Broadly this class focuses on how media is used to facilitate and sustain exploitative political and economic practices – e.g. how media helped facilitate imperialism – and, dialectically, how media has been used by individuals and groups to contest or speak back to power. Our focus traverses history but increasingly comes to focus on the present moment, which is characterized by rapid changes in media practices such as the relatively recent emergence of social media and complexly related transformations in political and economic practices and systems (e.g. the election of Donald Trump, the “Brexit” referendum, the rise of new forms of “popular” nationalism, and new practices of propaganda.) The course has developed over the period I have been teaching it to focus more closely on these contemporary transformations as they happen in front of our eyes with bewildering pace. Our goals are to foster interesting explorations and conversations about media and our political and economic realities. Our (expansive) goals are to understand the role film and media plays in the orchestration of power, and how this has been contested and transformed. The film material and scholarship will also enable us to learn about political struggles mostly occluded in mainstream corporate media.

In the midst of these broad agendas, the class pursues some pragmatic objectives: it will expand knowledge of cinema history, including different histories of production, distribution, and exhibition. (I understand “cinema” here broadly to refer to the production and dissemination of moving pictures, and cinema to be a form of mass media that is inherently inter-medial.) It will explore different forms of this cinema (documentary, experimental, propagandistic, fictional) and lead us to examine the politics of form across history. It will explore the writings of cultural activists and academics as they examine questions about media, power, and influence. It will produce knowledge about past political struggles as mediated through film (and push us to learn about the socio-political contexts in which the films were made and circulated). Plus it will necessarily prompt questions about how different state systems engage with media and how the production and regulation of media are political acts that shape the possible public sphere. In pursuing these lines of enquiry our work will necessarily be inter-disciplinary, and we will draw in particular (but not exclusively) from scholarship in political history and political science, public policy, film, media, and cultural studies, history, and broadly progressive traditions of historical, cultural, and media analysis.

I have recently completed a book on the liberal state and corporate use of cinema in the interwar period so am familiar with some of this material – but the subsequent history of that process, and the global history of cinemas of resistance, is something I am learning about and I hope that this class will be a place for collective learning. In this it makes sense to draw on the interests that you bring to the class from your own experiences. Currently there is also one week left blank in the schedule that we can collectively decide upon. I personally would like to learn more
in particular about how cinema has been used to help produce social, economic and political emancipation, and how we might participate in that. My hope is the class will start collectively to produce answers to those questions, and even act upon them. Likewise, and related to this, the assessment for the module is varied. You can either:

1) Write a traditional scholarly essay of 6000 words on a subject germane to the topic agreed in advance with me.

2) Write a report, of similar length, for a program for a season or festival of political films that seeks to take some of the things we have talked about in class to a broader public. (It may be this could also be arranged with screenings at UCL and this part of the assessment for the module is one way of taking the issues from the classroom to a broader public.)

3) Find and critically examine two examples of “film” propaganda, asking questions about who produced the material, with what goals in mind, what form the propaganda takes, how it was circulated, and with what effects. (It may be that some of this material can be made available online as the beginning of a project to examine in particular corporate propaganda.)

4) Make a short film (no more than 6 minutes) with a related 1000 research report that explores how your film utilizes ideas learnt from the history of political filmmaking.

_nb_: if you are taking this class for 15, rather than 30 credits, these assessments are cut in half (e.g. a 3000 word essay, a 3 minute film). _Deadline_: Monday 9th January, 4pm.

Two final notes: 1) Many of the films we will watch will be of poor quality, on various levels, and some of them will be from video copies (mostly from my collections) and some from low quality digital versions. There is a politics to the high-cost of film production, to what is archived, and what is made available, that merits reflection. But do bear in mind that many of the films will not necessarily be “entertaining” or “interesting” as aesthetic objects – but then, to my mind, the films are sometimes the least interesting part of these stories. 2) I would advise reading this book to provide a useful backdrop for some of our discussions: Eric Hobsbawn, _The Age of Extremes, 1914-1991_ (London: Abacus, 1994). But for further exploration, see also (for example – I can provide other suggestions also): Giovanni Arrighi, _The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times_ (London: Verso, 1994), in particular 58-73 and 269-299; David Harvey, _A Brief History of Neoliberalism_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Harvey, _The New Imperialism_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Perry Anderson, “Imperium,” _New Left Review_ 83 (Sept.-Oct. 2013), 5-111 (yes, an essay that is over 100 pages long). You will find it useful also to watch Noam Chomsky, _Manufacturing Consent, _currently available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzuffDdO6uKg. You will likely notice that this syllabus asks you to do a lot of reading, in subjects often far from “film.” Suck it up. The world is a complex place, and we have little hope of understanding it – let alone helping change it – if we do not read and view as widely as possible. The philosopher and historian Michel Foucault once said that history requires relentless erudition. I know of no other route to that than through curiosity and hard work. You are required to read all the “What you have to read” section before class; and explore the other materials when possible.
Week 1: **Introduction**

