Society and Politics in Popular Culture

Erasmus

Lecture

Teacher: **dr Wojciech Lewandowski**

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Office hours: **Wednesday, 15.00-16.30, Nowy Świat 69, room 32**

Academic Year: 2017/2018

Winter term: 15 h

DURATION

Days and hours: **Wednesday, 13:15-14:45 (from 2 October to 22 November 2017)**
Place: **Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, Old Library, room 112.**
ETCS: 6
Examination: **Project**

EVALUATION

1. Presence.
2. Project.

COURSE AIMS/OBJECTIVES

The course is aimed at discussing selected aspects of the way socio-political phenomenas are presented in popular culture. Specific social and political problems of contemporary world will be discussed in class along with the analysis of their coverage in selected texts of popular culture.

COURSE SCHEDULE/CONTENT

1. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES IN POPULAR CULTURE. INTRODUCTION

Problems:
- Cultural studies – basic terminology.
- Popular culture – definitions and interpretations.
- Popular culture vs mass culture.
- High culture vs low culture.
- Politics and society in popular culture – introduction.
- Political fiction - art as a way of understanding politics.

Essential Readings:

Davidson, James F. 1961. "Political Science and Political Fiction." *American Political Science Review* 55 (4): 851-860.

Storey, John. 2009. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction*. Pearson. Longman: 1-16.

van Zoonen, Liesbet. 1998. "A Day at the Zoo: Political Communication, Pigs and Popular Culture." *Media, Culture & Society* 20 (2): 183–200.

Further Readings:

Barker, Chris. 2002. *Making Sense of Cultural Studies. Central Problems and Critical Debates*. London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Fiske, John. 1995. *Understanding Popular Culture*. London-New York: Routledge.

Negash, Girma. 2004. "Art Invoked: a Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political." *International Political Science Review* 25 (2): 185–201.

Strinati, Dominic. 2000. *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*. London: Routledge.

van Zoonen, Liesbet. 2007. "Audience Reactions to Hollywood Politics." *Media, Culture & Society* 29 (4): 531–47.

Woodcock, Pete. 2006. "The Polis of Springfield: the Simpsons and the Teaching of Political Theory." *Politics* 26 (3): 192–99.

2. WAR AND WAR ON TERRORISM IN POPULAR CULTURE

Problems:
1. War as a theme in popular culture.
2. War movies – between fiction and reality.
3. From propaganda to war in comic book panels.
4. War trauma in Rogers Waters' and Pink Floyd's songs.
5. War on terrorism – its moral and practical aspects as portrayed in popular culture.

Recommended popular culture texts:

24, created by Joel Surnow, Robert Cochran, 2001-2010. Imagine Television, 20th Century Fox Television. TV series.

A Bridge Too Far, directed by Richard Attenborough. 1977. United Artists and Joseph E. Levine Productions. 1977. Film

Ennis, Garth (w), Peter Snejberg (a). "Dear Billy." In *The Complete Battlefields. Volume 2*, Garth Ennis (w), Peter Snejberg (a). Mt. Laurel: Dynamite Entertainment, 2009.

Saving Private Ryan, directed by Steven Spielberg, 1998. DreamWorks Pictures, Paramount Pictures. Film.

Spiegelman, Art (w&a). 2011. *The Complete Maus. 25th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Star Trek: Discovery, Season 1, Episoded 1-2, created by Bryan Fuller, Alex Kurtzman. 2017. Netflix Original. TV Series.

Vaughan, Brian K. (w), and Niko Henrichon(a). 2008. *Pride of Baghdad*. New York: DC Comics.

Waters, Roger. *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), *The Wall* (1979), *The Final Cut* (1983), *Radio K.A.O.S.* (1987), *Amused to Death* (1992). Albums' lyrics. Online.

Essential readings:

Dyce, Andrew. 2017. "STAR TREK: Discovery's Heroes Commit War Crimes." Screen Rant. September 25. http://screenrant.com/star-trek-discovery-war-crimes-klingons/.

Kendrik, James. 2008. "Representing the Unrepresentable: 9/11 on Film and Television." In *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, edited by Peter C Rollins and John E OConnor, 511–28. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press.

