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499T/499P Honors Thesis: Contract and Registration Form

Contract submission deadline date: November/December for spring semester registration; April/May for fall semester registration.

⬇ **STUDENT SECTION**

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Member of Commonwealth Honors College: **Yes**	Departmental Honors Dept. (if applicable): **BA-POLSCI Political Science(BA)**

This is a (check one): ☑ Thesis ☐ Portfolio	☐ I need these credits to reach 12 credits for fulltime status for my 499T/P semester.	☐ If necessary, I have obtained overload permission from my Academic Dean so these credits can be added to my SPIRE schedule.

☑ **I have read and followed the instructions from the section of this form titled "PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS"**

☑ **I understand that the attached plan is binding and part of my permanent UMass record; it may be shown to graduate schools upon request.**

Student's Signature: **Sheridan, Elizabeth Catherine**   Date: **12/13/2022**

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499T/P Registration Department/SPIRE Subject Area: **POLISCI**	499T/P Registration Semester and Year: **Spring 2023**

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Chair's Signature: ****** 12/13/2022 ******

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S)   *I agree to serve as a Committee Member for this student's work as described in the attached Honors Thesis proposal.*
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Name: **McCarthy, Lauren A**	Name:
Email Address: ▮	Email Address:
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The committee, the credits, the 499 course registration department noted above, and the attached Honors Thesis proposal are acceptable for DH in my department.

HPD Name: **POLISCI: Musgrave, Robert P**	HPD Signature: ********	Date: **12/13/2022**

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The expectations outlined in the attached proposal do or do not meet the standards of my department. This 499 coursework
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Title: Measuring United States-Russian foreign policy identities through popular and elite conceptions of media

1. INTRODUCTION

General description of your Honors Thesis/Portfolio topic. (about 1 page)

Why does *The Simpsons* use images of Russia as a nefarious state as a punchline? Why do the eponymous *Dukes of Hazzard* help a Soviet gymnast defect? Why are there so many Russian mobsters in *CSI: Miami*? These examples were all part of highly-rated television shows which aired from 1980-2019 and were watched by millions of Americans. Why does this matter?

Many scholars of international relations have acted as if these portrayals do not matter. Many scholars tend to only look at "serious" sources of belief, such as conferences or official speeches, to explain why actors in international politics hold the beliefs they do. By ignoring the effects of mainstream and less-serious popular culture, much of the ideas behind foreign policy decisions are overlooked. Yet a newer strand of scholarship has explored the relationships between fictional popular culture, meaning culture that is consumed by the masses, and actual foreign policy made by the political elite. At present, this work has been begun in smaller sections but has not yet been systematically evaluated and tends to rely heavily on particular texts published only by the elites, rather than portrayals that are accessible to and relatable for all viewers.

In the specific case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the United States has reacted in such a way as to depict Russia as the obvious aggressor. This is different to the 2014 invasion of Crimea which came as a surprise in its contemporary global environment and produced fewer international repercussions. In the 2014-2015 television seasons, there were only 3 total depictions of Russians on screen, mainly being portrayed as minor offenders as compared to the roles of international terrorists as was seen in the 1980s and 1990s. Whether the status as the aggressor is irrelevant in terms of reality; whatever is portrayed to the mass public tends to accept may matter more than what becomes taken as the truth. If images circulated by popular culture matter this much, then we need to understand them and the relationships between foreign policy and perceptions. Doing so may even enable approaches that can improve how the United

States acts by affecting public understanding of the sources of their views regarding foreign policy.

My thesis project aims to add to the larger national identity scholarship field. Through original data collection, I am conducting a systematic quantitative exploration of film and television shows to explore how they relate to actual policy approaches adopted by the American government. I have studied and collected information on popular television shows and movies that were received by the mass public, with the intent of proving that the political elite are also exposed to and influenced by it. I seek to establish how American fictional popular culture depicted Russia/the Soviet Union from 1980-2019 to the mass public and relate those depictions to U.S. foreign policy debates. My project aims to identify and analyze how identities have shifted over time as viewed through fictional popular culture, and how this relates to changes between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia. Thus, I specifically seek to address the puzzle: How do these depictions relate to U.S. foreign policy--and if they have no relation, why not?

Statement about the scientific problem or intellectual/creative intent. Description of objectives and hypotheses or other discipline-specific inquiry. (at least 1 page)

My goal is for this project to help scholars understand how identities have changed over time as shown in popular culture, and how these changes relate to changes in relations between the United States and Russia around broader political events, and vice versa. This thesis project will further contribute to the field at large, providing both a new dataset and formalized method of collection for popular culture-related information. This can allow for future research on the impact of non-serious mediums of information and a greater understanding of how identities and foreign policy decisions are made.

