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Movies in the teaching of International Relations: the Brazilian experience

Filmes no ensino das Relações Internacionais: a experiência brasileira

Películas en la enseñanza de las Relaciones Internacionales: la experiencia brasileña

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Cristine Koehler Zanella¹

Edson Jose Neves Junior²

Abstract

This article investigates how movies have been used as an IR pedagogical tool in Brazil. Through a survey research method, with voluntary and unidentified participation of respondents, we mapped when films are used and why, the judgment on the successfulness of performed activities, and the difficulties to use them. Data confirmed that films are widely employed; that the main purposes of using movies are to provide additional information and to illustrate how a given IR theory or school explain the world; and that limits of using films go from the lack of adequate films to the absence of adequate resources for their exhibition.

Keywords: International Relations; pedagogy; movies; Brazil.

1 Doctor in Political Sciences (UGent/Belgium) and Doctor in International Strategic Studies (UFRGS/Brazil); Lecturer in International Relations at Federal University of ABC (São Bernardo do Campo/São Paulo, Brazil) (cristine.zanella@ufabc.edu.br).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7092-4549>.

2 Doctor in International Strategic Studies (UFRGS/Brazil); Lecturer in International Relations at Federal University of Uberlândia (Uberlândia/Minas Gerais, Brazil) (edson.neves@ufu.br).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0532-5555>.

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Resumo

A partir de uma pesquisa quantitativa e qualitativa, com participação voluntária e não-identificada dos respondentes, este trabalho investiga o uso dos filmes como ferramenta pedagógica no ensino das Relações Internacionais no Brasil. Mapeamos quando os filmes são utilizados e por que, a percepção sobre o sucesso das atividades e as dificuldades observadas. Os dados confirmam que filmes são largamente utilizados; que as intenções principais ao utilizá-los são fornecer informações sobre eventos e ilustrar as explicações de dada teoria ou escola; e que os limites dessa ferramenta vão desde a falta de filmes apropriados à ausência de recursos adequados para exibição.

Palavras-chave: Relações Internacionais; pedagogia; filmes; Brasil.

Resumen

A partir de una investigación cuantitativa y cualitativa, con participación voluntaria y no identificada, este trabajo investiga el uso de películas como herramienta pedagógica en la enseñanza de las Relaciones Internacionales en Brasil. Mapeamos cuándo se utilizan las películas y por qué, la percepción sobre el éxito de las actividades y las dificultades presentadas. Los datos recopilados confirman que las películas son ampliamente utilizadas; que las principales intenciones son proporcionar información y ilustrar explicaciones de una teoría o escuela determinada; y que los límites de esta herramienta van desde la falta de películas adecuadas hasta la falta de recursos adecuados para exhibición.

Palabras clave: Relaciones Internacionales; pedagogía; cine; Brasil.

Introduction

International Relations (IR) are a privileged field for employing films as a learning tool. Regardless of their gender, films can be used in IR, which is explainable for several reasons, such as (i) films address relations beyond borders. In very few other courses, students can feel distant from their academic objects and scenarios of analysis as they feel in IR — films, by portraying events, help perceive concepts, actors, and movements on these spaces making them less abstract (Inoue, Krain 2014). This is especially true in large countries as Brazil, in which many IR courses are headquartered far from the countries major cities such as Sao Paulo , Rio de Janeiro, or Brasilia; (ii) the involvement in movies'





histories by students can transform their interest in related topics into an easier task and can therefore encourage them to investigate a specific topic (Kuzma, Haney 2001); (iii) an in-context presentation provide a more complex view on addressed themes or concepts (Weber 2001; Weber 2014), stimulating students to explore these topics through other different perspectives than those limited to certain theoretical schools, which increases analytic criticism; and (iv) films can be more stimulating than text reading, and still contribute for more active class participation (Inoue, Valença 2017; Boyer *et al.* 2003). Thus, the use of cinematographic works for the teaching of International Relations has been a frequent resource in classrooms and, increasingly, this has become an object of academic research studies. The following article intends to add some contributions in this regard.

