

# PIA2801: SOCIAL CHANGE AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES: A CRITICAL APPRECIATION THROUGH FILM

---

## Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Social Change and Governance Challenges: A Critical Appreciation through Film

### Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

### Course Number

2801

### Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

CLA1102 Understanding Asia in the World

CLA1502 Discovering Government

AIS2801 Asia in the World: A Critical Appreciation Through Film

POL2109 Understanding Politics and Policy

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course aims to introduce students to social changes and challenges for governance in the contemporary world via a number of core themes that will be addressed through lectures/discussion and related movies or documentary screenings. Each theme will bring together a designated film or a number of shorter documentaries and key concepts, context, and debates related to the film. The themes to be covered are as follows: 1) family changes; 2) aging society; 3) technology and dystopia; 4) the political economy of food; 5) rapid environmental change; 6) the global illicit economy and the wildlife trade; 7) Hong Kong and the circular economy.

Social Change and Governance Challenges: A Critical Appreciation Through Film is an interdisciplinary course drawing on anthropology, history, political science, public policy and sociology. It adopts a pedagogical strategy that emphasizes exploration and discovery through various modes of learning and critical inquiry, and in particular via reading 'film languages' of both documentaries and feature films. The course also serves to demonstrate the value and relevance of social scientific and humanistic study and research in understanding Asia, and the world more broadly.

Through their work in this course, students will be better placed to conceptualize local, regional and global governance challenges and to think through the potential and limits of social action. The selected issues represent key issues facing societies today, especially demographic change, worsening natural ecosystems, and fears of technological overreach. Students will critically examine multiple levels of analysis, from individuals and families to public and private actors to larger social forces. The focus is continuity and change in the region, while also situating developments in both a Hong Kong and a global context.

Notionally, the film screenings are listed below:

- 1) family changes: The Farewell
- 2) aging society: The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel
- 3) technology and dystopia: Ghost in the Shell
- 4) the political economy of food: Okja
- 5) rapid environmental change: The Last Glaciers
- 6) the global illicit economy and the wildlife trade: The Last Animals
- 7) Hong Kong and the circular economy: reFashioned

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Demonstrate an awareness of the key social, historical, political, cultural, and ecological features of contemporary societies, and locate these features within the broader global context.	30	x	x	
2	Identify major social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental issues facing contemporary societies.	20	x	x	
3	Examine the inter-connectedness among societies in the region and with the wider world.	20	x	x	
4	Evaluate current and prospective challenges and opportunities facing different cultures and ecosystems in the world.	20	x	x	x
5	Develop critical thinking skills applicable in other academic fields as well.	10		x	x

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

**A2: Ability**

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

**A3: Accomplishments**

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

**Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)**

	<b>LTAs</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>CILO No.</b>	<b>Hours/week (if applicable)</b>
1	Lectures	Theories and approaches to films will be introduced in lectures to help students contextualise core issues in Asia and Asia' s position in the world.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
2	Film screenings and discussion sessions	Films relating to core thematic lectures will be screened in class and discussion sessions will be held at the conclusion of each screening for students to raise questions about the film and share their thoughts.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

3	Discussant	<p>Each student is responsible for serving as a discussant twice. Discussants will have carried out advance research to go deeper into the topic and they will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify key points and questions raised by classmates on Canvas Discussions (see “Five Points Before Select Classes” below)</li> <li>- present their position on some of the key issues</li> <li>- think of critical cases that shed light on the topic</li> <li>- think about provocative/ penetrating questions that will challenge classmates and/or any guests and generate discussion</li> <li>- be prepared to answer questions from classmates</li> <li>- be ready to take on a leadership role in smaller groups, when appropriate</li> </ul>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
4	Q&A With Guests	<p>Experts, including the film-makers themselves, will be invited to engage in a Q&amp;A to critically examine the subject. Particular attention will be paid to how the subject is relevant to the lives of students, whether social change is possible, and which public and private actors are central to this governance challenge.</p>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
5	Readings	<p>Carefully selected readings will push students to think through the issue at hand and generate points that they want to discuss in class and pursue additional research in their individual assignments</p>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("-" for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Film Critique	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	40	Students will be required to write a film review to show their understanding of the films and lectures. The paper should employ research and critical analysis.	No
2	Research paper	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	40	Students will write a research paper of 2,000 words developing an argument related to one of the 7 themes in the course.	No
3	Class Participation and Discussion	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	20	Students are expected to participate actively in all class activities. The performance of students as discussants in two weeks factors into this assessment item.	No

