to shared environments. The class could run in conjunction with a Radical Screen Media class exploring the ways in which film/screen media have been used by media-makers and activists around the world to explicate and challenge imperialism, global inequality, and other forms of exploitation.

1. Introduction: Militant Liberalism and the World According to Hollywood

Screening: Star Wars (Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1977); Top Gun (Paramount, USA, 1986).

2. Empires of Media

Screening: The Matrix (Warner Bros., USA, 1999); Iron Man (Marvel/Paramount, USA, 2008).

3. The Digital and Convergent Screen


4. The Spectacles of Corporate Property

Screening: The Apprentice (NBC, USA, 2004-); Keeping Up with the Kardashians (E!, USA, 2007-); Location, Location, Location (Channel 4, U.K., 2000-); example from global sports media (likely a football game in the competition sponsored by Gazprom, the state-owned Russian gas company.)

5. The Eye (Phone) of Power

Screening: Selections from YouTube, including Google produced content; screen media produced by new media corporations like Amazon and Netflix; selection of TV/online advertisements for smartphones from 2007; do no track (dir. Brett Gaylor) documentary about online surveillance available here: https://donottrack-doc.com/en/intro/.

6. Liberal Fascism Today: The Movie

Screening: extracts: Hillary: The Movie (Citizens United, USA, 2008); Occupy Unmasked (Glittering Steel, USA, 2012); Clinton Cash (Glittering Steel, 2016); Brexit: The Movie (dir. Martin Durkin, U.K., 2016); and Trumping Democracy (Thomas Huchon, USA, 2017); HyperNormalisation (Adam Curtis, UK, 2016).