Scholar Cynthia Weber (2014), in “International Relations Theory: a critical introduction”, whose first edition was launched in 2001, analyzed each theory on IR chosen for her book based on popular films. Weber — who is also a film producer, director, and editor — became known for her series of short films on the American identity fostered after September, 11th, by inviting her viewers to think on democracy, multiculturalism, and national identity (I Am An American 2017). Like Weber, researcher Sophie Harman increases the list of IR scholars who are directly involved with film production, exceeding the academic limit restricted to analysis. In 2017, in partnership with director Leanne Welham, Harman wrote the script and produced the film “Pili” (2017), about the struggle of poor Tanzanian women against HIV. In 2019, she published the book *Seeing Politics. Film, Visual Method, and International Relations* that deals with “Pili” to demonstrate the virtues of cinema for the IR (Harman 2019). On a different approach, Marc Doucet (2005) investigated children’s films. His work suggested that films contribute to the increasing popularity of a certain vision of the world at the detriment of others and therefore some IR theories tend to seem a more accurate description of the world than others, which transforms their acceptance into an easier process and validates them as a way of thinking on international political phenomena.

Nevertheless, films are not an educational tool by themselves, and the way through which teachers and professors use them for teaching and learning can also pose some negative aspects. For instance, as far as the teaching of politics and international politics is concerned, focusing on the main character’s suffering in a film portraying atrocities can make it difficult to understand the current





political dynamics that led to that violent scenario. By indicating arguments that may go against the use of cinema for teaching IR, Safia Swimelar (2013), in “Visualizing International Relations: Assessing Student Learning Through Film”, highlights that films can manipulate contents and provide misinformation on the addressed theme; films can still occupy an exaggerated time in class, provoking tedium and leaving little room for reflection; films can also waste too much time on unrelated themes; films can be proposed by teaching professionals with no capacity in working with films; films can trigger emotional effects with a great impact on the understanding of the analyzed theme; and films can mostly reflect a certain theory or ideology, in a situation in which little or no attention being given to other thoughts (Swimelar 2013, 16,19). This is a more elaborated made by other authors that were celebrating the use of movies in the IR classrooms but not without alerting that movies should not be incorporated in the curricula without due attention to the intended learning goals (Glover, Tagliarina 2013).

Despite criticisms, the ten-year experience held by the authors suggests that films have been progressively serving as material for IR lecturers, not as objects of improved and finalized knowledge, but as a primary source of analysis, as a cultural manifestation contextualized in time and space, just like other works in the artistic field. And, in recent years, IR specialists have advanced, as exemplified in the references to Cynthia Weber and Sophie Harman, in the production of films oriented by fundamental themes in their field of study. This work has been aimed to investigate this ongoing process in IR. The intention was to investigate, in the Brazilian IR scenario, the profile of lecturers who are more prone to employ films, when films are used as educational resources, the goals intended by lecturers by using films as an educational tool, the judgment on the successfulness of performed activities and the difficulties indicated by lectures in the use of films for teaching purposes in IR.

To investigate the goals for which lecturers resort to the movies in IR, four ways of using films in the class were resumed, following the definition proposed by Stefan Engert and Alexander Spencer (2009), in “International Relations at the Movies: Teaching and Learning about International Politics through Film”. In their work, the authors identified the use of films for (i) portraying historical events; (ii) debating on specific themes of international politics; (iii) examining cultural narratives; and (iv) explaining and criticizing IR theories. On this work, however, we worked with only three categories of goals. The two first ones were suppressed and reformulated to: “adding information on either a specific event





or on a theme”. The first goal was reformulated because we considered that no teacher resorts to films as an accurate picture or as the sole source of information on an event. We also excluded the second goal indicated by Engert and Spencer (debating specific themes on international politics) because we considered that debates can be unleashed in all situations and that dialectics will be inherent to both the examining of cultural narratives and the criticism on IR theories. Thus, debating specific themes can be suppressed as an independent category of goals.

This work is divided into three sections. In the first section, we describe the methodology for applying forms and the universe of analysis. In the second section, we analyze the profile of lecturers who use films as educational tools for teaching IR and we also report the reasons and arguments invoked by those who neither use films nor intend to use them as an educational resource. In the third section, we analyze the goal for which films are employed, how lecturers assess the success in using this tool, and the difficulties of using cinema within IR learning environments where teachers work. Throughout these sections, we will indicate the paths explored by this research in its following steps.