**Screening**, 4th October, 9.30-12: *Zero Dark Thirty* (Columbia, USA, 2012.)

**Seminar**, 5th October, 11-1.

**What you have to read:**

- *Zero Dark Thirty* was subject (briefly) of a Senate investigation into the ways the CIA shared classified information with the filmmakers, resulting in a letter criticizing the film sent to the CEO of Sony (the corporate owners of Columbia) by Diane Feinstein, the Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Carl Levin, the Chair of the Senate Armed Service Committee, and John McCain, Ranking Member Senate Armed Service Committee, available here: [http://documents.latimes.com/feinstein-mccain-levin-statement-zero-dark-thirty/#sthash.z5EU1aWL.dpuf](http://documents.latimes.com/feinstein-mccain-levin-statement-zero-dark-thirty/#sthash.z5EU1aWL.dpuf)

**What you might also read:**


**What you might also read and watch if interested:**

• Anne McClintock, “Paranoid Empire: Specters from Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib,” *small axe* 28 (March 2009). [available online through the library catalogue.]


**Week 2: **

**Screening, 11th October, 9-11:** Selection of Spanish-American War films, 1898-1989; Selection of films of the Panama Canal, 1904-1914; *The Bond, A Liberty Loan Appeal* (Committee on Public Information/ Charlie Chaplin, U.S., 1917); *Poor Mrs. Jones* (US Department of Agriculture, USA, 1925); *Wheels of Progress* (US Bureau of public Roads, US Department of Agriculture, 1927); *West Africa Calling* (Conservative and Unionist Film, U.K., 1927); *Empire Trade* (Conservative and Unionist Film, U.K., 1934), *Tropical Hookworm* (Bekefilm, 1936: these last three films can be seen on the Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire website: [http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/](http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/)).

**Seminar, 12th October, 11-1.**

**What you have to read:**

• George Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York: Harper and Brothers
Publishers, 1920), 117-132. (The book is online at: http://archive.org/stream/howweadvertameri00creerich/howweadvertameri00creerich_djvu.txt)

- Lee Grieveson, “Empire Marketing Board,” available here:
  http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/production-company/empire-marketing-board

- David Harvey, The New Imperialism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), vi1-25. (This book is available online through the UCL library catalogue.)

What you might also read:
- Tom Rice has written about West Africa Calling, Empire Trade, and Tropical Hookworm respectively, here:
  http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1329
  http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/6734
  http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/735
What else you might read and watch if interested:

- Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, currently available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzufDdQ6uKg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzufDdQ6uKg); *The Crisis of Civilization* (Dean Puckett, 2012), currently available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMgOTQ7D_lk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMgOTQ7D_lk)

Week 3: Corporate PR/opaganda

Screening, 18th October, 9-12: *Sam and the Bolsheviki* (Ford, U.S., 1919); *Democracy in Education* (Ford, 1919, U.S.); *The Road to Happiness* (Bureau of Public Roads/Ford, U.S., 1924); *To New Horizons* (General Motors, 1939); *The Middleton Family at the World’s Fair* (Westinghouse, 1939); *Long Distance* (At&T, 1941); Adam Curtis, *The Century of the Self* (London: BBC, 2005), Episode 1, “Happiness Machines.”

Seminar, 19th October, 11-1.

What you have to read


What you might also read:

What else you might read and watch if interested:

- Edward Bernays, “Counsel on Public Relations: A Definition,” January 26th, 1927, *Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929*, currently available here: http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/coolbib:@field%28SUBJ+@band%28Public+relations+%29%29
- Website (with lots of interesting material): The Centre for Media and Democracy’s PRWatch here http://www.prwatch.org/cmd
- PR techniques are used by states. See, for example, PsyWar (Metanoia, 2010, currently available online here http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/psywar/) on the U.S.’s use of PR or, for example, on the PR strategies of the repressive Bahraini state (supported by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia) see Bahrain: The Media War (Al Jazeera, available here http://watchdocumentary.com/watch/bahrain-the-media-war-video_a77075f25.html, as well as the blog of Guardian journalist Brian Whitaker documenting the connections between Bahrain and western PR firms at http://al-bab.com/, and the website Bahrain Watch at https://bahrainwatch.org/ which examines the abuse of state power in Bahrain and documents the ongoing sale of arms by British and U.S. arms firms in particular to Bahrain.