My question seeks to contribute to the larger field by asking: does United States foreign policy toward Russia/the Soviet Union (from 1985-2019) relate, either as a cause or as a consequence of, to the depictions found in fictional popular culture targeted at the mass public? Furthermore, if constraints are placed on the possible actions of United States' leaders through the theory of common sense, will the general public support them if the allowable actions are contrary to public opinion? (Hopf 2013). Throughout different time periods, which I outline more fully

further in this proposal, the portrayals of Russia and Russians in United States popular culture have differed. Based on this timeline, I see that as negative relations abounded, so too have depictions of Russians as the nefarious character, intent on evil deeds. In times of positive relations or neutral media coverage, Russians appear as blundering characters and their citizenship is largely unimportant to the plot.

Within the existing literature, there are a number of hypotheses that scholars have put forth seeking to understand why foreign policy decisions are made, especially those that are not successful nor logical in the context of the conflict.

The hypothesis that I will be seeking to test in this thesis is the idea that popular culture (and fictional media) influences the field of foreign policy and has a similar effect on both the mass public and the political elite. An influence on the political elite could be more meaningful in that it would affect how the elite make policy, while the mass public does not have this ability. On the other hand, it would be surprising to find such an effect, given the rival information sources that elites have access to because of their positions that are unavailable to the average television viewer. This may include foreign intelligence or in-progress negotiations,

Within the idea of fictional popular culture as a significant influence on foreign policy, there are a few existing hypotheses that my data collection will enable me to test. Some scholars assert that positive depictions of events like torture, meaning they are shown as being effective, can influence viewers perceptions. This can occur even when the viewer was originally neutral to or held negative opinions of torture as a tool (Delehanty & Kearns 2020, 2). Other authors write that the boundary between fictional popular culture and the real-world policy implications remain permeable due to a combination of strategies, general knowledge, and actor-specific behavioral models that give the political elite a guideline to follow (Daniel & Musgrave 2017, 504). The idea of behavioral influencing media has also been applied to the intersection of James Bond media and the real world of intelligence to explain why so many members of the mass public, both those involved in the intelligence community and those outside of it, conflate the two (McCrisken & Moran 2018, 4). A real-life example of such behavioral influencing media is the CSI effect, in which shows such as *CSI* are said to influence court jurors throughout criminal

trials (Shelton 2008). While the effect is not shown to be significant, the public tends to believe this specific example, giving further credit to the idea of fictional influence.

The data that I am collecting will allow me to determine the differences in how and how often American popular culture depicts Soviet and Russian characters, as well as the relevance of such depictions. As long as *The Simpsons* portrays Russia as the punchline to a joke and *The Dukes of Hazzard* sees ordinary Soviet citizens in need of Western help, it will be difficult to view Russia as a whole as a complete actor that possesses agency rather than a simple caricature for viewer's entertainment. The state itself is not good or bad; it is the state's actions that judge morality. Thus, overarching negative depictions will entrench the idea that the state is the enemy. If these stereotypes enter into popular opinion, will politicians be able to overcome it in debates or relations? Or are the depictions seen on screen so poignant that they affect the politicians view themselves, as in the case of John F. Kennedy modeling himself off of James Bond (Zenou 2021)?

This project aims to collect data to explore these arguments. To begin, I aim to test different models on how popular culture and foreign policy intersect, both those provided within the existing literature regarding the real-world applicability of fictional media as related to relations between the United States and Russia, and newer methods of analysis.

I further aim to identify depictions that are viewed as being "common sense" ideas. Some scholars claim that the elite members of society typically think within the constraints of existing policy or culture, while the mass public instead think within the context of common-sense action (Morozov & Pavloka 2021). By utilizing instead only a common-sense approach to international relations and ensuring the inclusion of multiple viewpoints, the masses and their influence can be brought back into the conversation and used to understand larger theories and ideas (Hopf 2013, 318). If the mass public is neglected in the study of international relations, the same will occur for their influence on the political elite. Possible causal chains between the mass public and political elite include the impact of public opinion on election outcomes, or the use of popular culture to portray major grievances.

This project seeks to understand whether the larger 'neutral' United States institutions, such as the State Department or the Department of Education, that deal with foreign policy are influenced by the political elite working within them, or if the mass public can affect change in action.