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Examination (%)**

0

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

1. Film critique

**Criterion**

Critically analyse a film, its themes and how does it relate to one of the five thematic modules, its strengths & weaknesses. Need good organization & English writing.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Evidence of grasp of subject, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical skills; reasonable understanding of issues; evidence of familiarity with literature and the film.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Some evidence of understanding of the subject; relevant information is included.

**Marginal (D)**

Minimum familiarity with the subject matter which enables the student to progress without repeating the course.

**Failure (F)**

Little evidence of familiarity with the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited, or irrelevant use of literature and/or film.

---

**Assessment Task**

2. Research paper

**Criterion**

Each student will write a 2000-word research paper that shows critical thinking about the concept of “Asia in the world.” The paper should exhibit a firm grasp of the general context of Asia and of one of the individual modules. Students will choose from a variety of topics. The paper should demonstrate good use of academic style and draw on lectures, readings, and films

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Strong evidence of a firm grasp of new materials. Writes well. Shows full understanding of concepts and contents; all relevant information is included; purpose of paper is clear and expressed critically. Student applies proper academic style.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Good evidence of a grasp of new materials. Writes well, with minor mistakes. Shows good understanding of concepts and contents; most relevant information is included; purpose of paper is clear and mostly expressed critically. Student applies proper academic style with some shortcomings

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Some evidence of a grasp of new materials. Writes well, though not fluent. Shows limited understanding of concepts and contents; limited relevant information is included; purpose of paper is somewhat unclear and only marginally expressed critically. Academic style is not used properly.

**Marginal (D)**

Little evidence of a grasp of new materials. Writes with major shortcomings. Shows partial understanding of concepts and contents; does not include most of the relevant information; purpose of paper is unclear and marginally expressed critically. Student shows poor academic style.

**Failure (F)**

No evidence of a grasp of new materials. Writes unacceptably. Shows no understanding of concepts and contents; does not include relevant information; purpose of paper is unclear and not expressed critically. There is no attempt at proper academic style. Missing assignments

---

**Assessment Task**

3. Five Points Before Select Classes

**Criterion**

This assessment is a test of students’ ability to: identify important as well as underexplored themes; draw connections across the course modules; link the themes to their own lives and localities; and raise questions that the discussants and the instructor should address for all students.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Original and thought-provoking and the discussants and instructor directly respond to these points in class

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Well-thought through and some of the points raised may be discussed in class

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Not particularly original or thoughtful material and little or no engagement from the instructor or students

**Marginal (D)**

Student did not follow guidelines and/or submitted sub-standard work

**Failure (F)**

No evidence of any thought put into the five points; no submission; plagiarism

**Assessment Task**

4. Class participation and discussion

**Criterion**

Students are expected to participate actively in all class activities, including serving as a discussant.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

Very active participation in all classroom activities.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

Active participation in classroom activities.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

Satisfactory participation in classroom activities.

**Marginal (D)**

Rarely participate in classroom activities.

**Failure (F)**

Nil participation in classroom activities.

## Part III Other Information

**Keyword Syllabus**

Family, kinship, aging, care work, culture, documentary, environmental change, film, food futures, the global illicit economy, political economy, politics, social transformation, society, sociotechnical imaginaries, technology, dystopia, governance, circular economy.

**Reading List**

**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Allum, Felia and Gilmour, Stan (eds). 2012. Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime, London: Routledge.
2	Balaam, David N. and Dillman, Bradford. 2015. "The Illicit Global Economy: The Dark Side of Globalization" in David N. Balaam and Bradford Dillman, Introduction to International Political Economy, London: Routledge.
3	China Water Risk. 2018. No Water, No Growth: Does Asia Have Enough Water to Develop?

