Introduction
OSU Catalog description: Exploration of the role of celebrities and celebrity politicians in the political process. Special focus is given to current celebrities working in humanitarian, environmental, and other high visibility causes. Also examines the domestic and international policy implications of celebrity activism.

Whether through movies, news comedy shows, or acting as an ambassador for a particular cause, celebrities have arguably become more that entertainers but issue-focused and sometimes agenda setting de-facto political leaders. Celebrities like Angelina Jolie, Bono, Ted Nugent, and Donald Trump have brought attention to issues that have national and global implications. With citizens less inclined to identify with political parties, celebrities and celebrity politicians may be uniquely positioned to influence policy and voting preference. While this may seem like a recent phenomenon, Wheeler (2013) reported that as early at 1944 American sociologist Leo Lowenthal “argued that US media coverage had replaced ‘idols of production’, such as politicians, with ‘idols of consumption’ such as film stars (9).

This class will examine an array of issues related to celebrity politics such as celebrities as humanitarian and political ambassadors, the role of celebrities in agenda-setting and policy formation, and politicians as celebrities. We have a few goals in this class. First, this class will briefly review the literature surrounding the idea of celebrity in modern culture. Second, we will examine the ways in which celebrities influence domestic and international policy and agenda setting. Finally, this course will explore the implications of celebrity activists and celebrity politicians on the American democratic system.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to ...

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the role of celebrity activists in international and domestic policy issues (measured in all written and oral assignments).
• Explain the implications of celebrity activists on the democratic process (measured in all written and oral assignments).
• Articulate the critical perspectives of “celebrity” (both of politicians and pop-culture figures) politics using evidence as support (measured in all written and oral assignments).

Prerequisites
It is recommended that students take PS 201 (Introduction to American Government). [http://oregonstate.edu/registrar/prerequisite-enforcement](http://oregonstate.edu/registrar/prerequisite-enforcement)

Credits
This is a 4-credit course, meaning you should expect to commit approximately 120 hours of time into the course materials and assignments.

Required Texts/Readings


Darrell M. West and John Orman *Celebrity Politics: Real Politics in America* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003) You can find good used copies on Amazon for only a few dollars.

Textbook: *NOTE: For textbook accuracy, please always check the textbook list at the OSU Bookstore website* ([http://osubeaverstore.com/Academics/](http://osubeaverstore.com/Academics/)). *Sample syllabi may not have the most up-to-date information.*

Students can also click the OSU Beaver Store link associated with the PS 399 course information in the Ecampus schedule of classes for course textbook information and ordering.

In order to fully ascertain the influence of celebrity culture on politics, we will use a variety of resources including books, journal articles, movies, and Internet sites.

Additional assigned articles, book chapters, and readings are available on blackboard. Video may be rented and streamed from Amazon, Netflix or iTunes.

Assignments

• You are expected to submit 5 current events during the quarter using Canvas. (50 points total)
• Movie Review – You are expected to submit a 1-2 page paper movie review describing in what ways the movie was politically persuasive and the overt and covert ways the movie conveyed an ideological or policy goal. (20 points)
• You are expected to submit two term papers, in which you will discuss and analyze course materials in relation to chosen topics. (200 points total)
• You will present a video campaign evaluation of a celebrity activist reviewing the key messages that indicate policy preferences on a domestic or international level. (100 points total)

Course Policies

• I do not accept late work without prior approval (you will need to let me know in advance of any time conflict).
• Extra credit will not be allowed in this course.
• All OSU academic regulations will be followed in the course. Academic regulations are available at http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/offenses-0
• You are expected to do all required reading.
• Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in this course. Engaging in such behaviors will result in a failing course grade. You are to do ALL of your own work. Plagiarism is defined as representing (and using) another person's ideas, writings, and work as one's own. Appropriate citation must be used for all materials incorporated into your work. Plagiarism will lead to a failing course grade.
• Proper spelling, grammar, and citation should be used in all assignments. We all make typos, but try to catch them as best you can.
• I will make every effort to respond to emails/inquiries within 24-48 hours and have all assignments grades within one week of submission.