Explanation of the significance of the problem or justification of the creative intent, i.e., relate the key literature to the problem or creative endeavor and explain the study's importance to the advancement of knowledge in the discipline. (at least 1 page)

This thesis addresses two significant issues. First, it will create a new dataset about how U.S. popular culture depicted Russia at a crucial time in those countries' relations. This will serve as a pool of information in which the effects of popular culture on foreign policy can be identified in the real world. It will also advance the scholarly debate regarding popular culture and foreign policy. Second, because this thesis will investigate how U.S. public opinion toward Russia is formed, it will have an immediate impact on studying contemporary relations between the United States and Russia.

As talks are held between the two powers in regard to the war in Ukraine, being able to predict actions based on ideas is incredibly important. If an influence exerted by foreign policy on the political elite (either direct or indirect) can be identified, then actions can be better predicted. For instance, if scholars who assert that popular culture has a large influence on foreign policy are correct in their assumptions, then knowing what United States fictional popular culture is depicting at a given time regarding Russia should allow us to understand the actions of the political elite, specifically if they are exposed to the same popular culture content.

This influence can lead the population to ensure their officials act in a certain way based on a common-sense set of principles, removing certain options from consideration. As I will be looking at real world applications of identity theory, it is important to find linkages between action and depictions. For example, when politicians absorb information through fiction, policy changes can become evident, as when President Bill Clinton created an entire biohazard policy plan inspired by the novel *The Cobra Event* (Hall 1998). In relation to Russian studies, portrayals of Russians as defectors such as in *The Dukes of Hazzard* could influence both changes in the immigration/asylum systems and the view of Russians being cowards. Especially in the modern media environment, understanding popular culture's effect on policy making is more important

than ever. By analyzing what the mass public sees in their daily lives the underlying influence placed on the state can be pinpointed. As the public is also made of multiple groups in terms of age, race, socioeconomic class, and interests, mapping out the popular media can assist in showing what the different groups are receptive to. If the mass public are left out of the study of international relations, an entire field of influence will be ignored. Thus, mapping said causal chains will allow for a fuller understanding of why certain actions are taken over others.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE OR BIBLIOGRAPHY

Many scholars have conjectured about how popular culture relates to value formation in terms of general research. Scholars have asserted that popular culture can influence domestic politics and to shape foreign policy. The direct experiences (reality), indirect experiences (media portrayals) and synthetic experiences (fictional ideas) that the mass public are exposed to in their daily lives creates an underlying influence placed on the state that can be pinpointed. However, each state's internal institutions and structure affects the extent to which popular culture can create policy, with there being additional common-sense constraints on action. In this vein, the specific interactions between states such as the United States and Russia have prolonged conflicts that impact research on perceptions. Studying the relationship between fictional media and the beliefs held by both the elite and mass publics will form a fuller picture of societal ideas.

From the regime of Gorbachev to the Trump administration, foreign policy between the United States and Russia has a cyclical relation in terms of positives and negatives, as each United States administration entered into office with certain ideas as to how the two states should coincide, with such ideas evolving from a variety of sources. These changes are similar to the myriad of beliefs presented to, and held by, the mass public of the United States. This begs the question: How does United States foreign policy with Russia (from 1985-2019) at the elite level vary throughout the given period as related, either causally or as a result of, to the depictions found in fictional popular culture targeted at the mass public? Is it possible to link fictional references to real-world activities?

Historical Relations Between the United States and Russia

As administrations transitioned between Democratic and Republican leaders (Knott, Miller Center), and the larger context of the Cold War gave way to the Wild 90s and the current Putin regime, there has been a circulation of ideas and perceptions related to common sense understandings (Hopf 2013). Likewise, the fictional media representations of United States-Russian relations shifted, such as the idea of defection changing to a theme of immigration. As such, to measure the impact of popular culture, an understanding of the state and history of said relationship is required. The following break-down is a brief high-level

description of the historical events in each period and does not yet include the impact of popular culture.

Time Period 1: 1979-1985

Prior to this period there was a standard policy of 'detente,' in which overt hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union cooled substantially (Grant 2006). From 1979 to 1985, tensions increased dramatically. Both the United States and the Soviet Union began to increase their internal nuclear capabilities and expanded the existing arsenals. An interest in Afghanistan on both sides also led to a jockeying for power as an attempt to garner influence (Stewart 2021).

Time Period 2: 1985-1991

This era runs through to the end of the Cold War and focuses mainly on Mikhail Gorbachev's tenure as leader of the Soviet Union until its dissolution in 1991. United States and USSR relations were vastly improved as policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* were implemented, which were policies of political openness (McNair 1991). International relations as a whole shifted from the contentious nuclear arms race to international cooperative summits and a focus on disarmament. Western goods flowed more freely into Russia and leaders spoke more frequently.

