

POLS6325 Frontiers of Research

Using Fictional Texts in Political Science Research

Semester 1, 2022

Coordinator	Dr Katie Brennan, k.brennan@uq.edu.au
Consultation	Contact by email to book an appointment
Schedule	Friday, 1 April: 10am-12pm, 2pm-4pm Friday, 8 April: 10am-12pm, 2pm-4pm Thursday, 14 April: 10am-12pm, 2pm-4pm

Masterclass Overview

We all use stories to help us make sense of the world. This is as true in every day conversation as it is in high-level academic work. In Political Science, and related disciplines, scholars use stories in their analyses, discuss the direct impact of stories on politics, and engage in more meta-level debates around the uses of stories.

There are many ways to approach this intersection of stories and the study of politics. In this masterclass we will examine how people think with and through stories as they are found in non-academic texts. This category of “non-academic texts” covers a huge range of materials, and while we will cover many of them in our sessions please feel free to think beyond what we cover in your own work.

We will begin by discussing how various scholars have approached the intersection of non-academic texts and the study of politics, and a particular grouping of such scholars that work under the heading of Popular Culture and World Politics. To get a handle on the variety of materials that can go under the category “non-academic texts” Sessions One and Two on Day Two and Session One on Day Three will each cover certain types of materials. The readings for these three sessions demonstrate how scholars make use of non-academic texts in the study of politics and related fields. Finally, we will close the masterclass with the final session and reflect on what we learned in the masterclass and where we think this research can go in the future.

Requirements

- Attendance at all seminars is a requirement of this course, and attendance will be recorded at each session.
- To get the most out of the masterclass, students are expected to arrive prepared, engaged and keen to contribute to each session. These contributions can take a variety of forms:
 - Actively contributing to discussions during the sessions
 - Bringing in outside material that is related to the topic at hand during the session, or emailing such items to Dr Brennan before the session (e.g., news articles, podcasts, video clips, etc.)
 - Bringing your notes or annotated readings to each session to facilitate your participation in discussions

- Asking questions during the session or sending them to Dr Brennan by email before the session.
- Specifically, students are to prepare for class by:
 - Reading all required readings in advance of class, and bringing the readings with you to class in either hard copy or electronic format. All readings are available on Blackboard.
 - You should approach these readings in an active way by:
 - ◆ Highlighting passages that interest or confuse you
 - ◆ Noting questions as they arise
 - ◆ Noting potential connections
 - ◆ Marking passages or adding notes in relation to the discussion questions listed on the syllabus
 - Complete all pre-class activities before the session.

Assessment

- Reflective Essays: Due no later than Thursday, 28 April, 2pm
 - Keeping with the description in the course profile, students are to write a 1,500 word reflective essay on the masterclass
- Main Research Essays: Due no later than Thursday, 26 May, 2pm
 - Please let Dr Brennan know ASAP if you plan to write your 5,000 word research essay on this class. That will allow time for a conversation about making the scope of your research manageable, and to discuss your research question and chosen method of analysis.
 - Dr Brennan is happy to provide feedback on research essay proposals, but you must contact her well in advance of the due date.

Day One Introduction

In these two sessions we will discuss what non-academic texts are, and how scholars have approached using them in the study of politics.

Session One: Introduction to the course and to using academic and non-academic texts together (1 April, 10am-12pm)

- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century (aka 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs')." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge, 1991, 149-182.
- Casarino, Cesare. "Philopoesis: A Theoretico-Methodological Manifesto." *boundary 2*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2002, 65-96.
- Shapiro, Michael J. Excerpts from *Writing Politics: Studies in Compositional Methods*, Routledge, 2021, 1-8 and 173-179.
- Kwaymullina, Ambelin and Blaze Kwaymullina. "Learning to read the signs: law in an Indigenous Reality." *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2010, 195-208.

Session Two: Popular Culture and World Politics (1 April, 2pm-4pm)

- Weldes, Jutta. "Popular Culture, Science Fiction, and World Politics: Exploring Intertextual Relations." *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics*, edited by Jutta Weldes, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 1-30.
- Griffin, Penny. "Symposium 'exploring the (multiple) futures of world politics through popular culture.'" *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 54, 2019, 508-514.
- Hamilton, Caitlin. "Exploring the potential of the popular culture of world politics agenda: actors, artefacts and the everyday." *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 54, 2019, 573-584.

