Transferring Knowledge to Narrative Worlds: Applying Power Taxonomy to Science Fiction Films

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Abstract: Instructors of courses in international relations increasingly use films to facilitate students' learning of abstract concepts and to deepen their understanding of theories. This paper introduces how the fictional universes presented in films can be utilized as platforms for students to learn about the application of analytical frameworks. This method aims to enhance students' abilities to transfer learned knowledge to a different setting. Knowledge transfer requires skills that go beyond lower-order thinking. Higher-order thinking aids students' retention of concepts, and enables them to apply what they have learned to new situations. This article illustrates an application of a power taxonomy in the narrative world of the non-historical science fiction films. This exercise can easily be transported to various political science, international relations, and other courses to help students learn various analytical concepts, frameworks, and theories.

Resumen: Los instructores de cursos sobre relaciones internacionales utilizan cada vez más películas para facilitar el aprendizaje de conceptos abstractos por parte de los estudiantes y para profundizar su comprensión de las teorías. Este artículo explica cómo los universos ficticios de las películas se pueden utilizar como plataformas para que los estudiantes aprendan sobre la aplicación de marcos analíticos. Este método tiene como objetivo mejorar las habilidades de los estudiantes para transferir el conocimiento aprendido a un entorno diferente. La transferencia de conocimiento requiere de habilidades que van más allá del pensamiento de orden inferior. El pensamiento de orden superior ayuda a los estudiantes a retener los conceptos y les permite aplicar lo que han aprendido a nuevas situaciones. Este artículo ilustra la aplicación de una taxonomía de poder en el mundo narrativo de las películas de ciencia ficción que no se relacionan con un evento histórico. Este ejercicio se puede aplicar fácilmente a diversos cursos de ciencias políticas, relaciones internacionales y otra índole para ayudar a los estudiantes a aprender diferentes conceptos analíticos, marcos y teorías.

Résumé: Les enseignants en relations internationales ont de plus en plus recours aux films pour faciliter l'assimilation par les étudiants de concepts abstraits et pour approfondir leur compréhension des théories. Cet article montre comment les univers fictifs présentés dans les films peuvent être utilisés comme des plateformes pour que les étudiants comprennent l'application des contextes analytiques. Cette méthode vise à renforcer les capacités des étudiants à transférer les connaissances acquises dans un contexte différent. Le transfert de connaissances requiert des compétences qui dépassent la pensée d'ordre inférieur. La pensée d'ordre supérieur aide les étudiants à retenir les concepts et leur permet d'appliquer ce qu'ils ont appris à des nouvelles situations. Cet article illustre une application d'une taxonomie de pouvoir dans le monde narratif des films de science-fiction non-historiques. Cet exercice peut facilement être

transposé à différents cours de sciences politiques, relations interna-
tionales etc. afin d'aider les étudiants à apprendre différents concepts,
cadres et théories analytiques.

Keywords: nonhistorical films, critical thinking, active learning,
revised Bloom's Taxonomy, power

One of the fundamental issues in pedagogy is to design courses that prioritize stu-
dents' meaningful learning beyond their remembering course contents for exams
(Nickerson 1989; Marso and Pigge 1993; Anderson and Krathwohl 2001; Brookhart
2010). In order to achieve meaningful learning, active cognitive processing, or crit-
ical thinking, is vital (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001). To facilitate active cogni-
tive processing, instructors turn to methods that aid active learning. Active learning
refers to student-centric learning "in which students are thinking about the subject
matter" (McCarthy and Anderson 2000, 279). This is in contrast to instructor-led
teaching, which "focus[es] on [the] transmission of content, and for learners to be
passive recipients of knowledge . . . in [a] premodern position of power" (Phillips
2005, 4). Among other methods, many instructors use films as active-learning tools
in this context (Kuzma and Haney 2001; Weber 2001; Simpson and Kaussler 2009;
Swimelar 2013; Cooley and Pennock 2015).

Instructors who use films to aid learning in international relations (IR) courses
mainly refer to historical films based on real political events (Kuzma and Haney
2001; Weber 2001; Simpson and Kaussler 2009; Swimelar 2013). Yet, others discuss
the value of nonhistorical fiction for providing metaphors to think about different
aspects of international relations (Asal and Blake 2006; Ruane and James 2008;
Engert and Spencer 2009; Blanton 2013; Drezner 2014; Salter 2014; Saiya 2016;
Payne 2017; Fischer 2019). Some instructors use popular fictional films that are
not related to international relations to teach IR theories, such as *The Godfather*
(Mitchell and Hulsman 2009), *Pulp Fiction* (Engert and Spencer 2009), *Lord of the
Rings* (Ruane and James 2008), and *Star Trek, Game of Thrones,* and *Battlestar Galactica*
(Dyson 2015). Weber (2001) is one of the pioneers in utilizing popular fictional
films not obviously related to world politics for teaching IR theories. She treats IR
theory "as a site of cultural practices where stories that appear to be true get told,"
and in a similar vein popular films are "cultural sites where stories that appear to be
true—at least within the confines of the films themselves—are told" (Weber 2001,
282). In any case, films are mainly used to teach IR theories or historical events.