Time Period 3: 1991-2000

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a number of newly independent states were created in Eastern Europe, with Russia inheriting the USSR's nuclear arsenal as well as its global position of influence (Plokhy 2014). In this period, the Russian Federation was formed under the leadership of President Boris Yeltsin. The relationship between Yeltsin and United States leaders was largely positive, allowing for an increase in international goodwill. This continued until NATO bombed the former Yugoslavia in 1999, shortly before Putin took over. Internally, Russia struggled to adjust to the new world order and faced many crises. The period, nicknamed the 'Wild 90s,' was characterized by economic decline, the rise of an oligarchical class due to the privatization of state resources, the war in Chechnya, and the first two elections post-dissolution.

Time Period 4: 2000-2008

Vladimir Putin ascended to power for the first time as president of Russia in 2000 and remained there until 2008. At the start, there was a continued increase in cooperation between the United States and Russia, as Putin attempted to align the state as a global superpower (Clunan 2014). Particularly as a result of the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, Putin positioned Russia as being aligned with U.S. interests in the War on Terror. Frustration quickly mounted, however, as the Iraq War started, and Russia saw no benefit. The resentment stemmed from the fact that the state felt as if they had lost their superpower status and were expected to act as "back-up" to the United States. This period includes the infamous Munich Speech which heralds the start of direct competition with the West (Stent 2014, 138-158), intended as an act of deterrence against NATO expansion in Eastern Europe (Kofman 2018).

Time Period 5: 2008-2012

Dmitry Medvedev served briefly as President from 2008-2012, with this period characterized by the "Russian reset." This was an attempt to improve relations with the Obama administration and the West writ large (U.S.-Russia Relations 2010). This was a short-lived attempt, however, as the 2011 conflict in Libya quickly put an end to these improvements and relations soured (Zygar 2016), as well as the Russo-Georgian War taking place. A constitutional change which allowed Putin to rerun for the Presidency inspired civil society opposition and led to an increased crackdown of dissent and limits on protests (News Desk 2011).

Time Period 6: 2012-2019

The last period in which popular culture will be studied for this project has been nicknamed 'Putin Era II,' meaning his reign from 2012 to 2019. This period includes the 2014 Crimea invasion, increased repression, and a drastic fall in positive relations with the United States (McFaul 2020).

Relations between the United States and Russia since 1979 have been varied, with highs and lows throughout. It is thus difficult to attribute a single prevailing idea or cultural event for each interaction between the two states.

Existing Research Background

Individuals interpret information about international relations through their personal identity, belief systems, and the medium in which the information is provided. This is true for both the mass public and the political elite. As these beliefs influence actions, they are colored by the same biases and mediums as the original information was. If foreign policy decisions are made based on incomplete or trivial information gleaned from popular culture, it will be evident as such. If this is the case, then this is important because it proves that non-serious forms of information, as opposed to speeches or textbooks, can influence major international decisions. Accordingly, we need to know and understand the content of popular media, as well as how that content varies over time and by audience.

Theories of national identity and foreign policy (Hopf & Allan 2016) and aesthetics in foreign policy (Bleiker 2001), along with the idea that popular culture does impact opinions in international relations (Daniel & Musgrave 2017), can be put to use in answering the above overarching question. The cultural impacts of fictional narratives on both the mass and elite public provide context to the issue, but they are not enough to understand the longevity of a topic or belief that was created through popular culture. Cultural impact, in this context, is when the information and images shown via a fictional piece enter into the society's common understanding and shape the community's values as a whole, regardless of whether each member has had first-hand exposure. This impact can be different at the elite and mass levels. A member of the political elite is defined as "persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations and movements, to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially" (Osei 2018, 21). The mass public beliefs thus refer to the "refers to the norms, attitudes, and opinions held by the general public as opposed to those held by elites" (Ostman 2008) Only through an understanding of the *intersection* between the elite level and mass public can the effects of popular culture on international relations be fully measured, and the foreign policy ramifications be known.

Some scholars assert that fictional depictions in television or film, along with imagery created for public consumption, influence the beliefs of those exposed to it. Beliefs that are frequently circulated can become more ingrained in the minds of viewers or contribute to biases based on

the given circumstances. At the mass public level, this may lead to a grassroots push in support or opposition of policies aimed towards an international actor. When the focus is shifted to the elites, societal beliefs can affect policy. It is not fully known how differently the elites and mass public think in relation to their actions, so understanding the differences can help further shed light on why policy decisions are made.

