POP

Struggle!

**Repression and Dissent in Film and Graphic Novels**

**Christian Davenport**

Professor of Political Science &

Faculty Associate with Center for Political Studies

Days/times: Tuesday 9 to 12

Location: 1210 Weill Hall

Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-3:30

Location: Institute for Social Research

**Words of Wisdom**

The Universe is made of stories, not atoms.

Murial Rukeyser

For reasons that lie deep in childhood learning, cultural immersion, or perhaps even in the structure of human brains, people usually recount, analyze, judge, remember, and reorganize social experiences as *standard stories* in which a small number of self-motivated entities interact within constricted, contiguous time and space. (Unfortunately) stories fail dramatically to provide viable explanations, indeed demand explanation in their turn.

Charles Tilly, *Stories, Identity and Political Change*

Stories are more than dramas people tell or read. Story, as a pattern, is a powerful way of organizing and sharing individual experience and exploring and co-creating shared realities.

The Co-Intelligence Institute

This course is about understanding how state repression (genocide, human rights violation, counter-insurgency and protest policing) and political dissent (e.g., demonstrations, boycotts, terrorism, insurgency and sit-ins) are dealt with in diverse aspects of popular culture – graphic novels and film. It is maintained that these diverse windows on the culture provide important information about what a specific society believes is important as well as how problems are dealt with and resolved. For example, graphic novels and film tell us about why repression and dissent occur, who participates, when things are undertaken and how they take place. This informs us about when such activities are legitimate and illegitimate thereby influencing how we understand the most essential aspects of human freedom and domination. We will explore particularly American stories of repression and dissent. We will then venture to create our own.

**Expectations**

The course seeks to develop the general understanding of the student with regard to what can be classified as state repression and political dissent as well as what aspects of these phenomenon are dealt with in popular culture. Specifically, the student of this course will be able to comprehend

What are the Actions involved

Who are the Perpetrator(s)

Who are the Victim(s)

Who are the Target(s)

What are the Objective(s)

What is covered in Graphic Novels and Film

How do these characterizations differ (if at all)

What is specifically American about the representations

What is covered within Other Cultures

Disclaimer: the instructor reserves the right to change class format and/or evaluation/activities as deemed necessary.

**Attendance**

Students are required to attend and participate actively in class and complete the assigned readings before the class meeting for which they are listed.  Students should endeavor to always be considerate of your instructor(s) and fellow-students by arriving to class on time. Repeated tardiness will be counted against class participation (3 instances of tardiness = 1 absence); Repeated absences will also be counted against participation (3 unexcused absences = 50% reduction in individual class participation).

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at least two weeks prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; http://www.umich.edu/sswd) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

**Communication**

There are three ways to communicate with the instructor and I wanted to provide expected response times so that you can make the selection that best meets the students needs.

In-Person meeting during office hours: Immediate response

Telephone: 3-5 days

Email: 7-10 days

**Requirements & Grading**

Participating in discussions/activities – 35%

contributing to classroom discussion through informed commentary/reflection about reading and/or prior discussion as individual

Examination – 25%

An assessment of what you have grasped thus far about the material and

theories used to inform them

assessed by degree of clarity, creativity and thoroughness with which

material is covered

Final Product – 40%

An original graphic novel or short film (yes, original)

assessed by degree of clarity, creativity and thoroughness with which

material is covered

**Readings**

Required:

*Homer Simpson Marches on Washington: Dissent Through American Popular*

*Culture*

*Palestine* by Joe Sacco

*Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* by Marjane Satrapi

*V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore and David Lloyd

*Nil: A Land Beyond Belief* by James Turner

Recommended:

*Constructing the Political Spectacle*

*Why Societies Need Dissent*

*Theatre of the Oppressed*

*The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television*

*Graphic Novels: Stories to Change Your Life*

*Ronald Reagan the Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology*

**Class Schedule**

September

4 – Introduction: What we are going to do and how

What is popular culture?

What is struggle?

How are they related?

How will we study the topic?

11 – *Birth of a Nation*

Reading:

“Harry Potter and the Functions of Popular Culture.” 2007. The

*Journal of Popular Culture* 40(1): 69-89.

“The International Relations of Middle-earth: Learning from The Lord of the Rings.” 2008. *International Studies Perspective* 9: 377-394.

Additional Reading (i.e., if you finished the other reading and you’re bored):

“Hell on Earth: Threats, Citizens and the State from Buffy to

Beck.” 2009. *Cooperation and Conflict* 44: 400-419

18 – *The Village* or *Billy Jack*

Reading: *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington*, Introduction &

Chapter 1

25 – *The Killing Fields*

Reading: *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington*, Chapter 3

October

2 – *Robin Hood*

Reading: *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington*, Chapter 5

9 – *Animal Farm*

Reading: *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington*, Chapter 6

23 – *Fight Club*

Reading: *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington*, Chapter 11

30 – *Closet Land* or Braveheart

Reading: *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington*, Chapter 13

