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.

Required reading

Grading

Research paper

- Part 1 draft 10
- Part 2 draft 10
- Part 3 draft 10
- Final paper and presentation 10

Article Powerpoint and presentation (group grade) 10

Midterm 20
Final exam 20
Class participation 10

As an EP course, students will write a 20-page research paper on a political theme in the Marvel Universe. For the first three Mondays of the class, students will turn in a 5-page paper on a political theme in the Marvel Universe (women’s rights, animal rights, economic justice, the individual versus the community, toleration, nuclear power, religion, etc.). The papers should discuss a Marvel movie, three reviews, and two academic articles. Then, the final paper will add an introduction, a conclusion, and edits based on feedback from the professor. See appendix for a template.

Article presentation group: The group is responsible for leading class discussion on the article. The group should make, present, and send to me a Powerpoint that describes:

- The authors of the article
- The background to the article. So if the article is on the 99, then the group is responsible for teaching the class about the 99. Feel free to show video clips adding up to about 10 minutes.
- The argument of the article
- How it illustrates political theory in popular culture. In other words, describe how the story under consideration fits into an ideology, e.g. Spiderman and libertarianism.
- Your thoughts.
- Students will have about an hour to lead discussion, so plan accordingly.
- Have fun! Make an interesting presentation that sparks a lively conversation.

Course schedule

1. May 31 – 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. June 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. June 2 – The Winter Soldier + discussion

4. June 6 – Conservativism
• Political Ideologies, Chapter 3
• What are the origins and development of conservativism? What do conservatives mean by tradition, human imperfection, organic society, hierarchy and authority, and property? What is the difference between paternalistic conservativism and libertarian conservativism?
• Part 1 draft due.

5. June 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?

6. June 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?

7. June 9 – Midterm at 4 pm in Faber Hall 6th Floor. There will be no class that evening.

8. June 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?
• **Discussion Group D**: Anika Hagley and Michael Harrison, “Fighting the Battles We Never Could: The Avengers and Post-September 11 American Political Identities,” PS: Political Science & Politics; 2014, Vol. 47 Issue 1, p120-124
• **Part 2 draft due.**

9. June 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?

10. June 15 - Feminism
• *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?”
• *Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal*

11. June 16 – Movie + discussion

12. June 20 – Ecologism
• *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?
• **Part 3 draft due.**

• *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. **June 22 - 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?
   - **Discussion Group D**: Kenneth Ghee “Will the ‘Real’ Black Superhero please stand up?!”: A critical Analysis of mythological and cultural significance of black superheroes” in Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation (eds) Sheena Howard and Ronald Jackson III

15. **June 23 – John Milewski visit**
   - **Civil War**

16. **June 27 – A Post-Ideological Age?**
   - *Political Ideologies*, Chapter 12
   - What is the end of ideology/history thesis? What are arguments for the persistence of ideology?

17. **June 28 – Final paper due + presentations (Groups A, B, C)**

18. **June 29 – Final paper due + presentations (Groups D, E, F)**

19. **June 30 – Final exam**
**Research Paper Structure**

Title that indicates topic and thesis

I. Introduction
   1. Hook: Tell an interesting story and then raise a provocative question, i.e. Is the Marvel University feminist? Are the X-Men communists? Is the Marvel Universe ahead of or behind the curve of transgender awareness? Does the Marvel Universe maintain old-fashioned views of masculinity and is that a problem? Etc.
   2. Map: Explain how you will answer the question by examining three Marvel movies. Say why these movies are the right ones to answer your question.

II. Theme X in Marvel Movie 1
   - Answer the big question
   - Explain the plot of the movie
   - Cite 3 reviews and 2 academic articles or book chapters. The academic sources may be on the movie or the political issue, e.g. feminism.
   - Consider the evidence in the movie that could support answering the question the other way. Complexity makes the paper better.
   - The last few paragraphs can discuss your view on whether the movie is good or bad on the political issue.

III. Theme X in Marvel Movie 2

IV. Theme X in Marvel Movie 3

V. Conclusion
   Articulate your own informed perspective. Answer the question that you raised in the introduction. And then share your thoughts about whether the Marvel movies are a force for good or bad, how they should be different going forward, etc. In general, the best way to articulate your own perspective is to contrast it with those of other smart people in the conversation. So if your paper is on how the Marvel Universe handles racism, engage with other people who have written on the topic and explain how you agree and disagree with them.