This article discusses the use of nonhistorical fictional films. Rather than teach-
ing IR theories per se, this article explains how film creates a fictional universe
that allows students to *apply* the analytical frameworks they learned in the course.
This approach aims to facilitate students' meaningful learning of abstract concepts
through active cognitive processing. In other words, the use of the films discussed in
this article is not aimed at *teaching* students certain historical events or IR theories;
rather, the use of films provides assistance to student their *learning* by encouraging
them to actively *transfer* what they already learned to a different universe.

This article describes a graduate course exercise in which students apply Barnett
and Duvall's (2005) power taxonomy to two nonhistorical science-fiction movies:
Hunger Games and *Mad Max: The Fury Road.* The exercise, called the Power Work-
shop, was part of a graduate course on power in world politics taught at a private
university in South Korea during the 2017 fall semester. The class consisted of five
doctoral and five master's students from nine different countries. Two of the stu-
dents were male and eight were female.

The rest of this article is organized as follows: Section two introduces the
pedagogical assumptions underlying the Power Workshop for facilitating active

cognitive processing and contributing to meaningful learning. Section three addresses the value of fictional films as a learning tool, introduces the Power Workshop, and illustrates student papers in line with the learning objectives. Section four discusses the findings of the paper and the portability of the exercise. The fifth section summarizes the article and offers suggestions for practice.

Active Cognitive Processing and Meaningful Learning

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, 64–66) divide learning into three types: no (intended) learning, rote learning where a student can recall relevant knowledge but cannot transfer and apply this knowledge elsewhere, and meaningful learning where a student not only recalls the relevant knowledge but also makes sense of it and can apply it in other settings. While rote learning is about committing new information to memory, meaningful learning occurs when "students engage in active cognitive processing, such as paying attention to relevant incoming information, and mentally organizing incoming information into a coherent representation, and mentally integrating incoming information with existing knowledge" (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001, 65; see also Mayer 1999). When a student is able to make sense of what she learned in one situation and transfer her knowledge to new learning situations, the learning outcome is referred to as meaningful learning (Mayer 2002, 227).

In their revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, 66) suggest that out of six categories of cognitive processes, the first one, namely *Remember*, is related to knowledge retention, while the other five, *Understand*, *Apply*, *Analyze*, *Evaluate*, and *Create*, represent active cognitive processing that facilitates students' ability to meaningfully transfer their knowledge to other settings.[1] Students gain higher forms of thinking skills as they construct meaning of incoming information (*Understand*), apply the learned information in new settings (*Apply*), draw connections among the different parts of information (*Analyze*), evaluate and justify a decision based on certain standards (*Evaluate*), and produce original and coherent work that is based on their learning (*Create*) (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001).

While Anderson and Krathwohl refer to the categories required for meaningful learning and the transference of knowledge as active cognitive processing, other scholars use the concepts of critical thinking or higher-order thinking in similar contexts in the pedagogical literature (Nickerson 1989; Singh and Gibson 2007; Thornton and Wilson 2007; Trinidad and Fox 2007; Brookhart 2010). The Oxford Dictionary (n.d.) defines critical thinking as "[t]he objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment"; *Analyze and Evaluate* appear in Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) more active end of the taxonomy. In his article on educational assessment, Nickerson (1989) uses the concepts of higher-order thinking, higher cognitive processing, higher-order cognitive functioning, and critical thinking interchangeably to suggest going beyond "teaching to the test" (Nickerson 1989, 3) and rote learning (see also Marso and Pigge 1993; Brookhart 2010).

Traditional assignments in tertiary education are mainly concerned with researching and thinking (Bardach 2011; Cooley and Pennock 2015). Given the limited time students have to complete their assignments, there is always a trade-off between researching and thinking, particularly creative and critical thinking. Most traditional assignments lead students to focus more on research—that takes more time—while the more important activity of thinking gets less training. Assignments based on nonhistorical fiction can relieve students of the task of hustling data or truth,

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[1] For transfer of knowledge, see also Macaulay and Cree (1999) and Royer (1979).

allowing them to focus all their efforts on creative and critical thinking by applying an analytical framework to a fictional universe (Cooley and Pennock 2015).[2]

This paper explains the Power Workshop, which uses nonhistorical science fiction films to assist students in transferring their knowledge of the concept of power to fictional universes. The fictional universes of films showcase imaginary narratives in which one can identify the power relations at play. This helps students find and establish analogies between these fictional universes and the real world. Some of these analogies are created intentionally by the filmmakers, allowing students to find these subtle and subliminal messages. At other times, students establish analogies that were possibly unintended. When there are very clear parallels between these films and the power relations that exist in international politics, students transfer their knowledge of the concept of power from one universe to another, which is what Royer (1979, 55) refers to as "literal transfer." When films use metaphors that have less obvious connections to international politics, students establish the connections between the metaphors and international politics, using the concept of power "as a tool for thinking," which is what Royer (1979, 55) refers to as "figural transfer." The more subtle the metaphors and analogies in the films, the more room there is for student creativity.