Hart, Jennifer Weed. 2008. "President Palmer and the Invasion of China: the Beginning of a Just War." In *24 and Philosophy: the World According to Jack*, edited by Jennifer Weed Hart and Ronald Weed, 57–66. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

O'Mathuna, Donal P. 2008. "The Ethics of Torture in 24: Shockingly Banal." In 2*4 and Philosophy: the World According to Jack*, edited by Jennifer Weed Hart and Ronald Weed, 91–104. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Rollins, Peter C. 2008. "Using Popular Culture to Study the Vietnam War." In *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, edited by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press.

Scott, Cord. 2007. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: a Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda From World War II and September 11." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 40 (2): 325–43.

Further readings:

Hurka, Thomas. 2005. "Proportionality in the Morality of War." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33 (1): 34–66.

Rollins, Peter C., and John E. O'Connor, eds. 2008. *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press.

Strömberg, Fredrik. 2010. *Comic Art Propaganda: A Graphic History*. Lewes: ILEX.

Weinstein, Deena. 2002. "Progressive Rock as Text: the Lyrics of Roger Waters." In *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, edited by Kevin Holm-Hudson, 91–110. New York & London: Routledge.

Wright, Bradford W. 2003. *Comic Book Nation. the Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press: 30-55, 86-108, 287-293.

Young, Richard. 2017. "The 'Real Victims' of the Vietnam War: Soldier Versus State in American Comic Books." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 50 (3): 561–84.

3. POPULAR CULTURE AND CENSORSHIP. THE GHASTLY CASE OF THE *COMICS CODE*

- Comic books after the World War II: dangerous new genres – crime and horror comics.
- Frederick Wertham's crusade against comic books.
- Comic books and juvenile delinquency – Senate investigation.
- Entertainment Comics (EC) – a victim of the witch-hunt (moral panic).
- Creation of the Comics Code as a remedy for comic book business.

Recommended popular culture texts:

A selection of crime and horror stories from late 40s and early 50s.

Essential readings:

Nyberg, Amy Kiste. 2005. "«No Harm in Horror»: Ethical Dismensions of the Postwar Comic Book Controversy." In *Comics as Philosophy*, edited by Jeff McLaughlin, 27-45. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Wright, Bradford W. 2003. *Comic Book Nation. the Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press: 86-108, 154-179.

Further readings:

Adkinson, Cary D. 2008. "The Amazing Spider-Man and the Evolution of the Comics Code: A Case Study in Cultural Criminology." *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 3 (14): 241-261.

Adler-Kassner, Linda. 1995. "'Why Won't You Just Read It?': Comic Books and Community in the 1950s.," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington DC August 9-12. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED387852.

Beaty, Bart. 2005. *Fredric Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi: 104-166.

Hajdu, David. 2008. *The Ten-Cent Plague. The Great Comic Book Scare and How It Changed America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Nolan, Michelle. 1998. "The Case Againt Crime Comics!." Crimeboss.com. http://www.crimeboss.com/history01-1.html.

Vale, Catherine M. 2015. "«The Loyal Heart»: Homosocial Bonding and Homoerotic Subtext Between Batman and Robin, 1939-1943." In *Dick Grayson, Boy Wonder. Scholars and Creators on 75 Years od Robin, Nightwing and Batman*, edited by Kristen L. Geaman, 94-109. McFarland &Company, Inc.: Jefferson.

Wertham, Fredric. 1954. *Seduction of the Innocent*. New York, Toronto: Rhinehart & Company, Inc.

4. POPULAR CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Problems:

1. Concepts of nation and nationalism.
2. National identity.
3. Cultural roots of national identity.
4. Popular culture as a source of national identity
5. Nationalistic superheroes as a way of expresing national unity.
6. National myths and stereotypes in popular culture.

Recommended popular culture texts:

Brubaker, Ed (w), and Steve Epting (a). 2007. *Captain America Omnibus*. Vol. 1. New York: Marvel Publishing.

Ferguson, John (w), Gary Welsh (a), and Tone Juskjaer (a). 2013. *Saltire. Invasion*. Dundee: Diamondsteel Comics.

Essential readings:

Dittmer, Jason. 2005. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post 9/11 Geopolitics." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95: 626−643.

Dittmer, Jason. 2011. "Captain Britain and the Narration of Nation." *The Geographical Review* 101: 71−87.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2016. "SuperScots. Supeheroes and Scottish Identity." In *Scottish Culture: Dialogue and Self-Expression*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska and Izabela Szymańska, 380–88. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.