Pre-class Activity

- All pre-class activities will be completed on padlet. Please complete the following activity by 4pm the day before our first meeting (4pm on 31 March). Select a non-academic text

that either impacted politics directly or that has helped you think about a political issue differently. Discuss this text in relation to one of the readings for this week in 150-200 words.

Questions

- What are non-academic texts? What kinds of non-academic texts interest you the most?
- What does it mean to take non-academic texts seriously in academic work?
- How can we understand the politics of non-academic texts?
- How do such texts impact the kinds of questions we ask in the study of politics?
- How do such texts impact the methods used in the study of politics?
- Consider and be prepared to discuss one non-academic text and how it relates to an aspect of politics.

Day Two Applied examples of the use of non-academic texts in the study of politics

On Day Two we will begin our tour through applied examples of the use of non-academic texts in the study of politics. During the sessions we will examine the range of materials in each category, how the texts are used in the analyses, what the non-academic texts make possible or thinkable in the projects, and how the non-academic texts impact the writing style of the authors.

Session One: Political Science + Text: novels, short stories, etc. (8 April, 10am-12pm)

- Bell, Duncan. "J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Liberalism." *Political Theory*, vol. 49, no. 6, 2021, 934-967.
- Crawford, Neta C. "Feminist Futures: Science Fiction, Utopia, and the Art of Possibilities in World Politics." *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics*, edited by Jutta Weldes, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 195-220.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. "The Semiotics of Virtuality: Mapping the Posthuman." *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, University of Chicago Press, 1999, 247-282.

Session Two: Political Science + Cultural Materials: cultural stories, lore, songs, etc. (8 April, 2pm-4pm)

- Brigg, Morgan, Mary Graham and Martin Weber. "Relational Indigenous Systems: Aboriginal Australian political ordering and reconfiguring IR." *Review of International Studies*, 2021, 1-19. [Online First]
- Tynan, Lauren. "What is relationality? Indigenous knowledges, practices and responsibilities with kin." *cultural geographies*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2021, 597-610.
- Lewis, Jason Edward, Noelani Arista, Archer Pechawis, and Suzanne Kite. "Making Kin with the Machines." *Journal of Design and Science*, 2018.

Questions

- In reflecting on these more applied readings, what are some of the different roles that non-academic texts play in the various projects?
 - Do they impact the research questions?
 - Do they impact the methods chosen or how those methods are applied?
 - Can you see an impact in the writing style?
- Can non-academic texts change how you understand the world?
- How do non-academic texts work more directly in contemporary politics? Can you think of an example in which non-academic texts work to question or push back against the status quo? Alternatively, can you think of an example in which non-academic texts reinforce the status quo?

Day Three Applied examples (continued) and Reflections

On Day Three we will first continue our discussion of applied examples in Session One, and in Session Two we will transition to a more reflective mode.

Session One: Political Science + Moving Images: movies, TV shows, video games, etc. (14 April, 10am-12pm)

- Clapton, William and Laura J. Shepherd. "Ethics *Ex Machina*: popular culture and the plural future of politics." *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 54, 2019, 531-542.
- Brown, Michelle Lee. Excerpt from *(Re)Coding Survivance: Relation-Oriented Ontologies of Indigenous Digital Media*.

Session Two: Using non-academic texts in your work (14 April, 2pm-4pm)

- This final session will be more student-focused. You should come to this session prepared to discuss your own work in relation to the questions and readings we have covered in this masterclass.
- There are no required readings for this session.

Pre-class Activity

- Please complete the following activity on padlet by 4pm the day before our meeting (4pm on 13 April). Briefly summarize, in 150-200 words, a key issue or question that will stick with you from this masterclass. It might be a question that you still have, something that surprised you, or a key theme that you identified.

Questions

- For Session One, please refer to the questions from Day Two as we are continuing our exploration of applied readings.
- How have scholars used non-academic texts in the study of politics?
- Of these uses, which have you found to be the most compelling or interesting? Why?
- Were any of the uses of non-academic texts problematic? Why?
- Has the masterclass prompted you to re-consider how you see non-academic texts? Both in themselves and in their use in the study of politics?
- Identify three themes or insights that you will take away from our exploration of non-academic texts and their use in the study of politics.