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Movies with Meaning: Crossing Disciplines in Cinema

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Ashley Cotter
Sr. Thesis
Abstract

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One might not realize that blockbuster movies can be used as an educational tool in the classroom setting to enhance the learning process. While these types of movies are not crafted as pedagogical tools, like animated, demonstrative video clips, there is educational value to be found in them. In more recent years, this is a practice that has been used in many classrooms. However, it is within the social sciences primarily that these blockbuster films are used to augment the understanding of concepts. Big films are rarely, if ever, used in the hard sciences to provide examples of concepts. How can big movies be used to explain both concepts in international relations and biology? I argue that big blockbuster movies have an interdisciplinary use to supplement the learning process. Abstract concepts from both disciplines, international relations and biology, can be demonstrated through images and scenes readily available through blockbuster movies. Concepts such as the levels of analysis, realism, and liberalism draw from international relations, but those same movies can also demonstrate ideas in biology, such as the microanatomy of a cell, mechanisms of homeostasis, as well as branching into other more detailed fields of biology such as microbiology and ecology. All of these concepts and more can be found in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, *the Dark Knight*, and Disney Pixar's *Inside Out*, movies which I utilize in this paper, to demonstrate concepts in two very different, intellectual, and demanding fields.