Description of research method and universe of analysis

In Brazil, IR has expanded as a field of scholar education. Between 2005 and 2015 this growth was expressive as it was enlarged from 58 to 112 IR courses. Still, in 2015, the approximate figure of IR students in Brazil exceeded 24 thousand individuals (Inep 2016). This expansion of IR courses has been also followed by the consolidation of this area as a field of scientific knowledge. One step toward this goal is perceived by the adoption of so-called National Course Guidelines, or NCGs (in Portuguese, Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais — DCNs) for college courses. NCGs are aimed at defining some basic contents for each course, still attempting to guarantee that a minimal range of knowledge is taught for all students enrolled in a certain course within the Brazilian territory. For IR courses, NCGs were approved by the Brazilian National Council for Education (Conselho Nacional de Educação — CNE) formally adopted in October 2017 (CNE 2017).

Although it is possible to identify both the growth in IR courses and the consolidation of this area in the country, it is also very hard to define the number of lecturers of these courses in the Brazilian territory. Several reasons contribute to this difficulty. Firstly, there is not a database assembling IR lecturers in the





country. Secondly, the correspondent Brazilian association, Brazilian Association for International Relations (Associação Brasileira de Relações Internacionais — ABRI) has been indeed consolidated as a space for scholar reunion. However, many individuals are not associated, so the official board of affiliates is a partial representation of IR lecturers in Brazil. A study performed by Villa et al. (2017) — in which trends, preferences, and perceptions of IR epistemic communities in Latin America are addressed — identified 321 members in the Brazilian epistemic community for IR. We understand that this figure is underestimated. With more than 100 IR courses in Brazil, considering its epistemic community (scholars and lecturers, as informed by the research) as being composed of 321 individuals would correspond to considering that, in each course, only 3 lecturers are part of that community. Even if one considers only those lecturers linked to more specific IR subjects — such as Brazilian foreign policy, analysis on foreign policy, international politics, international security, and IR theories —, this number still seems rather reduced.

A third factor contributing to the difficulty in identifying the universe of IR lecturers is that, even if a survey came to be performed, by quantifying the number of IR lectures in Brazil, this would still be a transitory environment. IR is characterized by its interdisciplinarity, which frequently leads lecturers to be associated with each course only for teaching specific subjects. In some institutions, for instance, many lecturers are mainly associated with other courses and teach IR subjects on a solely occasional basis. This situation leads to the fact that the teaching staff working at each IR course may substantially differ yearly.

In the face of the aforementioned non-existence of a database of IR lecturers, the universe of respondents in the survey we conducted was defined by another assessment, performed between August 2015 and January 2017, on internet websites for IR courses in Brazil. 85 websites were located, in the 5 territorial areas of Brazil, and provided information on lecturers associated with each course. 1892 names of lectures associated with IR courses were identified, among which 1021 e-mail addresses were located. The research universe excluded lecturers on courses with no websites, lecturers who were not officially listed on each course, and those whose institutions' websites did not provide their e-mail addresses. Therefore, the fundamental criterion for preparing this research and defining who would be consulted derives from basic guidance on quantitative research methods: how the Brazilian International Relations epistemic community is undefined, mainly due to the increase in the number of courses and its interdisciplinary





character, the option was to consider the largest number of lecturers linked to undergraduate courses available for contact through digital addresses.

Out of the 1021 invitations which were sent with a website link for answering the survey, 159 were returned for delivery failure due to the deactivation of the address, which indicates, as previously suggested, a high turnover in the number of lecturers in Brazilian IR courses; 74 invitations were returned as an automatic answer, indicating lecturers' absence due to their vacation; 154 invitations were personally answered by lecturers who did teach at the IR course, but declined to answer the survey because their subjects were not associated to IR core courses (for instance: English language, computing, Portuguese language, Mathematics, Accounting, among other subjects); and 10 invitations were answered by lecturers indicating they were no longer associated to that course. Therefore, 624 was the final figure of useful invitations. Out of these 624 invitations, 26% were effectively answered. One form was excluded because the lecturer only taught for post-graduation classes, and the object of this research is limited to the use of cinema for teaching IR at graduation level (which leads to a Bachelor's degree in Brazil). 163 was the total figure of answered forms which were useful for this research.