Communication/Contact Policy

I encourage all students to post general questions in the Q&A board under the Discussion Board link. I will try to respond to these posts within 24-48 hours. Questions that are more specific can be directed to my email Erika.wolters@oregonstate.edu again I will respond within 24-48 hours. I am also available to meet with you in person, via Skype or phone (my office phone is 541.737.1421) by appointment.

Accommodations

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.
Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used for evaluating written and oral assignments:

(Poor; Average; Good; Very Good; Excellent)

- COMMITMENT - did you cover all relevant materials/questions?
- AMBITION - did you take each issue to task?
- ENGAGEMENT - did you make connections between issues?
- CLARITY - was the assignment well prepared and organized?
- READINGS/COURSE MATERIALS - did you use appropriate reading and other course materials in your work? [Note: cite everything appropriately] You are also strongly encouraged to use additional resources.
- COMPARISON - in general, how did your work compare to the rest of the class?
- DIRECTIONS - did you follow directions?

Final Grade Distribution

Letter Grade Per cent of point’s possible:
A [95-100%]  A- [90-94%]  B+ [87-89%]
B [83-86%]  B- [80-82%]  C+ [77-79%]
C [73-76%]  C- [70-72%]  D+ [67-69%]
D [63-66%]  D- [60-62%]  F [0-59%]

Additional Sites

There are a multitude of sites to obtain information on celebrity ambassadors/activists. The following list should be used as a starting point, and not seen as an exclusive list. These sites are a collection of informative sites, entertainment sites and sites analyzing celebrity involvement in issues.

UNICEF  http://www.unicef.org/people/people_ambassadors.html
UNHCR  http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c3e.html
ONE and RED campaign  http://www.one.org/us/person/bono/
Environmental Celebrities  http://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/celebrities-helping-environment/
Clint Eastwood support of gay marriage  http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/clint-eastwood-joins-republicans-gay-marriage-highlighting-growing/story?id=18620592
Sarah McLachlan animal rights campaign  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gsPElv1yvc
SNL – Tina Fey as Sarah Palin [http://www.hulu.com/watch/34465]
Arnold Schwarzenegger [http://governors.library.ca.gov/38-schwarzenegger.html]
and his organization [http://jphro.org/index.html]
Jamie Oliver Food Revolution [http://www.jamieoliver.com/us/foundation/jamies-food-revolution/home]
George Clooney Sudan effort [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/16/george-clooney-arrested-sudanese-embassy]
Sudan – Not On Our Watch organization [http://notonourwatchproject.org]
Jack Johnson [http://johnsonohana.org/]
Look to the Stars: The World of Celebrity Giving [https://www.looktothestars.org/]

Topics and Readings

Week 1 – Politics and Popular Culture
- Read chapters 1 & 2 in Celebrity Politics by Mark Wheeler
- Read chapter 1 in Celebrity Diplomacy by Andrew F. Cooper
- Read “Celebrity Politics: The Politics of Late Modernity?” by Marsh et al. (2010) – on Canvas

Week 2 – The Power of Celebrity
- Read chapter 5 in Celebrity Politics by Mark Wheeler
- Read chapters 2 & 6 in West & Orman’s Celebrity Politics
- Read “Star Power: Celebrity Advocacy and the Evolution of the Public Sphere” by Thrall et al. – on Canvas

Week 3 – Celebrity Campaigners & Influence on Elections
- Read chapter 4 in Celebrity Politics by Mark Wheeler
- Read “Why Haiti can’t afford a rap star president” available at [http://www.salon.com/2010/08/10/wyclef_jean_president/]
- Read “Celebrity diplomacy, spectacle and Barack Obama” by Kellner - on Canvas
- Read “The influence of Celebrity Endorsements on Young Adults’ Political Opinions” by Jackson and Darrow available at [http://hij.sagepub.com.ezproxy.proxy.library.oregonstate.edu/content/10/3/80.full.pdf+html]

Week 4 – “News” Media, SNL, and the Sarah Palin Effect

- Read “The influence of Celebrity Endorsements on Young Adults' Political Opinions” by Jackson and Darrow (2005) available at http://hij.sagepub.com/content/10/3/80.full.pdf+html
- Watch selected political clips (your choice) of SNL, The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, The Simpsons, etc. (contact me for other choices).