Exercises that use metaphors and analogies help students' cognitive processing and critical thinking (Gick and Holyoak 1983; Anderson and Krathwohl 2001; Marks 2008; Payne 2017). While the use of nonpolitical fiction in teaching international relations is still not mainstream, metaphors and analogies are commonly used in the IR literature to help students learn abstract concepts (Duit 1991; Kanthan and Mills 2006; Marks 2008, 2011, 2018). Using films takes the advantages inherent in metaphors and analogies to the next level as films appeal to "verbal/linguistic and visual/spatial, and even musical/rhythmic" (Berk 2009, 3), intelligences, in addition to "stimulat[ing] the senses, ground[ing] abstract concepts, [and] engag[ing] the emotions" (Kuzma and Haney 2001, 34).

The main advantage of popular films in achieving meaningful learning is that they narrate well-crafted hypothetical worlds that are more advanced and more interesting than a narrative a professor can design and present in the classroom. Popular films, and for that matter other print and visual stories, provide students with in-depth and vivid experiences, imagery, and emotions that transport students into the narrative world (Green and Brock 2000; Green 2004; Green, Brock, and Kaufman 2006; Green et al. 2008). "Transportation into a narrative world" (Green and Brock 2000, 701) is correlated with the perceived realism or plausibility in a coherent narrative (Green 2004); coherent and well-crafted narratives are vital elements of popular films.[3]

Furthermore, popular films generate more interest and attention among younger students in the current period. Kuzma and Haney (2001, 34) suggest that their "students, namely the MTV generation, spend a major portion of their time in front of the television, at the computer, or in a film theater." Following the spectacular changes that have taken place in information and communications technology and in consumer cultures since 2001, when Kuzma and Haney's paper was written, we now teach Generation Y (or Millennials) and Generation Z (or iGen) who interact more through cyberspace than in real life (Nielsen 2016; Sulleyman 2017). Therefore, in the digital age, innovative learning methods must become mainstream in course designs.

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[2] Although "all films are stories that portray selective pieces of very complex events" (anonymous reviewer 3), students would have to spend more time to learn about the "truth" behind certain events that are portrayed in historical films. Nonhistorical films naturally take this burden off the students' shoulders, which lets them focus on creative and critical thinking.

[3] Perceived realism or plausibility is different than "real-world truth value of a story," and indeed many studies find fiction to be more realistic than nonfiction since people hold fiction to a different truth standard than scientific or logical arguments (Green 2004, 251–252).

It is no secret that, in the digital age, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain students' interest in political science courses (Champoux 1999; Kuzma and Haney 2001; Engert and Spencer 2009; Kahn and Perez 2009; Valeriano 2013; Andrist et al. 2014; McCarthy 2014). In particular, conventional teaching tools such as reading assignments and presentations are often found to be boring (Sørensen 2015). Innovative and active learning methods, such as using simulations, films, role play, and games, increasingly gain currency by making students' learning experiences more stimulating (McCarthy and Anderson 2000, 281). Many empirical studies find that active learning aids in students' acquisition of knowledge and skills, often more effectively than traditional methods (McCarthy and Anderson 2000; Armbruster et al. 2009). More importantly, for the purposes of this course, moving from passive to active learning helps students gain the higher-order thinking skills they need for meaningful learning.

A study by Stice (1987, 293) suggests that students remember 10 percent of what they read, 26 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, 50 percent of what they see and hear, 70 percent of what they say and 90 percent of what they do and say. In a similar vein, the 2016 National Survey of Student Engagement (2016, 14) found that students' higher-order learning is activated when they apply facts, theories, or frameworks to problems or new settings. The Power Workshop complements reading materials and lectures with the creative use of films. In this practice, students not only watch films, which aids their learning by appealing to various intelligences, but they also critically apply a power taxonomy to the film and present their findings in class, thereby learning by doing.[4] Transferring knowledge requires tasks that give students a chance to learn by doing "through methods such as role play, critical incident analysis, case study scenarios, observed practice, video simulations, and problem-based learning" (Macaulay and Cree 1999, 192). The next section explains how learning objectives are achieved in an exercise of the Power Workshop.

The Power Workshop

The literature on using fictional films in IR courses notes three main disadvantages of the fictional aspect of films. First, fictional films are not seen as serious or informative and are, therefore, a waste of students' time (O'Meara 1976, 215; Champoux 1999, 214). Second, in fictional films that are based on history, the dramatization of real events for cinematic impact may blur the boundaries between truth and fiction and leave students confused (Champoux 1999, 214; Kuzma and Haney 2001, 37, 46; Engert and Spencer 2009, 92; Swimelar 2013, 20). Third, based on an interpretivist approach to pedagogy (Muldoon and Lee 2007), metaphors come with the baggage of filmmakers' and instructors' biases—the former because the films are based on their construction and interpretations of events and relations, the latter because the instructors decide which films and metaphors to use for certain learning objectives (Engert and Spencer 2009, 91; Marks 2011, 18–20; Swimelar 2013, 14–15; Payne 2017, 213).