Table 1 — Definition of the universe of lecturers and answered forms

Description	Number/Figure
<i>Total lecturers' e-mail addresses collected from consultation on websites</i>	1021
Automatically returned invitations for delivery failure due to the deactivation of e-mail addresses	159
Automatically returned invitations for lecturers' absence due to personal vacations	74
Lecturers who did not answer the survey for teaching parallel disciplines, with no direct linking to IR	154
Lecturers who did not answer for no longer teaching at the course	10
<i>Total useful forwarded invitations</i>	624
<i>Total answered forms</i>	164 (= 26,28%)
Lecturers who only teach at the post-graduation level	1
<i>Total forms useful for this research</i>	163

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

The forms were created on Google Forms platform. The answers were spontaneous and non-identified by specific names. Nevertheless, the respondents'





e-mail addresses were requested, to make it possible to further expand this research on specific points demanding deeper analysis. In this sense, there are two examples, among many: one can more deeply investigate how lecturers who stated using films for working with a specific IR theory did this, and; one can still investigate what type of materials were sought by lectures who stated not being able to identify films able to respond to their educational purposes. Another goal in this collection process was to enable some return to respondents of the written work, based on the several obtained answers.

In age terms, the respondents' profile indicates a group of lecturers concentrated on an age group defined in Brazil as adults (between 30 and 59 years old). More than half of the respondents (53%) are between 30 and 44 years old. There is a balance in their origins, with 50% of the respondents working for public institutions and the other 50% working for private institutions. The majority of respondents finished their doctorates (65%). On the data-collection process, this group was divided between lecturers holding only a doctorate and lecturers with an extra research period, in post-doctorate, with this subdivision being performed to a more accurate group stratification. Finally, the Brazilian Southeastern area is where the majority of respondents work and where the majority of IR courses in Brazil are.

Framework 1 — Form respondents' profile (number of respondents and corresponding percentage within each analyzed category)

Age group										
Up to 29 years old		30-44 years old		45-59 years old		60 or older		Total		
16	10%	87	53%	42	26%	18	11%	163	100%	
Nature of the institution										
Private				Public				Total		
82		50%		81		50%		163		100%
Highest educational level achieved										
Post-doctorate		Doctorate		Mastership		Specialization		Total		
28	17%	79	48%	54	33%	2	1%	163	100%	
Brazilian location										
South		Southeast		Center-West		Northeast		North		
34	21%	85	52%	17	10%	17	10%	10	6%	

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).





Some considerations must be made regarding the representativeness of the sample of respondents in their relationship with the teaching profile of IR Bachelor's degree courses in Brazil. As a rule, in data research, it is essential to consider whether the sample numbers are representative of the group to be analyzed. In our case, as there is no epistemic community determined by the bibliography for the academic field of International Relations and as the course is interdisciplinary by its nature, we chose to send the questionnaire on the use of films in the teaching of IR to all teachers who had their virtual addresses available on the institutions' websites. This exercise raised the question of whether the sample obtained from the respondents was representative of the group of lecturers in the International Relations courses in Brazil. As will be seen below, the confirmation of this relation is only partially verifiable, considering the questions we asked in the form, indicated in Framework 1.

First, concerning respondents by age (in Framework 1 indicated as "Age group"). There is no specific information regarding the age profile of the teaching staff of undergraduate degrees in International Relations or even of lecturers at national Higher Education Institutions. Therefore, checking whether our sample is representative of this reference is not a possibility.

Second, regarding the nature of the respondents' institutions, there is a substantial disparity concerning the profile of undergraduate courses in national International Relations. According to Framework 1, the number of lecturers from public and private institutions that filled out the form is practically identical. However, if we consider the number of International Relations courses in Brazil, the superiority of private institutions is evident. A survey on the field of International Relations in Brazil, published in 2020, with data referring to the period from 1974 to 2017, indicated that there were 125 undergraduate active courses in private institutions against only 26 in Public Universities (Ferreira 2020). In this regard, private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) therefore represented approximately 83% of Brazilian IR courses and public ones only 17%. These figures indicate that the number of teachers in private institutions was (and still is) much higher than that of public institutions. Therefore, considering our sample, there is a notable difference to indicate its representativeness.

Third, concerning the degree of training in our sample ("Highest educational level achieved" in Framework 1), it is clear that there is a predominance of lecturers with doctorates and post-doctorates: 65% of the group; a smaller proportion for those with Master's degrees (33%) and only two individuals with training at the





Specialization level (1%). It is important to note that in the Brazilian academic structure, there are two types of postgraduate courses: the *stricto-sensu*, which includes master's and doctoral degrees; and *lato-sensu* aimed at specializing in certain areas which is why they are also called Specialization courses. There are no published studies for the International Relations course that reveal the degree of lecturers' training working on IR courses. However, if we observe the Higher Education Census, an extensive survey on national higher education, it presents the profile of the teaching staff of national HEIs. According to data from the 2019 Census, the percentage of lecturers with a doctorate (or post-doctorate) in higher education is 45.9%, with a master's degree is 37.5%, and Specialization, 15.7% (Inep 2019). In this case, the approximation of our sample is moderate because it is only close to the data related to the "Master's" training.