Week 5 – When Celebrities Use Movies to Promote an Agenda

- Read 7 Movies that Changed Your Political Views at http://www.motherjones.com/mixed-media/2014/01/hollywood-movies-change-political-views-more-liberal-study
- Watch a movie with a supposed political agenda from the list of 7 above, or from the supplemental movie and book list provided. Submit a 1-2 page paper describing in what ways the movie was politically persuasive and the overt and covert ways the movie conveyed an ideological or policy goal.

Week 6 – The Celebrity Activist – Part I

- Read chapter 5 in Celebrity Politics by Mark Wheeler
- Read chapter 8 in Celebrity Politics: Real Politics in America by West and Orman

Take a look at the following articles/websites that illustrate the political work of these celebrities (you may choose other sites as well). Make note of how they use their role as celebrity to influence (i.e. visibility, name recognition, controversy, etc.)

- Russell Brand’s call for a revolution? Explore the site http://www.russellbrand.com/ Take a look at his videos or “Trews” that tackle the news and confronts the truth (his sentiment).
- George Clooney, humanitarian work http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/16/george-clooney-arrested-sudanese-embassy
- Michael J. Fox Parkinson’s Foundation https://www.michaeljfox.org/
- Write a 1-2 page paper discussing the ways that celebrities engage you in their cause (emotive, constructive, etc.) and why you think celebrity stature matters in these causes.
Week 7 – The Celebrity Activist – Part II: From Audrey Hepburn to Angelina Jolie

- Read chapter 6 in *Celebrity Politics* by Mark Wheeler
- Read “The Theatricality of Humanitarianism: A Critique of Celebrity Advocacy” by Chouliaraki – on Canvas
- Read “Angelina Jolie Dies for our Sins” by Junod – on Canvas
- Read “Celebrity politics: Bono, product (RED) and the legitimizing of philanthrocapitalism” by Farrell – on Canvas
- Read “The mirror of consumption: Celebritization, developmental consumption and the shifting cultural politics of fair trade” by Goodman (2010) – on Canvas

Week 8 – Eco Celebrities


The point of looking at these sites is to introduce you to the idea of celebrity altruism vs. narcissism vs. ignorance. How can celebrities build 20,000 square foot homes AND be a UN goodwill ambassador for the environment? Do celebrities who live in the ultimate consumer culture have the ability to communicate environmental awareness and concern? Is Ed Begley Jr. an exception? Are any celebrities?

- Please write a 1-2 page paper discussing the balance between advocacy and hypocrisy (have some concrete examples).

Week 9 – A critical review

- Read “The Democratic worth of celebrity politics in an era of late modernity” by Wheeler – on Canvas
- Read “Barack Obama and Celebrity Spectacle” by Kellner – on Canvas
- Read “Do celebrity politics and celebrity politicians matter?” by Street – on Canvas
- Read “Condi, Hillary, and…Angelina? When celebrities act like politicians, and politicians act like celebrities” by Weisberg – on Canvas

Week 10 – Saturation or efficacy?

- Read the conclusion to *Celebrity Politics* by Wheeler
• Read chapter 9 in *Celebrity Politics* by West and Orman

**Course Evaluation**

I encourage you to engage in the course evaluation process each term – online, of course. The evaluation form will be available toward the end of each term; you will receive instructions through ONID from the Office of Academic Programs, Assessment, and Accreditation. You will login to MyOSU to respond to the online questionnaire. The results on the form are anonymous and are not tabulated until after grades are posted.