The way science fiction films are used in the Power Workshop is relatively free from these disadvantages; indeed, it turns these disadvantages into advantages. The main learning objective in using science fiction films in this exercise is to provide students with an alternative universe in which they can *apply* what they *learned* during the course, thereby not only remembering what they learned but also being able to *transfer* their knowledge to a different setting. In other words, a film is selected for how it works as a platform for students to experiment with their newly acquired knowledge, rather than serving as the source of knowledge per se. The process of learning by transferring knowledge is prioritized to the contents that can be learned

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[4] For more on learning by doing, see Stice (1987), Gibbs (1988), and Kolb (2015).

from a film. For the same purposes, any nonhistorical film—that is, a film not based on real events, such as science fiction, fantasy, or animation—can be used.

This graduate course's main theme was power. Russell (2004, 4) suggests that power is "the fundamental concept in social science . . . in the same sense in which [e]nergy is the fundamental concept in physics." Power is also the most central concept in world politics (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 39). However, the disparate definitions, typologies, and faces of power make it difficult for students to grasp the meaning and application of this concept. Students can memorize the information they are given in a lecture or reading material for the purposes of preparing for a class, but the abstract and disparate definitions of power may hinder their learning of this fundamental concept and make it difficult for them to transfer their understanding of it to a different context.

In the early weeks of the semester in the graduate course, students were introduced to the concepts of power. They were assigned articles to read on the topic and asked to write response papers that they were to submit before coming to class. These response papers were intended to prepare students for class discussions. Rather than cold calling on students—a practice students often find intimidating—I asked them to share their thoughts on the readings and the topics for discussion based on the response papers they submitted the night before class. The response paper assignments together with the in-class discussion constituted 45 percent of the course grade. This motivated students to come to class prepared. It also helped them interact more confidently with each other and me in the classroom.[5] This approach contributes to students' critical thinking and active learning as evidenced in studies on experiments of active learning versus traditional lectures (McCarthy and Anderson 2000; Phillips 2005; Farrelly 2013).

These readings and response papers were meant to facilitate students' retention of the concepts of power in a relatively passive manner. The in-class discussions, based on the response papers, and three other assignments were designed to move students from lower- to higher-order thinking, facilitate the construction of meaning from reading materials and lectures, and guide students as they applied what they learned to different settings. The other assignments included presenting one case study in class and writing one analytical paper on the topic of power, which was integrated into a graduate student conference.

The final assignment, the Power Workshop, which is the main theme of this paper, concerned the higher end of active cognitive processing, namely *Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate*, and *Create* (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001). Students were asked to watch, on their own time, either of the following two science fiction films: *Mad Max: The Fury Road* (2015) or *The Hunger Games* (2012).[6] These two films were chosen because of their fictional universes that are not based on true events nor do they represent real places or historical characters. Both films' universes, stories, characters, places, and sequences of events are purely fictional. The power relations in these particular movies are not as obvious as in a historical movie on, for example, the Second World War. The fictional universe of the film allows students to identify the power relations and to focus solely on critical thinking, without searching for data and having to seek the truth behind the stories presented in the films.

The selection of nonhistorical films sets students free from any potential biases they might have toward historical events, characters, or places. This helps nurture their "critical thinking skills . . . [by] encouraging students to think more as social scientists than as partisans with a 'dog in the fight,'" thereby making them "better equipped to solve real-world political problems" (Marks 2008, 214). Furthermore, Engert and Spencer (2009, 86) suggest, whereas students seem cautious about

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[5] For more on course preparation assignments, see Yamane (2006).

[6] Students watched the films on their own time so as not to spend scarce class time watching the films. However, this decision was not without trade-offs as discussed in the next section.

commenting upon overtly political films, they seem comfortable discussing and making judgements about metaphorical films since there is no clear right or wrong in their interpretations (see also Webber 2005, 381; Asal and Blake 2006, 7; Kollars and Rosen 2016, 206; Payne 2017, 212; Fischer 2019, 182).

Students were asked to identify the power relations in the films they chose, using either one or a combination of the analytical frameworks they were introduced to in class. Although this choice left room for students' creative applications of the analytical frameworks to the fictional cases in these films, they were also encouraged to use Barnett and Duvall's power taxonomy, particularly because it gives "critical, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive distinctions" (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 43). This taxonomy helps students understand the concept of power through the lens of different IR theories in an analytically eclectic fashion thereby overcoming the misconception that power is "the exclusive province of realism" (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 40). Furthermore, it was assumed that the students would find it relatively easy to apply this taxonomy to different cases since we had examined similar analogical examples in class using the taxonomy. After watching the films, each student wrote essays based on their evaluations of the power relations in their film of choice. Then on the last day of the class, we conducted a three-hour-long Power Workshop wherein students presented their essays, followed by a class discussion about the power relations presented in both films. The students were not given prior questions to consider; rather, using an analytical framework of their choice, they were asked to identify the power relations in the film they chose to watch. This was meant to give them space for creativity and not to limit them to my imagination. The trade-offs related to this relative freedom are discussed in the next section.

