Between Fiction and Politics
(Mis)Representations of the United Nations in the news, literature and movies

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Tuesday 17h30-19h30

Course description

While everyone has heard about the United Nations, few people actually understand its functioning. Since 1945, the institution has the object of much criticism (naive idealism, paralysis, bureaucratization, power politics, etc.) which challenges its legitimacy. This course suggests re-visiting these criticisms not through the lenses of International Relations (IR) theories but from the perceptions of other groups that are contemporary of these institutions and form another part of “civil society” namely journalists, diplomats, writers and movie directors. Through their professional activity and art, they have shared (often on a broader scale than academics) their representations of the United Nations.

What are these representations? To what extent do they accurately reflect what actually happens within the United Nations and its field of action? How were these representations spread and received? How do these works articulate fiction with politics?

While priority will be given to the analysis of a corpus of selected documents (newspaper articles, books and movies), attention will also be paid to some theoretical works (in political science, sociology and history) in order to help us understand the way in which particular media may influence our own representations of international institutions.

This course is open to any student who has an interest for international politics, international organizations and media studies in general.

Assignments
For Erasmus/International Students: final paper (15 000 characters, notes and bibliography included): the topic will be given during the semester
For French Students: final exam: 2 hours essay (in English) in January
Although oral participation would not be evaluated as such, bonus points would be granted to students who participate actively through short oral presentations related to the topic of the day, or relevant interventions during the class based on the suggested readings.
Note that most of the readings are accessible at the Sciences Po library or via Google Drive.
The United Nations (UN): A short introduction (Oct.3)

Readings (in class)

PRESS

Campaigning for the next UN Secretary General (Oct. 10)

Readings

In English (mandatory)

In French (optional)

ACADEMIA

**LITERATURE**

**From the League of Nations to the UN: depicting the international bureaucracy (Oct. 17)**

Readings

**A diplomat-writer inside the UN (Oct. 24)**

Readings
Excerpts from Romain Gary (Fosco Sinibaldi), *L'homme à la colombe*, Gallimard, 1984 [1958]
Oral Presentation: Romain GARY, Nuits magnétiques, 17 avril 1978 (Podcast, Archives INA)

**The UN and “Aid and Development” in Haiti (Nov. 7)**

Readings

**MOVIES**

**The UN and peacekeeping: the Bosnian War, Part 1 (Nov. 14-Nov. 21)**

Movie
Danis Tanovic, *No Man’s land*, 2001 (98’)

Reading

**The UN and peacekeeping: the Bosnian War, Part 2 (Dec. 5)**

Movie
Peter Kosminsky, *Warriors*, 1999 (171’) (excerpts)

Reading

**Judging War Criminals (Dec. 19)**

Movie
Marcel Schüpbach, *Carla’s list*, 2007 (95’) (excerpts)

Reading

**Additional entertainment movies:**