Researchers have found that viewers will believe information that is proven false if presented with convincing portrayals, such as the effectiveness of torture after viewing shows such as *24* (Kearns & Young 2018) or *Zootopia* (Delehanty & Kearns 2020). The boundaries between the 'real' and the 'imagined' can become blurred when faced with repeated exposure to a certain idea or ideal structure (McCrisken & Moran 2018).

Understanding outcomes in terms of present and absent factors provides context which can be used to understand the larger issue. If one variable is always present or always absent when a circumstance occurs, it is easy to see its effect. If there is a fluidity to the presence of the variable as related to an event, understanding the frequency of it can be highly valuable. This is because the more times a viewer is exposed to the same idea, the more likely they are to identify with it. In a real example, loyal viewers of Fox News who switched to CNN during a research study saw a change in their personal opinions on politics (Broockman & Kalla 2022). If something is proclaimed to be true, it will be seen as the truth, which makes the presence or absence of a variable incredibly important.

Current Research Methods

Through my preliminary research, I have determined two approaches prevalent in the existing research towards fictional narrative or media depictions. I describe the two as being "intensive study of texts chosen because they represent a phenomenon" or "the study of an extensive number of texts to see how often a phenomenon occurs" This follows two existing bodies of research that exist within the social science field. The first is the idea of sampling on a dependent variable and the second is broad-based research. These approaches are two ways that research can be conducted, and they are based on opposing decisions as to what is important.

Dependent Variable Sampling

Many social scientists express skepticism regarding dependent variable-based studies, in that they look at factors that support one's research idea rather than the larger subject area (Geddes 1990, 132). That is not to mean that such a research design is bad, however, or that it is unable to account for all circumstances. Proponents of this method argue that when used correctly, the sampling of the dependent variable can account for absences of it via the creation of case-control designs. A case-control design is when one case with the dependent variable is compared with another that does not possess it (Forgues 2012, 270). In doing so, the actual determinants of the chosen variable can be found, leading to a larger field of research. The first type is more along the lines of a "case research" approach, while the second is an "action research" approach (Bhattacherjee 2012, 39-40).

In the first approach, I find that the authors tend to look at the number of positive instances of a given fact and less at the larger context (Delehanty & Kearns 2020; Hopf 2005). Frequency is considered to be indicative of importance and is expressed in this quantitative method. These scholars assume that the more viewers are exposed to a certain idea, the likelier they are to internalize it. They often attempt to pick out general examples of influence rather than specific cases matching an action with a fictional cause.

Broad-Based Research

The opposing research type to this conducts research with a broader scope. I would characterize this as being a type of "secondary data analysis" in which previous information on plot and background is used to draw conclusions.

The second approach looks more closely at the characteristics of a positive instance to understand what the larger context is, using a qualitative method. This approach aims to understand the actual depiction given rather than just its existence (Brown-Syed & Sands 2017) (Nexon & Neumann 2006). It is more specific in terms of links. It is both an inherently subjective way to look at it, in that the descriptions and interpretations may vary based on each

person, and a way to understand the actual perceptions of a given media. In general, the research through both a qualitative and quantitative study works to provide the full context.

Research Methodologies

The two above forms of study encompass various ways of actually conducting research. These differences exist both within the broader categories and between the two.

When looking at the dependent variable sampling format, Delehanty & Kearns differed in approach from Hopf. One method is to see which examples of media were most commonly and willingly seen. This means that viewers of the media chose to watch the piece and any resulting influence was thus taken in willingly. In order to measure this, the researchers looked at box office ticket prices and checked which successful movies incorporated torture and to what extent. Based on a definition created specifically for this project, including explicit descriptions of what is *not* torture, they then coded the type of torture present. Each instance was assigned a variable code based on the action and effect of the torture. In doing so, there was a definite depiction of the frequency and supposed effectiveness of torture in the media pieces (Delehanty & Kearns 2020, 6-11).

In terms of methodology, Hopf used a similar approach regarding how it was measured. However, his body of research looked at real-life events and interactions between political leaders to measure the frequency of topics being brought up by elites speaking on the topic publicly and in conference settings. In doing so, the elite position is more fully known as is the intended propagandic purpose of declarations (Hopf 2005, 239-240).

Using a focus on elite actions can help to showcase the background reasons as to why an event takes place as it does. However, it can also leave out the influence placed by constituents or the mass public if the research fails to account for societal norms and expectations. Small scale organizing, such as the attempted boycott of Russian vodka at the beginning of the Ukrainian invasion, are grassroots movements which occurred independently of state action (Valinksy 2022) The opposite is true if only mass public popular culture is studied.

