LEARNING POLITICS THROUGH “BATTLESTAR GALACTICA”

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

Using (the Re-imagined) “Battlestar Galactica,” and a selected set of “great books,” we will explore some of the big questions facing human persons in society: How should human communities be governed? Who rules? Is there a right of rebellion? How should resources be distributed? What is justice? What is law? Does might make right? Does democracy work under pressure? Does God have a place in human government? Do intelligent machines created by humans have rights? What should be the role of technology in the governance of human societies? On balance, are humans beneficial or detrimental to the universe? These are just a few of the questions the TV shows (and the great books!) raise.

Using class discussions and a variety of written and oral assignments, students will develop their abilities to

• Ask big questions
• Think systematically
• Think morally
• Watch visual media and read difficult texts closely and critically
• Amass relevant data
• Develop persuasive arguments
• Communicate clearly
• Document sources
• Know thyself!

The course is designed as a writing seminar. Students will produce a significant amount of formal and informal written work. The instructor will emphasize the art of writing clearly and persuasively, paying close attention to the mechanics of research and writing.

This class will be an adventure for the students and the instructor! All plans are tentative and subject to change as the term progresses.

TEXTS

Selected Passages of the Bible.
Readings Posted to Box.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

As a responsible student you will be expected to:

1) attend lectures;
2) complete all of the required viewings and readings;
3) participate in class discussions; and
4) keep abreast of current events.

The assignments for this class include the following:

1) Reflection Journal
2) Thought Paper
A Reflection Journal will offer the student opportunity to reflect on the topics raised by the TV series, the course readings and current events. Students will be encouraged to reflect on points of contact between the “Battlestar” narrative, current events and the ideas raised in the readings. Students should pay attention to the “themes of the week,” but should also feel free to be creative and address topics not covered in class. The journal should follow the rules of proper written English, but may be informal in style. Students are expected to write at least one full paragraph on each show. per week. The journal will be collected three times during the term.

A Thought Paper will demonstrate a student’s ability to think deeply about the issues explored in the TV series and communicate these thoughts in a well-crafted essay. Papers must meet the following guidelines:

- Clearly related in some way to “Battlestar Galactica.” It would be best to consult with the instructor on a topic
- Must argue in favor of a thesis
- 4-5 typed, double-spaced pages
- Must be revised after a face-to-face discussion with the instructor
- A hard copy of the draft and the final paper must be submitted to the instructor.

Research Paper will explore in the real world a question raised by the TV series. The instructor must approve topics.

A Take-Home Final Exam will cover the viewings, readings and discussions from the beginning of the course. Think of it as a final thought paper.

Students with disabilities who need academic accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services. Accommodations must be agreed to before assignments are submitted!

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance will be taken. After one unexcused absence, each additional unexcused absence will result in a reduction of the final exam grade by five points.

ETHICAL CONDUCT

Your presence in class signifies that you accept the basic rules of academic honesty. You must not engage in plagiarism or cheating in any form. Such conduct will not be tolerated and will result in severe penalties.

CONDUCT IN CLASS

Please, please, please—out of consideration for your classmates and the instructor—hold off on leaving the classroom for any purpose other than an emergency (i.e., get your Mountain Dew and go to the bathroom before you enter the classroom). In addition, students are not permitted to use laptop computers, tablets, cell phones or other personal handheld electronic devices in class unless asked to by the instructor (which will happen sometimes!). These rules apply during testing periods as well as class lectures and discussions. [By the way, I’m not a Luddite! I just know—from much personal experience from both sides of the lectern—how multitasking can undermine the learning process.]

GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Journal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thought Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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If a student fails to complete any one of the major assignments (reflection journal, thought paper, research paper, or final exam), the student will receive a grade of “F” for the course.
### COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Week</th>
<th>Class Days</th>
<th>BSG Episodes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</table>
| August     | 22, 24     | "Miniseries" (Movie) "33" "Water" "Bastille Day" "Act of Contrition" | Politics | PSM, Introduction, 1-4 | Tuesday  
- "Miniseries"  
- "33"  
- Hobbes (Box)  
- Locke, pp. 3-14  |
| Week 1     | 29, 31     | "You Can’t Go Home Again" "Litmus Test" "Six Degrees of Separation" "Flesh and Bone" "Tigh Me Up, Tigh Me Down" | The Nature of God(s)  
- Human Nature  
- Sacred Writings  
- Prophecy  
- Eschatology | PSM, 5-7 | Tuesday  
- Episodes  
- Genesis and Exodus readings  
- Individual Conferences  |
| September  | 5, 7       | "The Hand of God" "Colonial Day" "Kobol’s Last Gleaming (Part 1)" "Kobol's Last Gleaming (Part 2)" "Scattered" | Determinism v Free Will  
- Justice  
- Rule of Law  
- Political Expediency  
- Military Coup  
- Press Freedom  
- Political Opposition | PSM, 8-9, 25 | Tuesday  
- Episodes  
- PSM, 25  
- Tentative Research Paper Topic  |
| Week 3     | 12, 14     | "Valley of Darkness" "Fraged" "Resistance" "The Farm" "Home (Part 1)" "Home (Part 2)" | Causes of War  
- The Uses of War  
- Just War  
- The Causes of Peace  
- Perpetual War/Perpetual Peace? | PSM, 10-11 | Tuesday  
- Episodes  
- Machiavelli, Introduction, pp. 61-111  |
| Week 4     | 19, 21     | "Final Cut" "Flight of the Phoenix" "Pegasus" "Resurrection Ship (Part 1)" "Resurrection Ship (Part 2)" | Torture  
- Death Penalty | PSM, 12-14 | Tuesday  
- Episodes  
- Just War reading  |
| Week 5     | 26, 28     | "Epiphanies" "Black Market" "Scar" "Sacrifice" "The Captain's Hand" | Leadership  
- Markets  
- Extremism  
- Electoral Politics  
- Abortion Policy | PSM, 15 | Tuesday  
- Episodes  
- Smith  
- Locke  |
|           |            |              |        | Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Box)  
- Locke, pp. 16-30 | Thursday  
- PSM  
- Thought Paper, Final |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Episode(s)</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>3, 5</td>
<td>&quot;Downloaded&quot; &quot;Lay Down Your Burdens (Part 1)&quot; &quot;Lay Down Your Burdens (Part 2)&quot; &quot;Occupation&quot; &quot;Precipice&quot;</td>
<td>• Authoritarianism • Just Authority • Representative Government • Free and Fair Elections</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>&quot;Exodus (Part 1)&quot; &quot;Exodus (Part 2)&quot; &quot;Collaborators&quot; &quot;Torn&quot; &quot;A Measure of Salvation&quot;</td>
<td>• Collaboration • Resistance • Rebellion • Rule of Law • Retribution • Forgiveness • Truth and Reconciliation • Genocide</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>17, 19</td>
<td>&quot;Hero&quot; &quot;Unfinished Business&quot; &quot;The Passage&quot; &quot;The Eye of Jupiter&quot; &quot;Rapture&quot;</td>
<td>• Guilt/Sin/Shame • Resource Scarcity • Religious Conversion • Nuclear Threat • Cylon Democracy</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>24, 26</td>
<td>&quot;Taking a Break from All Your Worries&quot; &quot;The Woman King&quot; &quot;A Day in the Life&quot; &quot;Dirty Hands&quot; &quot;Maelstrom&quot;</td>
<td>• Human Rights • Ethnic Tension/Racism • Class Conflict • PSM, 35-39 • Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto (Box) • Rousseau, The Second Discourse, pp. 69-113</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>31, 2</td>
<td>&quot;The Son Also Rises&quot; &quot;Crossroads (Part 1)&quot; &quot;Crossroads (Part 2)&quot; &quot;Razor&quot; (Movie)</td>
<td>• Law and Justice • Human/Cylon Rights • Rousseau, The Second Discourse, pp. 113-148</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>14, 16</td>
<td>&quot;Faith&quot; &quot;Guess What's Coming to Dinner?&quot; &quot;Sine Qua Non&quot; &quot;The Hub&quot; &quot;Revelations&quot;</td>
<td>• Death and the Afterlife • Legitimate Authority • Tocqueville (Box)</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>&quot;Sometimes a Great Notion&quot; &quot;A Disquiet Follows My Soul&quot; &quot;The Oath&quot; &quot;Blood on the Scales&quot; &quot;No Exit&quot;</td>
<td>• Making Peace • Social Disorder • Revolution • Revolutionary Justice • Human Nature/Post-human Nature • Is Humanity Worth Saving? • Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (Box)</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>28, 30</td>
<td>&quot;Deadlock&quot; &quot;Someone to Watch Over Me&quot; &quot;Islands in a Stream of Stars&quot; &quot;Daybreak (Parts 1-3)&quot;</td>
<td>• Is There Purpose in the Universe? • Human Destiny • BGP, 7, 20 (Box)</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
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<td>• Tuesday ○ Episodes ○ Locke ○ Thanksgiving! ○ BGP ○ Journal, Weeks 12-15</td>
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Some seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge: that is curiosity;
Others seek knowledge that they may themselves be known: that is vanity;
But there are still others who seek knowledge in order to serve and edify others,
and that is charity.
—St. Bernard of Clairvaux