Finally, regarding the respondents' regional location (in Framework 1 "Brazilian location"), there is a significant approximation if the number of courses by geographic regions of Brazil is considered. According to the aforementioned publication, on the IR scenario in Brazil, 55% of undergraduate courses in International Relations are in the Southeast region; 21% in the South region; 10% in the Midwest; 8% in the Northeast, and 5% in the North; in addition to 1% who answered "does not apply" (Ferreira 2020). In our sample, according to Framework 1, the number of respondents by region is very close: 52% Southeast; 21% South; 10% Midwest; 10% Northeast, and 6% North. In this case, the representativeness of the research concerning the International Relations area is much more significant.

In summary, as for representativeness, there is a very approximate correspondence only for the item "Brazilian location", which considers the geographic region of the teachers who answered our questionnaire. Moderate representativeness for the "Highest educational level achieved" field, and a low one for the "Nature of the institution" indicator. Such conclusions, therefore, make it clear that the sample number refers to the fraction that answered the questionnaire and does not represent the Brazilian International Relations epistemic community. This conclusion does not invalidate the research presented here, because defining an epistemic community, as aforementioned, for the field of International Relations in Brazil would require specific research, but it should be noted that the results presented refer only to our sample.

In the next section, the assessment on the use of cinema by each of these strata will be presented, in an attempt to identify patterns, to suggest some





explanations for the numbers which were found, and to indicate further research paths.

Who uses movies in the teaching of IR in Brazil

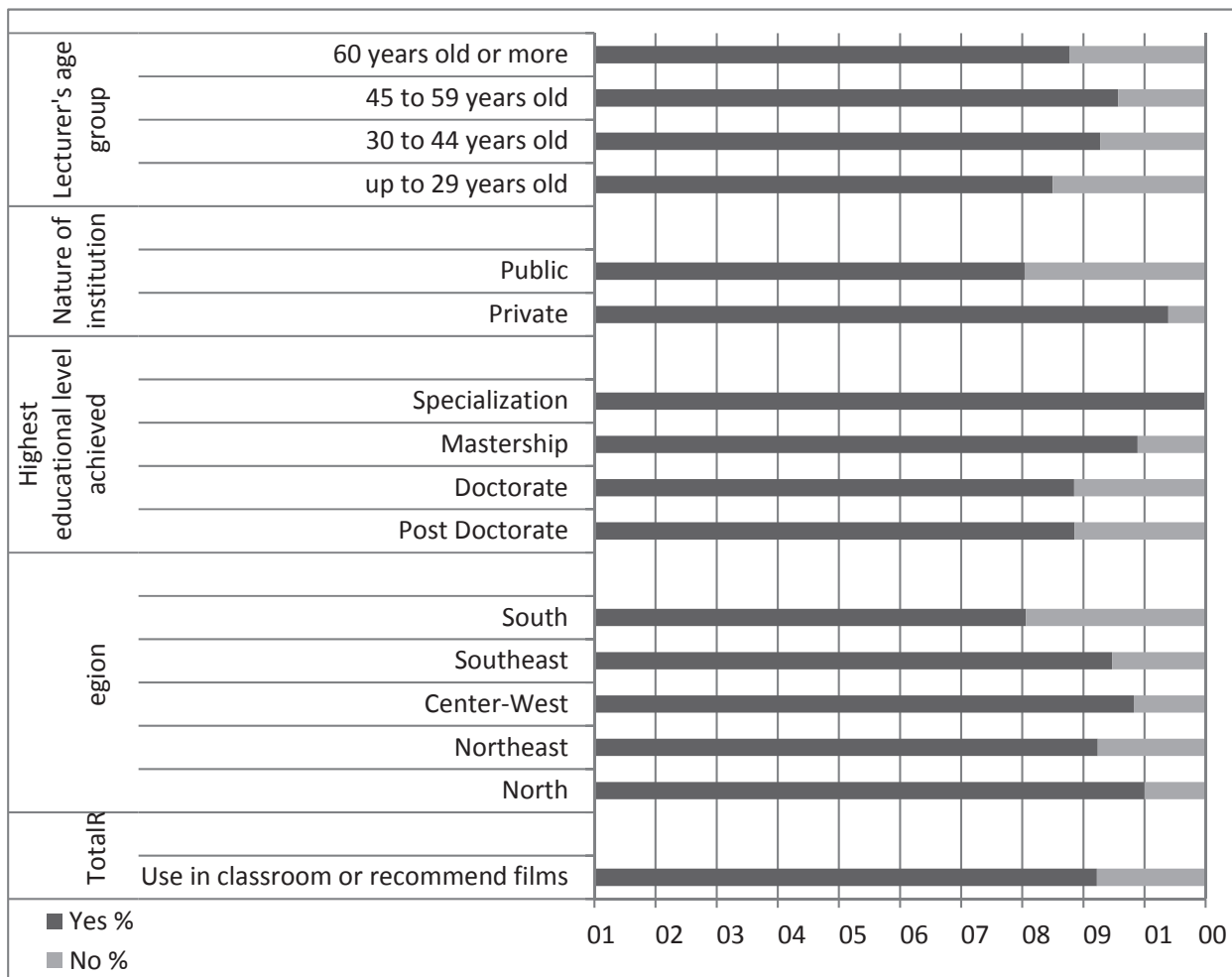
The answers which were obtained from lecturers indicate that films — encompassing, in this work-research, both fictional films and documentaries — are sources to which IR lectures often resort. More than 82% of the lecturers stated that, in subjects taught at IR courses, they used entire films or film fragments as educational tools, either by developing in-class activities or by suggesting studying activities to be performed at home. Despite some occasional disadvantages in the use of cinema, as remarked by Swimelar, IR lecturers foresee several positive aspects in resorting to this tool for improving the knowledge built from conventional sources.