Further readings:

Hagley, Annika, and Michael Harrison. 2014. "Fighting the Battles We Never Could: the Avengers and Post-September 11 American Political Identities." *PS Political Science & Politics*, 47 (1) : 120–24.

Hoyer, Anne. 2009. "National Identity in a Popular Scottish Comic." J*ournal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education* 2 (2): 115−124

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. "Scotsmen Versus Englishmen: Ancient Antagonisms as Depicted in a Belgian Comic Book." In *Facets of Scottish Identity*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska and Izabela Szymańska, 145–52. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.

Reynolds, Richard. 1994. *Super Heroes. A Modern Mythology*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Scott, Cord. 2007. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: a Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda From World War II and September 11." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 40 (2): 325–43.

Strömberg, Fredrik. 2010. *Comic Art Propaganda: A Graphic History*. Lewes: ILEX.

5. ALIENATION AND POLITICAL DISOBEDIENCE: THEORETICAL, MORAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS

Problems:

- The nature of political obligation.
- Political disobedience – theoretical and moral aspects.
- From protest through civil disobedience to violence – forms of political disobedience.
- Popular culture and political disobedience.
- Individual vs totalitarianism – anatomy of disobedience in Alan Moore's and David Lloyd's graphic novel *V for Vendetta*.

Recommended popular culture texts:

Moore, Alan (w)., and David Lloyd (a). 2008. *V for Vendetta*. New York: DC Comics.

V for Vendetta, directed by James McTeigue. 2006. Warner Bros. Pictures. Film.

Waters, Roger. *The Wall* (1979), *Radio K.A.O.S.* (1987), *Amused to Death* (1992). Albums' lyrics. Online.

Essential readings:

Di Liddo, Annalisa. 2009. *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi: 111-125.

Keller, James R. 2008. *V for Vendetta as Cultural Pastiche. A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel and Film*. Jefferson, NC, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., chap. 1-2.

Morreall, John. 1976. "The Justifiability of Violent Civil Disobedience." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6 (1): 35–47.

Weinstein, Deena. 2002. "Progressive Rock as Text: the Lyrics of Roger Waters." In *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, edited by Kevin Holm-Hudson, 91–110. New York & London: Routledge.

Further readings:

Bedau, Hugo Adam, ed. 1991. *Civil Disobedience in Focus*. London and New York: Routledge.

Bentouhami, Hourya. "Civil Disobedience from Thoreau to Transnational Mobilizations: The Global Challenge." *Essays in Philosophy* 8 (2007), http://commons.pacificu.edu/eip/vol8/iss2/3.

Kohns, Oliver. 2013. "Guy Fawkes in the 21st Century. A Contribution to the Political Iconography of Revolt." *Image [&] Narrative* 14 (1): 89-104.

Kowalski, Dean A. 2008. "R for Revolution. Hobbes and Locke on Social Contracts and Scarlett Carsons." In *Homer Simpson Goes to Wasington. American Politics through Popular Culture*, edited by Joseph J. Foy, 19-40. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Reynolds, James. 2009. "Kill Me Sentiment: V for Vendetta and Comic-to-Film Adaptation." *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* 2 (2): 121–36.

Sanders, John T, and Jan Narveson, eds. 1996. *For and Against the State: New Philosophical Readings*. Lanham and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

6. POLITICIANS AND POPULAR CULTURE. CELEBRITIZATION OF POLITICS

Problems:

- Celebritization of politics – cultural roots of the phenomenon.
- Politician as a celebrity.
- Tony Blair – political celebrity or real statesman?

Recommended popular culture texts:

Harris, Robert. 2007. *The Ghost*. London: Hutchinson.

The Ghost Writer, directed by Roman Polański. 2010. Summit Entertainment, Optimum Releasing. Film.

Love Actually, directed by Richard Curtis. 2003. Universal Pictures. Film.

Essential readings:

Driessens, Olivier. 2013. "The Celebritization of Society and Culture: Understanding the Structural Dynamics of Celebrity Culture." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16 (6): 641–57.

Street, John. 2004. "Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation." *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 6: 435–52.

Street, John. 2000. "Prime Time Politics: Popular Culture and Politicians in the UK." *The Public* 7 (2): 75–90.

Further readings:

Granville, Shannon. 2009. "Downing Street's Favourite Soap Opera: Evaluating the Impact and Influence of Yes, Minister and Yes, Prime Minister." *Contemporary British History* 23 (3): 315–36.

