

Chapter 16

New Approaches in Political Science Education: Films as Assistive Course Material With an Application From Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This study will assess the use of films as an assistive educational tool in the course of political science and the effects it will have. Firstly, the use of films as an assistive tool in the teaching process will be discussed, and this subject will be analyzed in terms of political science education. Secondly, the effect of the use of films in the course will be discussed with the practice conducted in the “Introduction to Political Science” course by the researcher in the 2018-2019 fall semester. The researcher assigned the films in accordance with the syllabus of the course and gave as a homework for the students to watch, and after watching these films, the researcher asked the students to evaluate them in parallel with the subjects of political science and concepts which they have learned. As a result, the study revealed that films can have a positive effect as an assistive tool in political science education.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of student population and education tools have changed significantly over the past two decades, but in political science, teaching style has not yet thoroughly followed this path of change. While many other disciplines have adopted innovative and diverse ways to respond to the characteristics of the new student population, there is little evidence that politics did the same until the 2000s (Stammers et al., 1999; Welch, 2000). However, it has been emphasized that there is a need for change in teaching political science. The Wahlke Report (1991), which became famous with the name of its author, was published in 1991 by the American Political Science Association (APSA), the world-renowned authority

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8243-5.ch016

in the field of Political Science. This report contains recommendations for undergraduate political science teaching. And, it should be stated that APSA continues to work on this issue and produce reports.

Opinions and researches on the need for change in the direction of innovative approaches in political science teaching continue to increase. For example, European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) organized a panel called “Teaching and Learning Politics” in 2018 (ECPR, 2018). Also, it is seen that Political Science journals have published special issues on this subject, and some journals have entered the publication life only with this field. For example, *Journal of Political Science Education*, which started its publication life in 2005, is one of these journals.

Recently, it has been observed that films and documentaries are an indispensable part of learning methods. Many disciplines recommend certain visual materials that fall within their subject are a supportive resource to students. Considering this method from the field of Political Science, the use of films as a supportive material is under the initiative of the lecturer of the course. According to the course outcomes of political science, it is not stated that the course will be taught with such a method in terms of teaching techniques.

The strong relationship between Generation Z and technology in the 21st century necessitates a change in educational methods and innovative approaches. This relationship has paved the way for the use of films as assistive materials in education in some fields of science. Some experiences even show that people learn foreign languages on their own through films and TV shows. Again, it is seen that films are used in some fields of science to prepare for the profession. For example, a study (Özcan, et al., 2019) conducted in the field of medical ethics tried to convey the essential characteristics of a good physician, such as an empathic approach, giving bad news, and gaining professional knowledge, through films (p. 64).

The use of films as an educational tool is not new. In 1987, the publishing was made for military history education, including video recordings, motion pictures, and war-related audio-visual aids. There are ten titles in the study: General military history on war, commanders-characters, military unit history, colonial America, civil war-Spanish American War, World War I and the interwar period, World War II, Korean War, and Cold War, Vietnam War, and Hollywood films. In addition, a related film bibliography was created under each title (Yakar İnce, 2013).

Yakar İnce (2013) provides information on how films are used in private science fields in his article, in which he made a historical evaluation of the educational use of films. She gives examples of academic literature on the use of films as educational tools in fields such as economics, sociology, literature, foreign language, history, and medical ethics. Films are considered as a critical tool in concretizing difficult concepts, especially in fields such as economics and sociology, in teaching foreign languages, in transmitting the public of medical ethics, and in both transferring historical events and introducing their heroes (pp. 30-31).

In Turkey teaching political science through films or to use them as assistive material is under the initiative of the lecturer. It is not stated that the course will be taught in such a method in terms of teaching techniques in the course outcomes of political science. There are elective courses on the relationship between politics and cinema in some departments at the undergraduate level. Looking at the content of these courses, the proposed sources are both books and films. The subjects to be taught according to weeks are matched with suitable films. It is seen that films are used pedagogically at the postgraduate level, especially in the departments of political science and international relations

As seen above, social science is a convenient field for using films as an assistive tool in courses. It is at the lecturer’s discretion to suggest films on related topics in the lessons, and this method is becoming

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