In terms of the age group, one could be led to believe that younger lecturers would tend to interact with these audiovisual tools and to resort to them in the process of teaching and learning. However, this group, formed by 10% of the respondents, was precisely the one presenting the lowest number of lecturers who stated to have resorted to the use of cinema in class and/or to the recommendation of films for in-home activities. Generally, resorting to the use of cinema increases as the lecturer's age also increases. The group of lecturers stating a higher degree in the use of cinema was that between 45 and 59 years old. Working with cinema as a teaching tool is neither obvious nor consolidated in the field of IR, and there is still a lack of texts guiding the methodology to be employed in class for this purpose. In this sense, the fact that more experienced lecturers are those who more often resort to cinema as an educational tool seems to reflect more confidence in contents that can be approached through other tools. Besides, at this age, lecturers already had the opportunity of knowing a wider range of films able to serve educational purposes. Finally, the group of eldest lecturers also resort less to films than those lecturers who are between 30 and 59 years old. This can suggest an attachment to traditional means of teaching and learning or even some difficulty in handling the equipment required for audiovisual usage. Additionally, younger lecturers may avoid resorting to less conventional sources due to their wish of stating their knowledge on classic sources for the study of IR.





Graphic 1 — Use of films in the process of teaching IR in Brazil



Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

Regarding the nature of institutions where lectures teach, whereas 94% of the lecturers working for private institutions stated to resort to films as an educational tool, 70% of the lecturers working for public institutions stated the same. This is the deepest intra-category difference within the categories investigated on Graphic 1. When these figures are crossed with the reasons for which lecturers neither used nor recommended films (Frameworks 2, 3, 4), two situations are unfolded.

In the first situation, among those who did not use films, but expressed interest in using films (22 lecturers), the main alleged reasons were “lack of classroom and/or adequate audiovisual resources for the exhibition”, “lack of adequate films for the desired educational purposes”, “difficulty in obtaining films” and “unfamiliarity with adequate methodologies for working with films as an educational tool”. These reasons mainly indicate the lack of material





resources (equipment, films) that enable the use of this tool or still the lack of methodological resources (knowing how to use films for teaching). Since it is imagined that methodological tools are accessible for lecturers working at both private and public institutions, it is possible to infer that part of the lower degree in using audiovisual tools by lecturers working for public institutions is due to an equally lower degree in access to material resources in comparison to private institutions.

In the second situation, in the investigation of lecturers who neither used nor were interested in using films in the process of teaching (7 lecturers), the main indicated reasons for their lack of interest were: “they are not adequate resources for the specific taught subjects”, “I consider that scholar books and articles are more efficient resources for college teaching”, “it consumes much time of class” and “I do not have enough knowledge on the methodology for using cinema as an educational tool”. The reasons for the non-interest in using films as an educational tool refer to the inadequacy of cinema for teaching specific subjects (which reflects in the statement that cinema is unsuitable for both certain contents and in-class work). The lack of knowledge on adequate methodologies for working with films emerges again among the reasons for the non-interest in working with films as educational tools.