Leal, Andres Bartolome. 2015. "Strangers in a Strange Land: Cinema, Identity and the Modern Nation-State in Roman Polanski's *The Ghost Writer*." *ATLANTIS. Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 37 (2): 119–36.

Smith, Jeff. 2009. *The Presidents We Imagine : Two Centuries of White House Fictions on the Page, on the Stage, Onscreen, and Online*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

7. HOUSE OF POLITICS. POLITICAL FICTION AND POLITICAL REALITY

Problems:

- The nature of political fiction.
- Machiavellian politics in democratic systems.
- Popular rule and its shortcomings.
- Politics and ethics - when the values collides with power.

Recommended popular culture texts:

House of Cards, directed by Paul Seed. Season 1, Episodes 1-4, 1990. BBC. TV Series.

House of Cards,, created by Beau Willimon. Seasons 1-5. 2013-2017. Netflix Original. TV Series.

Essential readings:

Chou, Mark. 2014. "Democrats Against Democracy." *Cultural Politics* 10 (2): 163–81.

Kogelmann, Brian. 2016. "Frank Underwood Gives the Ideal Society a Reality Check." In *House of Cards and Philosophy: Underwood's Republic*, edited by J Edward Hackett, 31–41. Wiley Blackwell.

Littmann, Greg. 2016. "American Machiavelli." In *House of Cards and Philosophy: Underwood's Republic*, edited by J Edward Hackett, 81–91. Wiley Blackwell.

Further readings:

Hackett, J Edward, ed. 2016. *House of Cards and Philosophy: Underwood's Republic*. Wiley Blackwell.

Painter, Chad, and Patrick Ferrucci. 2017. "Gender Games: The Portrayal of Female Journalists on House of Cards." *Journalism Practice* 11 (4): 493–508.

van Zoonen, Liesbet, and Dominic Wring. 2012. "Trends in Political Television Fiction in the UK: Themes, Characters and Narratives, 1965–2009." *Media, Culture & Society* 34 (3): 263–79.

8. HIDDEN REALITY: CONSPIRACY THEORIES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES AND POPULAR CULTURE

Problems:

1. Conspiracy theories – its nature and history.
2. Conspiracy theories and their popularity in contemporary popular culture.
3. Blood stained monarchy – a secret identity of Jack the Ripper.
4. Governmental X-Files: The case of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Recommended popular culture texts:

Azzarello, Brian (w)., and J.G. Jones (a). "Comedian." in B*efore Watchmen: Comedian, Rorschach*, Brian Azzarello (w), J.G. Jones, Lee Bermejo (a), DC Comics: New York, 2013.

Brown, Dan. 2009. *The Da Vinci Code*, New York: Anchor Books.

Moore, Alan (w)., and Eddie Campbell (a). 2004. *From Hell. Being a Melodrama in.Sixteen Part*. Marietta: Top Shelf Productions.

Newman, Paul (w)., and John Tartaglione (a). August-October, 1964. *John F. Kennedy: 1917-1963*. New York: Dell Publishing

Straczynski, J. Michael (w)., and Adam Hughes (a). "Dr. Manhattan." in *Before Watchmen: Night Owl, Dr. Manhattan*, J. Michael Straczynski (w), Andy Kubert, Adam Hughes, Eduardo Risso (a), DC Comics: New York, 2013.

The X-Files. Created by Chris Carter. Performed by David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Robert Patrick. Ten Thirteen Productions, 20th Television, 20th Century Fox Television. 1993-2002. TV series.

Wein, Len (w)., and Jae Lee (a). "Ozymandias." in *Before Watchmen: Ozymandias*, Crimson Corsair, Len Wein, John Higgins (w), Jae Lee, John Higgins, Steve Rude (a), DC Comics: New York, 2013.

Essential readings:

Dawe, Ian. 2013. "JFK: Comic Book Hero." Sequart Organization. November 22. http://sequart.org/magazine/35074/jfk-comic-book-hero/.

Dawe, Ian. 2013. "Lee Harvey Oswald: a Comics Villain?." Sequart Organization. November 20. http://sequart.org/magazine/34564/lee-harvey-oswald-a-comics-villain/.

Parmet, Henry S. 1990. "The Kennedy Myth and American Politics." *The History Teacher* 24 (1): 31–39.

Rudmin, Floyd. 2003. "Conspiracy Theory as Naive Deconstructive History." New Democracy World. April. newdemocracyworld.org/old/conspiracy.htmconspiracy.htm.