This type of research design has a number of positives, mainly that by analyzing the frequency of a piece of data one can understand the common ideas present in a society. It also gives insight into what the mass public creates and provides to one another. It is important to note the main drawback of this method which is that frequency does not always equal influence.

Regarding the broad-based research designation, the general approach was incredibly different. Researchers preferred to choose overarching themes and analyze their inclusion in a piece of media rather than the frequency of one topic. Brown-Syed & Sands' piece of librarians in media is based on a bibliographic method of research, in which a long list of pieces is compiled and analyzed. Data, taken from plot summaries and similar sources, was looked at to see which specific depictions were generally used. Common roles were then listed and described (Brown-Syed & Sands 2017, 18-19).

Similarly, Nexon & Neumann's piece on Harry Potter as a method to view International Relations gives a synopsis of the uses of popular culture. This is considered to be a form of engagement with said media, and each type has included examples. The authors also provide ways in which the effects of popular culture can be measured (Nexon & Neumann 2006, 6-20).

The overarching similarities seen in broad-based research can be used to create a strong research design, which accounts for specific details in a given media piece. It can, however, miss the larger picture if small portrayals in a few media examples are outweighed by the high frequency of other portrayals which are equally as influential.

A combination of dependent variable and broad-based research would likely result in the best research design as it would account for all possible circumstances. This is not often a realistic method, as it is incredibly difficult to fund and complete such a large project. A dependent variable design which includes both mass and elite public media, would likely be the best realistic project in that it is wide enough to account for different eventualities, but not so large as to be impossible to complete.

3. METHOD

How are you conducting your research?

I do not require any specialized training to complete this project.

For my thesis, I have created and conducted an independent data collection that aimed to identify cases of Soviet or Russian depictions in fictional television shows and movies. I combine this form of data collection with a historical approach to the topic. I have built a basic timeline between 1985 and 2019 regarding relations between the United States and Russia, and I have divided this timeline into five eras. Throughout these eras, I will track the changes within foreign policy to see where large 'pivots' took place in the domestic American political sphere and will formally illustrate the timeline in my final project.

I have broken the timeline into more manageable pieces for analysis as follows:

 Time Period 1: 1979-1985 - Pre-Analysis Block

 Time Period 2: 1985-1991 - *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* Era

 Time Period 3: 1991-2000 - The 'Wild 90s'

 Time Period 4: 2000-2008 - Putin I

 Time Period 5: 2008-2012 - The Russian Reset

 Time Period 6: 2012-2019 - Putin II and Beyond

In doing so, I am able to map out the exact points in which foreign policy decisions shifted and match them with the surrounding popular culture released in similar years. I will layer my timeline onto a larger piece with important foreign policy actions to show years with major international events. This project will be largely based on the work of Bentley Allan and Ted Hopf, along with other field experts detailed more fully in the literature review.

To gather the data needed for my thesis project, I began by researching the top films and television shows that Americans would have been exposed to in my chosen time period. To do so, I utilized a combination of Nielsen ratings, plot summaries, and online databases.

Data Collection: Television Shows

This procedure entailed collecting data on made-for-television movies and regularly produced network television shows.

To find the information, the first step taken was to visit the American television Wikipedia page for every year from 1980-2005, in which I scrolled down to the section on Made-For-Television movies and miniseries. In a Google spreadsheet, I logged the year, original airing date, title of media, distributor, and link. As a note, only television Shows aired on NBC, ABC, CBS, Fox, UPN, the WB, and the CW with the United States of America being the first country listed were used.

I then visited the "Television Films by Year" Wikipedia page for every year from 1980 to 2005, looking at each entry individually. If the item was produced by one of the above distributors, I completed the same steps to include it into my spreadsheet. After all shows were logged, compare the spreadsheet to each year's Wikipedia page and confirm all titles are correct.

To supplement this list with all television shows not considered to be 'television movies" I used the Wikipedia page for *The Complete Directory to Prime-Time Network and Cable television Shows (1946-Present)* (Brooks & Marsh 2007) which lists all shows from the necessary channels. Starting with the year 1980, I copied the list of shows into the related spreadsheets, formatting data as needed.

After the initial data collection was completed, I used plot summaries and information from the Directory to find the genre and basic information for each show. Each show was separated using the following descriptions of type:
1. Clip Show: an episode or show which is mainly excerpts of other episodes
2. Comedy: an episode or show whose main purpose is to portray humor to the audience
3. Drama: an episode or show which portrays serious or meaningful content to elicit an emotional response from the audience
4. News: an episode or show which portrays nonfictional, real-world events to the audience

5. Reality: an episode or show which portrays regular people (as opposed to actors) in their daily lives and actions

6. Talent Show: an episode or show which contains any form of contest, nonfictional performance, or similar content

7. Other: an episode or show which does not fit into any of the above categories

If a show was a Clip Show, News, Reality or Talent Show, I did not include it in the data set as it was not considered to be a piece of fictional popular culture. Of the shows that were left, I marked down the appropriate genres, with the list having been created through a series of tests and checks against the system. I ended this step by marking down locations and "temporal settings," (i.e. past, present, or future).