4	Clapp, Jennifer. 2016. <i>Food</i> , Cambridge: Polity Press.
5	Clifford, Mark. 2015. <i>The Greening of Asia: The Business Case for Solving Asia's Environmental Emergency</i> , New York: Columbia Business School Publishing.
6	CROSBY, Kate. 2013. "Monks, Monasteries, and Their Place in Society." In <i>Theravada Buddhism: Continuity, Diversity, and Identity</i> . London: Wiley-Blackwell. 197-211.
7	DRYSDALE, Peter. 2015. "Abe bites the security bullet." <i>East Asia Forum</i> . September <a href="http://www.eastasiaforum.org/?p=47750">http://www.eastasiaforum.org/?p=47750</a>
8	Elmer-Dewitt, Philip, and David S. Jackson. 1993. "Cyberpunk! (Cover story)." <i>TIME Magazine</i> 141 (6): 58. The Global Environmental Reporting Collective. 2019. <i>The Pangolin Reports: Trafficked to Extinction</i> .
9	Goff, Patricia. 2000. "Invisible Borders: Economic Liberalization and National Identity" <i>International Studies Quarterly</i> , Vol. 44, No. 34, 533-562.
10	GUPTA, Sourabh. 2015. "Abe's new security legislation doubles-down on the US alliance." <i>East Asia Forum</i> . September
11	HAHM In Hee. 2011. "The Characteristics of Modern Korean Family and The State of Women." <i>Understanding Contemporary Korean Culture</i> . Ed. by Choi Joon Sik et als. Seoul: Ewha Womans University, Korean Cultural Research Institute. 61-87.
12	Hope, Bradley and Wright, Tom. 2018. <i>Billion Dollar Whale: The Man Who Fooled Wall Street, Hollywood and the World</i> , New York: Hachette Books.
13	LADWIG, Patrice. "Applying Dhamma to Contemporary Society: Socially Engaged Buddhism and Development Work in the Lao PDR," <a href="https://www.eth.mpg.de/3466895/Ladwig_Applying_Dhamma_Buddhism_Development_UNDP_.pdf">https://www.eth.mpg.de/3466895/Ladwig_Applying_Dhamma_Buddhism_Development_UNDP_.pdf</a>
14	Monbiot, George. 2020. "Lab-grown Food Will Soon Destroy Farming-and Save the Planet" <i>The Guardian</i> , 8 January.
15	Ochiai, Emiko. 2014. "Care Diamonds and Welfare Regimes in East and Southeast Asian Societies." In <i>Transformation of the Intimate and the Public in Asian Modernity</i> , edited by Emiko Ochiai and Leo Aoi Hosoya, 166-189. Leiden: Brill.
16	Onian'go , Ruth Khasaya. 2018. "Why What We Eat is Crucial to the Climate Change Question" <i>The Guardian</i> , 5 March.
17	Santos, Gonalo D., and Stevan Harrell, eds. 2017. <i>Transforming Patriarchy: Chinese Families in the Twenty-first Century</i> . Seattle: University of Washington Press (Introduction; available via CityU library).
18	Sobchack, Vivian. 2004. "Science Fiction Film and the Technological Imagination." In <i>Technological Visions: The Hopes and Fears that Shape New Technologies</i> , edited by Marita Sturken, Douglas Thomas and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, 145-158. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
19	Tan, Debra. 2018. <i>Fashion Has The Power To Shape A 2°C World</i> , China Water Risk, 18 December.
20	Wong, Rebecca. 2019. <i>The Illegal Wildlife Trade in China: Understanding Distribution Networks</i> , Houndmills: Palgrave.
21	Yeates, Nicola. 2004. "Global Care Chains: Critical Reflections and Lines of Enquiry." <i>International Feminist Journal of Politics</i> 6 (3): 369-391