November

6 – **Examination**

13 – *Nil*

20 – *Palestine*

27 – *Persepolis*

December

4 – *V for Vendetta*

11 – Presentations

**Other Relevant Films**:

1984

American History X

Amistad

Antz

Apocalypto

Arlington Road

Bananas

Ben Hur

Betrayed

Billy Jack

Born Losers

The Trial of Billy Jack

Billy Jack goes to Washington

Billy Jack’s Moral Revolution [in production]

Blade

1

2

3

Blade Runner

Blood Diamond

Braveheart

Brazil

Bread and Roses

Bullworth

Christ films

Jésus devant Pilate (Alice Guy, 1898)

From the Manger to the Cross (Kalem Company, 1912)

The King of Kings (Cecil B. Demille, 1927)

[King of Kings](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/ray.htm) (Nicholas Ray, 1961)

[Il Vangelo secondo Matteo](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/pasolini.htm) (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1964)

[The Greatest Story Ever Told](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/stevens.htm) (George Stevens, 1965)

Son of Man (Gareth Davies, 1969)

[Jesus Christ Superstar](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/jewison.htm) (Norman Jewison, 1973)

[Godspell](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/greene.htm) (David Greene, 1973)

[Jesus of Nazareth](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/zeffirel.htm) (Franco Zeffirelli, 1977)

[Monty Python's Life of Brian](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/jones.htm) (Terry Jones, 1979)

[Jesus](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/sykes.htm) (John Krish & Peter Sykes, 1979)

[The Day Christ Died](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/cellan.htm) (James Cellan Jones, 1980)

[The Last Temptation of Christ](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/scorsese.htm) (Martin Scorsese, 1988)

[Jesus of Montreal](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/arcand.htm) (Denys Arcand, 1989)

[Matthew](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/bergh.htm) (Visual Bible, Regardt van den Bergh, 1996)

[The Book of Life](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/hartley.htm) (Hal Hartley, 1998)

[Jesus](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/young.htm) (Roger Young, 1999)

[The Miracle Maker](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/sokolov.htm) (Derek W. Hayes & Stanislav Sokolov, 2000)

[The Gospel of John](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/saville.htm) (Philip Saville, 2003)

[The Passion of the Christ](http://www.ntgateway.com/film/gibson.htm) (Mel Gibson, 2004)

Son of Man (Mark Dornford-May, 2006)

Color of the Cross (Jean-Claude La Marre, 2006)

The Nativity Story (Catherine Hardwicke, 2006)

The Conversation

Cry Freedom

Dances with Wolves

The Dancer Upstairs

The Dictator

District 9

Do the Right Thing?

Drop Squad

Elizabeth

Enemy of the State

Everything is Illuminated

Fearless

Fight Club

Fist of Legend

Four Days in September

The Front

Gataga

Good Night and Good Luck

The Great Dictator

Happy Feet

Hero

Holocaust Films

Europa, Europa

Schindler’s List

Life if Beautiful

Swing Kids

Uprising

Hoot

Hotel Rwanda

The Hunger Games

In the Name of the Father

J.F.K.

Kautokeino-opprøret in [Norwegian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norwegian_language) or, The Kautokeino Rebellion in [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language)

The Last King of Scotland

The Lives of Others

Logan’s Run

Lumumba

Mad Max

Original

The Road Warrior

Beyond the Thunderdome

Malcolm X

Matrix

Original

Reloaded

Revolutions

Men with Guns

Michael Collins

A Mighty Heart

The Milagro Beanfield War

Missing

Mississippi Burning

Munich

Mutiny on the Bounty

The Official Story

Osama

The Passion

Pirates of the Caribbean

1

2

3

The Planet of the Apes

[Beneath the Planet of the Apes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beneath_the_Planet_of_the_Apes) ([1970](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970_in_film))

[Escape from the Planet of the Apes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escape_from_the_Planet_of_the_Apes) ([1971](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1971_in_film))

[Conquest of the Planet of the Apes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conquest_of_the_Planet_of_the_Apes) ([1972](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1972_in_film))

[Battle for the Planet of the Apes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_for_the_Planet_of_the_Apes) ([1973](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973_in_film))

Rabbit-Proof Fence

Riddick

Original

The Chronicles of Riddick

The Road to Guantanamo

Rob Roy

Romero

Rosewood

Running on Empty

Salvador

Sankofa

The Siege

Star Wars

[The Phantom Menace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Wars_Episode_I:_The_Phantom_Menace) (1999)

[Attack of the Clones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Wars_Episode_II:_Attack_of_the_Clones) (2002)

[Revenge of the Sith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Wars_Episode_III:_Revenge_of_the_Sith) (2005)

[A New Hope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Wars_Episode_IV:_A_New_Hope) (1977)

The Empire Strikes Back (1980)

Return of the Jedi (1983)

Steal This Movie

Tai Chi Master

The Tin Drum

The Three Musketeers

The Trotsky

Thunderheart

The Wind and the Lion

The Wind that Shakes the Barley

X-Men

Original

X-Men 2: X-Men United

The War Within

West Beirut

The Year of Living Dangerously

**Other Relevant Graphic Novels**:

The Authority

Cerebus

Civil War

The Dark Knight Returns

Deogratias

The Filth

Petrograd

The Watchmen