Because the Power Workshop ran on student creativity rather than on prior knowledge about the historical and/or political background of a certain historical "truth" (c.f. Fischer 2019, 181–182), the students were empowered. My role as instructor was to take a back seat and facilitate discussion. This approach made students more confident in their work, "privileg[ing] *learning* in the classroom over *teaching*" (Kuzma and Haney 2001, 36, emphasis in original) and facilitating students' creative imagination as they critically interpreted and wrote about a different universe (Kuzma and Haney 2001, 36; Weber 2001, 282). The workshop, along with the related assignments mentioned above, aimed to make students learn for learning's sake rather than just being able to recall information for an exam (Nickerson 1989, 3–4; Marso and Pigge 1993, 134). In turn, this assignment required that students not only recall the concepts but also be able to transfer their knowledge to other settings (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001, 65).

In sum, fostering students' ability to transfer what they learned from one setting—the realm of international politics—to another—the fictional universes of films—was the primary goal of the Power Workshop. Other learning objectives included making students focus on critical and creative thinking without the burden of having to research and seek the truth; aiding students' learning of the abstract concept of power; and helping them achieve all of these learning objectives in an interesting way so as to attract students' attention.

In line with the metacognitive dimension of knowledge, which is "knowledge about cognition in general as well as awareness of and knowledge about one's own cognition" (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001, 55), the learning goals were shared, in detail, with the students, during the first week of classes. This made them aware of the cognitive tasks of the Power Workshop and let them critically think about their knowledge of the topic. This metacognitive approach encourages students to conduct their own learning process in an informed manner (Silver 2013; Habib 2018). The Power Workshop consisted of 10 percent of the students' overall grade. The next section illustrates students' application of power taxonomy to the fictional universes of *Hunger Games* and *Mad Max: The Fury Road.*

Student Essays

Students produced highly creative essays and presentations that reflected their learning of the concept of power and their ability to comprehend higher-order or critical thinking skills. While some overlapping themes emerged in some student essays, the creative nature of the assignment allowed students to come up with diverse findings. Most students preferred Barnett and Duvall's (2005) conceptualizations of different types of power, while some students made references to soft power (Lee 2009; Kroenig, McAdam, and Weber 2010; Nye 2011) and social power (Van Ham 2010). However, for the illustrative purposes of this paper, only student application of the Barnett and Duvall's (2005) power taxonomy are discussed below. Six students (Students A, B, F, H, and I) applied this taxonomy to *Hunger Games*, while four students (Students C, D, E, and J) applied it to *Mad Max: The Fury Road*. Before presenting student findings, the power taxonomy will be explained briefly.

Barnett and Duvall (2005) developed a two-by-two taxonomy of power based on two dimensions: (1) whether power works through the interactions of specific actors (power over) or through social relations of constitution (power to) and (2) whether the power relation is direct or diffuse. Compulsory power is the power of one actor who has direct control over another actor's behavior, such as making direct threats to change one's behavior. Institutional power is in play when one actor indirectly exercises control over another's behavior through diffuse relations of interaction, such as US influence over a country through the mechanism of the International Monetary Fund. Structural power refers to the power embedded in the structural relations of actors vis-à-vis one another, such as an empire's power over a colony. Productive power "is the socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification" (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 43).

Hunger Games (2012), the first of a series of four films based on novels of the same name, depicts a postapocalyptic narrative world in which the Capitol controls and rules 12 poorer and dependent districts in the country of Panem. Every year, the Capitol organizes nationwide televised Hunger Games to which each district sends one male and one female "tributes," reminding all subjects of the intolerable and strict control of the Capitol over them. The last to remain alive in the Games, among 24 tributes, and her/his District are rewarded with gifts. The first film (2012), sets out the narrative that two tributes from District 12, Katniss and Peeta, manage to get the game-makers to change the rules of the Hunger Games and allow two survivors and winners of the Hunger Games.

Mad Max: The Fury Road (2015) is also another postapocalyptic movie where resources are scarce and under the control of few warlords. The movie centers on the city of Citadel, where Immortan Joe rules his subjects fiercely in a strict hierarchical order. The movie depicts the escape of Immortan Joe's wives, who have no function other than bearing potential sons for him, to a nostalgic and imaginary "Green Place of Many Mothers" with the help of a female general named Furiosa.