Week 4: The Militant Liberty of the Cold War

**Screening**, 25th October, 9-12: *Why We Fight* series (Office of War Information, U.S., 1942-1945); extract *Animal Farm* (Halas and Batchelor, U.K./USA, 1954); *Strength of the Free World* (Economic Cooperation Administration, USA, 1951); extract *Why Vietnam?* (Department of Defense, 1965); *Why We Fight* (Eugene Jarecki, U.S., 2006).

**Seminar**, 26th October, 11-1.

What you have to read:

- Jennifer Fay, *Theaters of Occupation: Hollywood and the Reeducation of Postwar Germany* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 39-82. (You can read instead this article: Jennifer Fay, “Germany is a Boy in Trouble,” *Cultural Critique*, 64 (Fall 2006).)


**What you might also read:**


**What else you might read and watch if interested:**


• Robert T. Davis II, *U.S. Army and the Media in the 20th Century* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), currently available here: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zo9XXTwizIC&pg=PA101&dq=office+of+war+information&hl=en&sa=X&ei=tlj-tV1bLL8e4UbrfgRg&ved=0CEQQ6AEwBzgK#v=onepage&q=office%20of%20war%20information&f=false

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• *Hearts and Minds* (Peter Davis, USA, 1974); *Propaganda* (Slavko Martinov, New Zealand, 2012), currently available here: https://archive.org/details/PropagandaNorthKoreanFilmExposesNwo

Week 5: **Global Third Cinema**


*Seminar*, 2nd November, 11-1.

**What you have to read:**


**What you might also read:**

• Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Towards a third cinema: notes and experiences for the development of cinema of liberation in the third world,” in Michael T. Martin (ed.), *New Latin American Cinema, Volume 1: Theory, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 33-58. (Nb.: if you have not read this for the MAFS core course, make sure you read it before class.)


Mike Wayne, Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema (London, 2001).


What else you might read or watch if interested:

- Apologies of an Economic Hitman (dir. Stelios Louloglou, Greece/USA, 2008), currently available here (but perhaps elsewhere in better copies): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUDTRfbs-oM (the book the film is based on is available here: https://archive.org/details/ConfessionsOfAnEconomicHitman_257)
- Stealing Africa (dir. Christoffer Guldbradsen, 2013), currently available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNYeumiAOfU

Week 6: Reading Week. No screening or classes this week.

Week 7: Digital Activism


Seminar, 16th November 11-1.

What you have to read:

- Christian Christensen, “Political documentary, online organization and activist synergies,” Studies in Documentary Film, 3:2 (2009), 77-94.

What you might also read:


What else you might read and watch if interested:
• The Square (dir. Jehane Noujaim, Egypt, 2013).
• The Rashomon Project: an online toolkit for assembling multiple perspective chronologies, bringing images generated from political protests together to better establish truth: http://automation.berkeley.edu/rashomon/

Week 8: Killer images

Screening, 22nd November, 9-12: The Act of Killing (Joshua Oppenheimer, Christine Cynn, and anonymous, 2012).
Watch on your own: Standard Operating Procedure (Errol Morris, 2008).

Seminar, 23rd November, 11-1.

What you have to read:

What you might also read:
• http://www.actofkilling.com/#about

What else you might read and watch if interested:
• The Look of Silence (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2014); Taxi to the Dark Side (Alex Gibney, 2007).

Week 9: Cyber/Culture/Meme Wars

Screening, 29th October, 10-12: Extracts from Hillary: The Movie (Alan Peterson/ Citizens United, USA, 2008); Occupy Unmasked (dir. Steve Bannon, USA, 2012); Clinton Cash (dir. M.A. Taylor/Glittering Steel, 2016); Brexit: The Movie (dir. Martin Durkin, 2016);Trumping Democracy (Thomas Huchon, 2017).
**What you have to read:**


**What you might also read:**


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**Week 10: People Have Had Quite Enough of Experts**

**Screening,** 6th December, 9-12: *HyperNormalisation* (Adam Curtis, BBC, 2016).

**Seminar:** 7th December, 11-1.

**What You Have to Read:**

- John Lanchester “Brexit Blues” (*London review of Books* vol. 38, no.15, July 2016) [https://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n15/john-lanchester/brexit-blues](https://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n15/john-lanchester/brexit-blues)

**What You Might Also Read:**

- If you are interested in the influence of dark money and new forms of data mining on politics in the US and the UK in particular, see in particular the journalism of Carole Cadwalladr, including: “The Great British Brexit robbery: how our democracy was hijacked,” *The Guardian*, 7th May 2017, available here: [https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy), and “Follow the data,” available here: [https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/14/](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/14/)

Week 11: To be collectively decided …