The Marvel Universe has provided the basis for several of the most popular movies of the past decade, including the X-Men and Avengers series. Are these movies teaching liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism, fascism, multiculturalism, or something else entirely? This course combines the study of political ideologies and cultural critique.

An Advanced Social Science course
Professor Nicholas Tampio
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Summer Session II 2015
MTWTH 6-9 pm, Keating 114

Required reading

Grading
Midterm 20
Final exam 30
Class participation 10
Discussion group 2x5= 10
Research paper 20
Research presentation 10

I will place each student in a discussion group. Each group will be responsible for giving a 20 minute Powerpoint presentation on the assigned article, including summarizing its argument, offering responses, and posing questions to the rest of the class. The group will then lead discussion.

Each student will write and present a 8-10 page research paper on a Marvel movie.
  • Make 5 subsections: the introduction, three sections that consider how the movie could express a certain ideology, and a conclusion on what you think is the political teaching of the movie.
  • Cite at least 5 movie reviews. The IMDB, Metacritic, and Rotten Tomato websites all have links to movie reviews. I personally like the reviews in The New York Times, New Yorker, Salon, Village Voice, and Film Comment.
  • Cite definitions and key ideas from Heywood’s Political Ideologies.

Course schedule

1. June 30 – Ideology and Ideologies
   • Political Ideologies, Chapter 1
   • What role do ideas play in politics? What is ideology? What is the difference between the political left, right, and center? Do we still live in an ideological age?

2. July 1 – Liberalism
   • Political Ideologies, Chapter 2
   • What are the origins and development of liberalism? What do liberals mean by individualism, freedom, reason, justice, and toleration? What is the difference between classical and modern liberalism?

3. July 6 – Conservativism
   • Political Ideologies, Chapter 3
   • What are the origins and development of conservatism? What do conservatives mean by tradition, human imperfection, organic society, hierarchy and authority, and property? What is the difference between paternalistic conservatism and libertarian conservatism?

4. July 7 – Socialism
   - *Political Ideologies*, Chapter 4
   - What are the origins and development of socialism? What do socialists mean by community, cooperation, equality, and class politics? What is the difference between socialism, communism, and social democracy?

5. July 8 – Anarchism
   - *Political Ideologies*, Chapter 5
   - What are the origins and development of anarchism? What do anarchists mean by anti-statism, utopianism, anti-clericalism, and economic freedom? What is the difference between collectivist anarchism and individualist anarchism?

6. July 9 – The X-Men
   - *X-Men* (2000, dir. Bryan Singer) is partly credited with launching the Marvel film franchise. What is the significance that Magneto spent time as a youth in a concentration camp? Who and what are mutants (in the movie and real-life)? What does the Mutant Registration Act signify? Does the movie celebrate eccentricity, group allegiance, or both?

7. July 13 – Nationalism
   - *Political Ideologies*, Chapter 6
   - What are the origins and development of nationalism? What do nationalists mean by the nation, organic community, and self-determination? What is the difference between liberal, conservative, and postcolonial nationalism?

8. July 14 – Fascism
   - *Political Ideologies*, Chapter 7
   - What are the origins and development of fascism? What do fascists mean by anti-rationalism, struggle, leadership and elitism, and ultranationalism? What is the relationship of fascism to the state and racism?
9. July 15 – Captain America: The First Avenger
   • Captain America first appeared in 1941 as someone who fought for good (freedom) against evil (fascism). What does Captain America fight for and against today? This class considers the answer of Captain America: The First Avenger (2011).


11. July 20 – Feminism and Ecologism
   • Political Ideologies, Chapter 8
   • What are the origins and development of feminism? What do feminists mean by the political, patriarchy, sex and gender, and equality and difference? What is the difference between liberal, socialist, radical, and third-wave feminism?
   • Political Ideologies, Chapter 9
   • What are the origins and development of ecologism? What do ecologists mean by ecology, holism, sustainability, and environmental ethics? What are the differences between modernist, social, and deep ecology?

12. July 21 – The Avengers
   • The Avengers (2012) was the fastest film to gross $1 billion. Why do people around the world like Marvel movies? Let’s also talk about how the Marvel Cinematic Universe handles race and gender.

13. July 22 – Religious fundamentalism
   • Political Ideologies, Chapter 10
   • What are the origins and development of religious fundamentalism? What do religious fundamentalists mean by modernity and religion as politics? What are the similarities and differences between Islamic and Christian fundamentalism?

14. July 23 – Iron Man
   • The Iron Man franchise is interesting for at least two reasons. Tony Stark’s main power is his money, and he represents American entanglement in Vietnam (the original character) and Afghanistan (in the 2008 movie). Is Iron Man a hero?

15. July 27 – Multiculturalism
   • Political Ideologies, Chapter 11
• What are the origins and development of multiculturalism? What do multiculturalists mean by the politics of recognition, culture and identity, minority rights, and diversity? What are the differences between liberal, pluralist, and cosmopolitan multiculturalism?

16. July 28 – A Post-Ideological Age?
• *Political Ideologies*, Chapter 12
• What is the end of ideology/history thesis? What are arguments for the persistence of ideology?
• **Discussion Group E and F:** Doru Pop, “Mythology Amalgamated. The Transformation of the Mythological and the Re-appropriation of Myths in Contemporary Cinema,” Ekphrasis (2/2013)

17. July 29 – Research presentations

18. July 30 – Research presentations

19. August 3 – Final exam