In their analysis of *The Hunger Games*, four students found that the Capitol has compulsory power over the Districts, as it uses its economic strength to control the Districts and to force members of these Districts to participate in the Hunger Games regardless of their willingness to do so. The winner of the Hunger Games is rewarded with gifts of grain, oil, and sugar to maintain their compliance with this compulsory power. Two students found compulsory power in the protagonist Katniss's and her friend Peeta's threats to commit suicide to get the Capitol to change the established rules of the game. If the pair were to commit suicide, the tradition of the Hunger Games would change because the game would be left without a winner that year. Three students suggested that this latter kind of compulsory power is also connected to productive power as the heroic duo show that the rules of the game can be reconstructed by simply not following the established norms and also by being able to disrupt and transform these norms through new ideas.

Table 1. Students' Analysis of Power Relations in the Narrative World of *The Hunger Games*, Based on Barnett and Duvall's (2005) "Taxonomy of Power"

		Relational specificity	
		Direct	**Diffuse**
Power works through	**Interactions of specific actors**	**Compulsory** Forcing districts' members to join the Hunger Games.	**Institutional** Making districts fight each other through the institution of the Hunger Games.
	Social relations of constitution	**Structural** Core-periphery relationship between the districts and the Capitol.	**Productive** The rules of the Hunger Games can be disrupted and transformed through ideas.

Three students suggested that the Capitol created the Hunger Games as an institution through which it exercised its influence over the districts. When the Capitol established and set the rules of the Hunger Games as a kind of institution, it indirectly managed to make the people of the country's 12 districts kill each other off in a classical example of "divide and rule." This instills "fear" one student noted, preventing, in turn, the Districts from creating an alliance and rebelling against the Capitol.

Four students raised the issue of the core-periphery relationship between the Capitol and the Districts as being a form of structural power. One student went further to suggest that the "dystopian society" of Panem exists as an economic hierarchy among the districts that in turn "shapes [the people's] ideology—the interpretive system through which they understand their interests and desires" (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 54) and their behaviors. This is similar to the world-systems theory that divides the world into the core (the Capitol), the semiperiphery (richer districts), and the periphery (poorer districts), as one student noted. Three students remarked that the structure is constituted in such a way that the districts accept their fates to pay tribute to the Hunger Games, albeit unwillingly, thereby contributing to Capitol-centric social cohesion in Panem. The students' analysis of this film is summarized in Table 1.

In their analysis of *Mad Max: The Fury Road*, three students referred to Immortan Joe's control over most of the available resources, including water, weapons, drugs, blood bags, cars, and gasoline, which he uses to control the behavior of his subjects, particularly the War Boys. According to the students, this is a typical example of compulsory power. Nevertheless, they went on to suggest that the creation of traditions and narratives around the cult of Immortan Joe is a form of productive power, structuralized over time. In other words, compulsory power is in play in tandem with this kind of productive and structural power. Angharad, the pregnant wife, also wields compulsory power over Immortan Joe by threatening and "sway[ing] Immortan Joe from shooting at the war rig out of fear [of] hurting his unborn son," as noted by one student.

Four students noted that the society of Citadel in *Mad Max: The Fury Road* is controlled with a strict and literal hierarchy (like the Capitol in Panem) with Immortan Joe at the top of a rock fortress, the common people or the Wretched on the ground, and the useful people, such as the War Boys, in the middle. Students found this to be a representative example of structural power; a dependency is created between Immortan Joe and his subjects as the former provides the latter water, food, and other resources.

One student pointed out another structural power relationship between male and female characters in the film. In her words:

> Women serve as cattle in this universe, producers of mother's milk, which is used as an alternative to water in some instances, and sons. The wives are literally called "assets" throughout the film and this is something the women themselves are aware of. . . . Because of this structure where women are possessions and assets, boys are valued above girls as well. This is showcased for example when Angharad dies and one of Immortan Joe's underlings attempts to save the child. Immortan Joe's concern is not for his wife, or for the child, but for whether or not the child was a boy.

Similarly, three students depicted the relationship between Immortan Joe and his War Boys as a master-slave relationship; the War Boys are indoctrinated into living and dying for Immortan Joe in return for a "rebirth and reward in Valhalla, as can be deduced from the quote [from the film]: 'I live. I die. I live again'" (student quote). One student asserted that this asymmetrical relationship between the War Boys and Immortan Joe is a perfect representation of structural power as it appears in Barnett and Duvall (2005, 54):

> [T]hose in the subordinate positions adopt (ideologically generated) conceptions of interest that support their own domination and their lesser position in the world. The most significant challenge to Immortan Joe's power and rule in the film begins as Angharad (and through following her, the other wives as well) defies the unequal structure she is stuck in, through adopting a different ideology that reassures her "we are not things."[7]

Two students noted the religion-like elements of Immortan Joe's control of the Citadel represented productive power. Symbols, narratives, music, and traditions are constructed and utilized around the cult of Immortan Joe in order to gain the loyalty of the War Boys, who would then offer their services without being coerced. The War Boys' identities and interests are constructed in such a way that being "noticed and witnessed" by Immortan Joe and going to "Valhalla (heaven)" under his command are their ultimate goals rather than acting in their own self-interest or for their own survival. Students also raised the issue of the War Boys being purposefully left uneducated, as can be deduced from their lack of language skills, so Immortan Joe's religion-like ideology could be more effective.

