**POSC 469** (**Politics and Film in Comparative Perspectiv**e), FALL 2018, Tuesday, 6:30-9:20 p.m. [Instructor: Stanley Rosen]

This class is intended to introduce students to some outstanding films, both American and foreign. To encourage more discussion, the class will be conducted as a seminar rather than a lecture course. There will be a term paper for the class and students will be required to prepare short papers on the readings for the week and lead class discussion around two or three times during the course of the term, depending on the number of students in the class. There will be no examinations. Grades will be determined on the basis of the short papers, the term paper, and class discussion. Students will have a great deal of flexibility with regard to term paper topics. They will be able to choose films and themes not directly addressed in the class. However, there are several themes being addressed in the course so you may want to think about choosing one of these themes for your term paper. For example, since one of the themes is the manner in which Hollywood addresses historical events, I would welcome papers on some aspect of that subject. There is of course a great deal written on this, and in the past, I have assigned books taking quite opposing positions on that issue (e.g., Toplin’s *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood* and Sanello’s *Reel v. Real: How Hollywood Turns Fact into Fiction*). This was an especially interesting question some years ago when two of the most successful films were Mel Gibson’s “*The Passion of the Christ*” and Michael Moore’s “*Fahrenheit 9/11*”. A related and interesting question worth discussing in class is the influence of films such as the two mentioned above. An argument could be made, for example, that despite Moore’s very publicly stated intentions, “*Fahrenheit 9/11”* cost the Democrats more votes than it delivered. Every year we have a variety of films that have stirred debate on issues relating to historical accuracy. I would include, for example, Spielberg’s “*Munich”* and Marshall’s “*Memoirs of a Geisha*,” among many others. This is particularly true of “biopics,” for example and just from recent years alone, “*Jackie*,” “*All the Way*,” “*Born to Be Blue*,” and “*Miles Ahead*.” The most recent film in this regard is “*Darkest Hour*,” with Gary Oldman playing Winston Churchill, a performance that won Oldman an Oscar for best actor. Some of these films raise other issues as well, with “*Geisha”* attracting criticism on cultural and casting grounds, and “*Munich”* stimulating discussion on a variety of grounds, including the filmmaker’s point of view and questions of (im)moral equivalence. There are also controversies over adaptation, as in Paul Thomas Anderson’s “*There Will Be Blood*,” which tones down Upton Sinclair’s critique of capitalism in the book *Oil*, on which the film is loosely based, turning it into a much more personal story, which of course helped Daniel Day-Lewis win his best acting award. In short, there are many ways to teach a course on film and politics and many films that we could be viewing, discussing and writing about.  If additional information is needed, please feel free to contract Professor Rosen ([rosen@usc.edu](mailto:rosen@usc.edu))