Further readings:

Bratich, Jack Z. 2008. *Conspiracy Panics. Political Rationality and Popular Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lewis, John E. 2012. *The Mammoth Book of Conspiracies*. London: Constable & Robinson.

Sturken, Marita. 1997. "Reenactment, Fantasy, and the Paranoia of History: Oliver Stone's Docudramas." *History and Theory* 36 (4): 64–79.

LECTURER

Wojciech Lewandowski, Ph. D. – Assistant Professor at the Institute of European Studies at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science at the University of Warsaw. Co-founder and coordinator of British Socio-Political Studies Research Group BRITANNIA. Guest Lecturer at American Studies Center, Warsaw University. Host of a music radio show "Art.Rock Universe".

Scientific interests

- Cultural interpretations of social and political processes;
- British and American culture (special focus: graphic novels and comic books, counterculture of the 60's, progressive rock, horror literature);
- History of Political Thought: American transcendentalism, anarchism; ethics and politics;
- Transatlantic relations (especially cultural and political relations).

Selected publications

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2017. "Siedem małych słów. Obraz wojny wietnamskiej w powieści graficznej Kaznodzieja Gartha Ennisa i Steve'a Dillona." [Seven Little Words. The Image of Vietnam War in Preacher Comic Book by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon] In *50 twarzy popkultury*, edited by Ksenia Olkusz, Kraków: Ośrodek Badawczy Facta Ficta: 623-640.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2016. "Political Monologue vs Political Dialogue in Graphic Novels." *Przegląd Europejski* 4 (42): 76-87.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2016. "SuperScots. Supeheroes and Scottish Identity." In Scottish Culture: Dialogue and Self-Expression, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska and Izabela Szymańska, 380–88. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2015. "Nowy człowiek, zamaskowany niszczyciel. Wizja zagłady dystopijnego państwa w powieści graficznej «V jak Vendetta» Alana Moore'a i Davida Lloyda." [] *Creatio Fantastica* 3 (50): 26-41.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. "Scotsmen versus Englishmen: Ancient Antagonisms as Depicted in a Comic Book." In *Facets of Scottish Identity*, edited by Aniela Korzeniowska, Izabela Szymańska, 145-152. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. "Brytyjski komiks polityczny. Zarys problematyki." [British Political Comic Books. Basic Problems] *Przegląd Europejski 4*(30): 108-119.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2013. "Soft Power jako narzędzie geopolityki. Znaczenie kultury popularnej." [Soft Power as a Strategic Instrument in Geopolitics. The Role of Popular Culture] In *Polityka zagraniczna państw Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej na przełomie XX i XXI wieku. Ujęcie geopolityczne* [The Foreign Policy of the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries. The Geopolitical Perspective], edited by Józef Tymanowski, 59-69. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych UW.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2012. "Kultura brytyjska." [British Culture] In *System polityczny Zjednoczonego Królestwa* [Political System of the United Kingdom], edited by Przemysław Biskup, Małgorzata Kaczorowska, 109-129. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2011. *Wolność i samotność. Myśl społeczno-polityczna amerykańskiego transcendentalizmu.* [Freedom and Loneliness. Social and Political Thought of American Transcendentalism] Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych UW.

Lewandowski, Wojciech., and Franciszek Gołembski, Przemysław Biskup, Małgorzata Kaczorowska, eds. 2011. *Polityka brytyjska po wyborach parlamentarnych 2010. Analiza wybranych problemów.* [British Politics after the General Election 2010: Analysis of Selected Problems] Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2010. "Pudel, mąż agentki i niedoszły zbawca Brytanii. Obraz Tony'ego Blaira w wybranych tekstach kultury popularnej." [Poodle, Agent's Husband and Would-Be Saviour of Britain: Tony Blair's Depiction in Selected Texts of Popular Culture] In *Era Blaira i Browna. Wybrane problemy polityczne rządów Partii Pracy w Zjednoczonym Królestwie 1997-2010* [Blair's and Brown's Era. Select Political Problems of Labour Government in the United Kingdom 1997–2010], edited by Franciszek Gołembski, Przemysław Biskup, Małgorzata Kaczorowska, 67-79. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR.

Lewandowski, Wojciech. 2007/2008. "The Dark Side of Walden." *The Americanist. Warsaw Journal for the Study of United States* 24(American Popular Culture as Import and Export): 117-132.