One student talked about the productive power of norms and narratives as she compared two different understandings of the violence constituted by the rival ideologies in the film. While for Immortan Joe, violence is vital to ensuring power and control over others, for "Angharad and her ideology of the Green Place of Many Mothers . . . violence is a necessary evil, used only when the situation forces them to. Guns are called 'the antiseed' (explained as 'plant one and watch something die') and seeds of vegetables and crops are the focus of this ideology, prioritized over guns and violence" (student comment). Furthermore, the Many Mothers challenge the masculine ideology and patriarchal society led by Immortan Joe and, by extension, they challenge the real world, "implant[ing] the notion of women as people instead of things within the minds of the wives and blame men (but more importantly the patriarchal society) as those 'who killed the world,'" (student comment).

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[7] In addition to the application in this exercise, both films would make good choices for students to learn critical IR theory.

Table 2. Students' Analysis of Power Relations in the Narrative World of the *Mad Max: The Fury Road*, Based on Barnett and Duvall's (2005) "Taxonomy of Power"

		Relational specificity	
		Direct	**Diffuse**
Power works through	**Interactions of specific actors**	**Compulsory** Immortan Joe's control over resources to compel his subjects to comply with his rule	**Institutional** None
	Social relations of constitution	**Structural** The hierarchy in Citadel, with Immortan Joe at the top (core), the common people on the ground (periphery), and the useful people, such as the War Boys, in the middle (semiperiphery).	**Productive** Religion-like traditions and narratives around the cult of Immortan Joe so as to obtain the War Boys' loyalty.

There was consensus among students that institutional power was relatively absent in the narrative world of *Mad Max: Fury Road* as Immortan Joe exerted his influence directly on his subjects without using any institutions as a medium.

The main aim of the Power Workshop was to enable students to transfer their learned knowledge through an active cognitive processing that requires "students not only to remember but also to make sense of and be able to use what they have learned" (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001, 63). This objective is broader than the narrower objective of whether or not students learned the concept of power, involving a more complex cognitive process (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001, 22). The students' essays and presentations demonstrated achievement of this broader objective to a certain extent. Table 2 summarizes student analysis of *Mad Max: Fury Road.*

Postworkshop Survey

The purpose of the survey was to assess whether students found the Power Workshop useful as a learning tool and to gather suggestions for future improvements. Hence, the survey did not attempt to find causality between the students' participation in the Power Workshop and their increased learning. This would have proved difficult due to two main constraints: the small number of students registered for the course and the lack of an adequate control group. In a similar vein, pre- and posttests were not conducted because it would have been difficult to isolate the impact of the Power Workshop on students' learning of the concept of knowledge, as they learned this concept throughout the semester.

One day after the Power Workshop, students received an online and anonymous questionnaire. All ten students voluntarily completed the survey. The survey asked students to rate the film using a five-point Likert Scale in terms of its use as a learning tool for the purposes of that particular course. Students rated the Power Workshop as "very good" (80 percent) and "good" (20 percent). The results are presented in Figure 1.

The next three questions asked the students to give open-ended answers. The third question asked, "What did you like about the film assignment? How did it help your learning?" Six out of ten students wrote that the exercise helped them "apply" and/or "practice" what they had learned in class. Another theme that emerged in
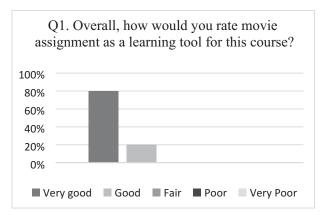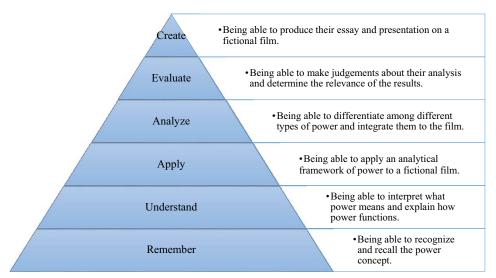
Figure 1. Evaluation of the Assignment.

students' answers was that the workshop helped them learn the abstract concept of power. In the words of one student, "it helped me understand the concepts of the course in [an] easier way by using visuals and real-life examples rather than just reading academic papers." Some students wrote that the workshop was "a very fun way to practice what we have studied in our class." Two students, in similar words, stated that the film exercise helped them deconstruct the taken-for-grantedness of their own biases and the discourses in society and in films, and "it made me think in a more flexible manner." Lastly, one student mentioned that the exercise "improved my critical thinking."

When asked what they disliked about this specific assignment, four out of nine respondents wrote "nothing." Two students wrote that they only watched one of the films and had no idea about the other film, thus they were bored when the other film was discussed. They recommended that at least the plots of both films be given at the beginning of the workshop. Other comments noted the "high degree of violence in the film," the difficulty of "deschooling [one's] thoughts from the previous conclusions made and solely concentrating on the specific film without the themes and ideas from the sequels," and "the schedule of the workshop," which was in the final week when students were having exams for other courses.