### Additional Readings

	Title
1	Beeson, Mark. "Southeast Asia and the Politics of Vulnerability." <i>Third World Quarterly</i> 23, no. 3 (2002): 549-64.
2	Berger, Mark T. <i>The Battle for Asia - from Decolonization to Globalization</i> . Edited by Mark Selden, <i>Asia's Transformations</i> . London: Routledge, 2004.
3	Carrington, Damian. 2017. "The Seven Megatrends the Could Beat Global Warming" <i>The Guardian</i> , 8 November.
4	Carroll, Toby. "Asia under Late Capitalism." <i>Critical Asian Studies</i> 45, no. 1 (2013): 133-52.
5	Carroll, Toby, and Darryl Jarvis. "The Death of Development in Asia." <i>The Jakarta Post</i> , Monday, August 19 2013, 6.
6	Carroll, Toby, Shahar Hameiri, and Lee Jones, eds. 2020. <i>The Political Economy of Southeast Asia: Politics and Uneven Development under Hyperglobalisation</i> . Fourth edition. ed. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
7	Case, William. 2017. "Stress Testing Leadership in Malaysia: the 1MDB Scandal and Najib Tun Razak" <i>The Pacific Review</i> , Vol. 30, No. 5, 633-654.

8	Cline, Elizabeth. 2012. <i>Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion</i> , New York: Penguin.
9	Dutton, M. 1995. <i>Street Life China</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
10	The Economist. 2019. "Chickenomics: How Chicken Became the Rich World's Most Popular Meat" 19 January.
11	Fanon, Frantz. 2004. <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> . Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press.
12	Ganti, Tejaswini. 2002. "'and Yet My Heart Is Still Indian': The Bombay Film Industry and the (H)Indianization of Hollywood." In <i>Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain</i> , edited by Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin, 281-300. Berkeley: University of California Press.
13	The Ivory Game. 2016. Documentary, Terra Mater Factual Studios.
14	Jasanoff, Sheila, and Sang-Hyun Kim, eds. 2015. <i>Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power</i> . Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press (Conclusion). Louie, Kam., ed. 2008. <i>The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University
15	Jaschinski, Britta, 2019. <i>Photographers Against Wildlife Crime</i> .
16	Kawai, Masahiro, and Peter Petri, A. <i>Asia's Role in the Global Economic Architecture 2010</i> [cited 26 October 2010].
17	Neuman, Lawrence W. 2014. <i>East Asian Societies</i> . Key Issues in Asian Studies, AAS publication.
18	Paper, Jordan. "Familism: The Global Context of Chinese Religion, " in his <i>Chinese Religion and Familism: The Basis of Chinese Culture, Society, and Government</i> . London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
19	Pfeiffer, Dirk. 2020. "Outbreak Should Spark Rethink on Wildlife Trade, i, 30 January.
20	Sahlins, Marshall. 1994. "Cosmologies of Capitalism: The Trans-Pacific Sector of "The World System"." In <i>Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory</i> , edited by Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner, 412-455. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
21	Stoler, Ann Laura, and Frederick Cooper. 1997. "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda." In <i>Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World</i> , edited by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, 1-58. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
22	Rabobank. 2019. <i>The Asia Food Challenge: Harvesting the Future</i> .
23	Staudenmaier, John M. 1985. <i>Technology's Storytellers: Reweaving the Human Fabric</i> . Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
24	Sturken, Marita, Douglas Thomas, and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, eds. 2004. <i>Technological Visions: The Hopes and Fears that Shape New Technologies</i> . Philadelphia: Temple University Press (Introduction).
25	Taylor, Charles. 2004. <i>Modern social imaginaries</i> . Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press (chapter 2).
26	Therborn, Göran. 2004. <i>Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900-2000</i> . London; New York: Routledge (Introduction; available via CityU library).
27	True Cost. 2015. Documentary on the human and environmental costs of fast fashion. Bullfrog Films.
28	Zhang, Jun, and Peidong Sun. 2014. "When Are You Going to Get Married?" Parental Matchmaking and Middle-class Women in Contemporary Urban China." In <i>Wives, Husbands, and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China</i> , edited by Deborah Davis and Sara Friedman, 118-144. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press
29	Yan, Yunxiang. 2010. "The Chinese Path to Individualization." <i>The British Journal of Sociology</i> 61 (3):489-512.