Of the shows left (Comedy, Drama, Reality, and Other), I used the Directory (Brooks & Marsh 2007, Wikipedia, IMDB, and fan-made sites, such as Wiki 24 which housed the fan site for the show 24, to pull plot summaries and information. If a show had any Soviet or Russian character and/or a plotline in which the Soviet Union/Russia played a large part, I coded the instance according to a codebook created specifically for this project. This included a portion in which I input character information as necessary. I conducted this step in two parts beginning with television Shows in the Top 30 according to Nielsen Ratings, and then doing the same with shows listed as being Top 31-50. To find the information that I needed, I used a number of specific search strings that included different ways of describing the Soviet Union and Russia combined with the show at hand.

To provide a few examples of this process, I will first turn to the 2005 television show *Commander in Chief*, episode "First Dance." I had previously identified the show as being in the Top 30 for the year, and thus completed the larger search using the term ""Commander in Chief" AND Russia* AND "Mackenzie Allen"." In this search, Mackenzie Allen is the main character of "Commander in Chief" and is used to further refine the search to relevant results. Characters are swapped out as needed for each television show searched.

This formula provided me with the appropriate IMDB page, from which I pulled the exact date of airing, the plot summary, and general information. In this episode, Mackenzie Allen hosts her

first official summit with the Russian President after taking office. The plot follows the trials and tribulations involved with this event and focuses fully on the actions of the political elite characters. The majority of the episode includes serious, conflictual discussions with the Russian contingent.

Based on the plot summary and related notes, I coded the show as follows:

1. Is the Russian/Soviet/Former Soviet content incidental to the plot or central to it?: Central
2. Is the Russian/Soviet/Former Soviet content serious or humorous?: Mostly serious/dramatic
3. Are relations between the USA/West and Russia/Soviet Union/FSU portrayed as cooperative or conflictual?: Mostly conflictual
4. Are Russia-Western relations depicted as being about elite politics or ordinary people?: Exclusively about elite politics
5. Major Plot Points: Soviet/Russian/FSU Diplomats/Embassy, Summit between leaders

I also included two Russian characters that were present in the episode, listing the actor's name, general age of the character, occupation, and overall loyalty to Russia.

Although this Commander in Chief episode was in the Top 30, I used the same steps for shows in the Top 31-50 range. Using the television show *Heartbeat*, I coded the episode "From Russia, With Love" which aired on March 9th, 1989. I used the search term ""Heartbeat" AND Soviet AND Dr. Joanne," and the populated reference once again led to an [IMDB](link)page.

Heartbeat is a television show which follows the careers of female doctors opening up a women's health clinic. While it is inspired by true events, the show itself is a drama. In this specific episode, the main character Dr. Joanne works with a Soviet doctor participating on an exchange trip. The Americans view their Soviet counterparts with immense suspicion, specifically regarding the chosen courses of treatment. The actions in the show influence ordinary people but are affected by elite politics. While a resolution is reached, much of the episode is conflict-based. Using the same categories as above, I found the following results:

1. Is the Russian/Soviet/Former Soviet content incidental to the plot or central to it?: Central
2. Is the Russian/Soviet/Former Soviet content serious or humorous?: Exclusively serious/dramatic

3. Are relations between the USA/West and Russia/Soviet Union/FSU portrayed as cooperative or conflictual?: An even mix of conflict and cooperation
4. Are Russia-Western relations depicted as being about elite politics or ordinary people?: An even mix of elite politics and ordinary people
5. Major Plot Points: Exchange trips (FSU/USSR/Russia -> West)

This episode contained two major Soviet characters, both of whom were doctors on an exchange trip.

To provide an example in which I did not use an IMDB page as the main reference, I return to the television Show *24*, episode "Day 8: 7:00pm-8:00pm." This episode aired on January 18, 2010 and sits in the Top 30 category. Using a combination of search terms ""24" AND Russia* AND "Jack Bauer" AND "Jack Bauer"" and "24" AND "KGB" AND ""Jack Bauer" AND "Jack Bauer"," I was directed towards the season 8 fan page hosted on fandom.com.