The last question asked for the students' opinions on how this assignment could be improved. Two students suggested that guiding questions or frameworks would "only limit the students' creativity, [and] it is best left as it is," while another student suggested "guiding questions may have helped." The rest of the suggestions were along the same lines discussed in the previous paragraph. The next section discusses the findings of the application of the Power Workshop.

Discussion

Students' essays, presentations, and discussions during the Power Workshop and in the survey results suggest that the Power Workshop facilitated their critical and creative thinking. The learning objectives of the power workshop are in line with the stages of active cognitive processing introduced in the first section of this paper (see Figure 2). First, through articles, lectures, and in-class discussions, students recognized and recalled the concept of power and were able to remember it later. Second, they understood the concept better and were able to interpret what power means and explain how power functions in different situations. Third, they applied an analytical framework of power to a fictional film, implementing what they

Figure 2. Author's Construction Based on the Cognitive Process Dimension of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

remembered and understood in a specific narrative world. Fourth, the students analyzed the power relations in the film's narrative world, thus differentiating among the different types of power and integrating them to the situations portrayed in the films. Fifth, they made judgments about their analyses and determined the relevance of their results for real life. This was particularly the case during the workshop where students discussed and received feedback about their work from each other and from me. Sixth, students' production of creative essays, presentations, and insightful reflections based on a fictional film were the outcomes of the workshop. In sum, the Power Workshop aided students' critical thinking and their ability to transfer knowledge through active cognitive processing.

The design of the Power Workshop consisted of two trade-offs. The most important trade-off is between having the instructor distribute guiding questions to the students before the film viewing and leaving the students free to creatively apply a power analytical framework to the films. Since this was a graduate course and since students were exposed to the concept of power throughout the course, including metaphorical applications of the power concept to imaginary narratives, the students were assumed better off without guiding questions. Guiding questions would restrict student creativity to the frame imposed by the instructor. However, when this workshop is conducted with undergraduate students or with students who are not familiar with the concept of power, withholding guiding questions may leave the students "directionless and disillusioned" (Weber 2001, 282).

The second trade-off is between showing the film in class and asking students to watch it on their own time. In order to save class time, I decided on the latter. However, this choice was not without its problems. The first problem was raised by a couple of students in the postworkshop survey, where they noted that they were familiar with only the film they watched and not the other one. Because of this, they were not able to participate in the discussions on the other film and, consequently, got bored in that particular part of the workshop. As noted above, students suggested that synopses of both films be given at the beginning of the class. Another way to tackle this issue would be to ask them to watch both films but to analyze only one of them. Yet, another alternative way to solve this issue is to

assign only one film. The next section summarizes the findings of this paper and makes suggestions for pedagogical practice.

Lastly, teaching IR theories was not a main goal of this course, but the films' narratives could have been discussed from the perspective of different IR theories. Both movies present rich narratives that could be used to discuss these IR themes: variants of realism (particularly in the context of compulsory power), cooperation under anarchy (particularly in the context of institutional power), constructivism (particularly in the context of productive power), neo-Marxism (particularly in the context of structural power), feminism (particularly in the context of structural and productive power), and poststructuralism (particularly in the context of structural and productive power). In future applications of this exercise, instructors might consider connecting metaphors and analogies in the films to IR theories and concepts. This can be done during the debriefing session without putting extra burden on the students.

Practical Application and Portability of the Exercise

One issue that is often raised about active learning tools, such as simulations, games, and films is the instructors' burden of preparing and customizing these lessons for the learning objectives of each course. However, if these tools were designed in a portable way, instructors could easily use the same structure across different issues and courses (Kollars and Rosen 2016; Brown 2018).

The exercise explained in this paper was designed to be portable across different courses and not limited to political science. While the Power Workshop used two science fiction films in a course about power in world politics, the exercise as a pedagogical tool can be applied to other courses that use different films. The main idea of this exercise is to provide students with a well-crafted fictional universe of films, particularly science fiction, fantasy, or animation, where they can transfer their knowledge of certain analytical frameworks or theories. The exercise helps students' active cognitive processing, in turn leading to meaningful learning. This exercise should be complementary to lectures and reading materials where students initially construct the meaning of an analytical framework or a theory—the first step in a revised version of Bloom's taxonomy of learning. The only extra preparation the instructor needs to do is find appropriate films with proper fictional universes where the learned frameworks and/or theories can be applied. The instructor should then explain the learning objectives of this exercise and how their film selection serves these objectives. The instructor can also prepare some guiding questions, depending on their own evaluation of the aforementioned trade-off between letting students freely transfer their knowledge and guiding them in the process.

This paper illustrated an exercise of Power Workshop in a graduate class with ten students. In classes with more students, instructors can put students in groups. Students can write individual essays and submit them to the instructor. Later, in groups of three to five, depending on the size of the classroom and the length of class period, students can prepare group presentations. This group exercise can lead to teamwork-related learning objectives including making students learn from their peers' essays.

Acknowledgements

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