The television series *24* follows Jack Bauer, a counterterrorism agent, in his quest to bring criminals to justice. The show takes place in one-hour increments, with a full season equaling 24 hours. In "Day 8: 7:00 pm-8:00 pm," agents go undercover in the Russian mob to prevent a nuclear terrorism threat. The information for this specific episode was provided on a Wiki 24 page. Results were as follows:
1. Is the Russian/Soviet/Former Soviet content incidental to the plot or central to it?: Central
2. Is the Russian/Soviet/Former Soviet content serious or humorous?: Exclusively serious/dramatic
3. Are relations between the USA/West and Russia/Soviet Union/FSU portrayed as cooperative or conflictual?: Exclusively conflictual
4. Are Russia-Western relations depicted as being about elite politics or ordinary people?: Mostly about elite politics
5. Major Plot Points: Russian mafia/organized crime, FBI, Nuclear Terrorism / Threatened Nuclear Terrorism, Stolen Nuclear Materials (USA/Western)

All three Russians listed under this episode as being major plot contributors were violent criminals or terrorists.

The data that I collected, using the above method, I analyzed and looked for frequencies of certain plotlines or depictions, and I will continue this step over winter break and into the beginning of the spring semester as I complete my final data evaluation.

Data Collection: Films

For this project, I am using the Top 100 movie lists from 1985 to 2019, in the aim of identifying all positive cases of Russian depictions. At this point, I have collected all of the films that I will be analyzing, and I have begun the process of separating the data into genres and degrees of relevance.

To begin, I pulled and compared the Top 50 lists published by *The Numbers* and *Box Office Mojo.* After these lists were gathered, I did the same for the Top 51-100 movies each year and added them to the relevant spreadsheets. I included the title, ranking, distributor, max theaters shown in, and monetary grossing. For example, according to *The Numbers,* the Top movie for 1986 was *Top Gun*, having been produced by Paramount Pictures and grossed a total of $180,470,489 domestically and was played in 1,531 theaters. *Box Office Mojo* largely agreed with this information, but instead noted that the movie grossed only $176,781,728 domestically. While this difference is largely unimportant for the scope of my thesis, I combined the two rankings lists to ensure that no films were left out. This means that some years may have more than 100 films total.

Due to the sheer enormity of such a list, I am approaching the film collection differently than the process for television. For this segment, I will only be looking for overt plotlines referencing the topics rather than any throwaway mention of Russians or the Soviet Union.

Rather than beginning by classifying the films according to genre, I have split the combined lists into 5-year increments. I then individually searched each movie for Russian content on its Wikipedia or *IMDB* page. If the movie contained any reference to Russia, the Soviet Union, or related topics I set it aside to further analyze later. If the movie contained none of these topics, I crossed it out on my list. If the movie had plotlines that were unclear I set it aside for further analysis.

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4. EVALUATION

How will your work be reviewed and graded?

The final product of my 499T project is a full-length research paper, upwards of 50 pages. The paper will be broken down into chapters based on topic or research section. Feedback will be provided through review of my paper and written/verbal feedback that I will then implement.

The committee will assess the viability of my research for the oral defense via the completeness and validity of my work.

5. COMMUNICATION

What are the expectations about meetings with your committee chair and other committee member(s)? Be specific.

We will meet once per week for half an hour either via Zoom or in-person. Prior to each meeting, I will send a detailed email recounting what I have accomplished up to that point, any questions that have arisen, next steps, and reflections as needed. I will also attend the meetings with Professor Musgrave's other thesis students each week.

Regarding my second committee member, Professor Lauren McCarthy, I will work with her on an "as-needed" basis.

6. TIMELINE

At each meeting, we will review the work I had completed prior and identify next steps. I am expected to have up to date notes which I will provide prior to the meeting and will implement the changes and notes that we discuss.

Due Dates:

- Completion of database: February 8, 2023
- Participation in the Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honors Society Conference: February 17-19, 2023
- Rough Draft of Empirical Section: February 27, 2023
- Second Draft of Empirical Section: March 13, 2022
- First Rough Draft of Complete Project (including introduction and conclusion): March 31, 2023
- Participation in Midwest Political Science Association Conference: April 13-16, 2023
- Revised Draft of Complete Project: April 21, 2023
- Participation in MassURC: April 28, 2023
- Revised Draft Sent to Committee: May 5, 2023
- Oral Defense: Mid-May, based on committee availability

COMMENTS

Academic Standards Committee (Acad Stds Comm) | Student+Faculty | Acad Stds Committee - Approved | 02/09/23 11:30
The ASC has read and approved this proposal.

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