Framework 2 — Interest in using films by lecturers who had not done it yet

Who did not use films	Number/Figure
But are interested in using films	22
And are not interested in using films	7
Total	29

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).





Framework 3 — Difficulties in the use of films by lecturers who did not use them, but are interested in using them

Difficulties in the use of films as an educational tool faced by those who did not use films, but is interested in using (more than one alternative could be selected)	Number/ Figure
Lack of classroom and or/ audiovisual resources adequate to exhibition	10
Lack of films which serve to the aimed educational purposes	7
Difficulty in obtaining films	6
Lack of knowledge on adequate methodologies for working with films as an educational tool	6
Lack of students' interest in using this instrument	2
More than 70 minutes reduce the time for discussion	1
The exhibition of films in the classroom would harm other educational activities	1
I used films on other occasions and had no difficulties	1

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

Framework 4 — Reasons alleged by lecturers who neither used nor have interest in using films

Reasons why films were not used / there is no interest in using films (more than one alternative could be selected)	Number / Figure
They are not adequate resources for the subjects that I teach	3
I think that scholarly books and articles are more efficient resources for education in college;	2
They consume too much time of the class	2
I do not know enough of the methodology for using films as an educational tool	2
There is a lack of physical or technical structure for using films as an educational tool	1

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

Following Graphic 1, it is remarked that the use of films as tools for teaching IR tends to be slightly lower among lecturers with doctorate than among lecturers with mastership. These figures may perhaps be explained from the perspective of a higher degree in confidence held by lecturers with a doctorate in using more traditional means of teaching and learning. It is also possible that lecturers with a lower educational degree, even for compensating an eventual authority stemming from a doctorate, are more concerned in making their taught subjects





more attractive for the students, being ready to establish a dialogue with the current audiovisual production and to use films as an educational tool.

In a nearly counter-intuitive result, in terms of economic development according to Brazilian locations, lectures working in the Northern area of Brazil, followed by those working at the Center-Western region, were those who stated to make the highest degree in using films as educational tools, with respective figures of 80% and 90% of positive answers. Lecturers working in the wealthiest Southeastern area are the next ones, presenting a figure of 85% of these lecturers stating to use films in their subjects. The last stratum was occupied by the Northeast and the South, with respective figures of 82% and 71% of lecturers stating to make use of films as educational tools. In the analysis of specific forms answered by lecturers from the Southern region, the results are that (i) they did not use films and have interest in using them, the most indicated difficulties are “Lack of classroom and/or adequate audiovisual resources for an exhibition” (3 references) and “difficulty in obtaining films” (2 references). Other reasons, such as lack of students’ interest, lack of knowledge on methodologies and lack of films which serve to educational purposes, received one mention each. By analyzing specific forms answered by lectures in the Southern region who (ii) did not use films and have no interest in using them, the most alleged reasons were that (films) “are not adequate resources for the subjects I teach” (2 mentions) and “I think that scholar books and articles are more efficient resources for teaching at college” and “there is a lack of physical or technical structure for using films as an educational tool” (1 mention each). Therefore, it is perceivable that, in addition to those cases in which cinema is not useful for teaching a specific subject (cases in which the lecturer neither uses nor intends to use films), the lack of material resources negatively impacts the use of cinema as an educational tool in the Southern area of Brazil, as seen in both specific and overall answers (Frameworks e and 4 above).

Finally, another variable must be considered to understand the use of films in the classroom in the teaching of IR: the provision of complementary courses or extension activities. In some institutions of higher education exhibitions of cinematographic works are recurrent, if not regular, as a resource for academic debate outside the classroom space, that is, not linked to the content of a specific discipline. Such a resource can work in different ways for the use of cinema in the classroom; by the demand and adhesion of the students, it can be a stimulus to the practices and induce the insertion of films in the disciplinary plans or, on





the other hand, it can curb its use in the classroom by considering that events about cinema and International Relations are already held and has an interested public served. However, preparing a quantitative study on the use of cinema as a complementary formation or as an extension activity, as well as its impact on the use of films for the teaching of IR, is quite a complicated task for two main reasons. First, they are not mandatory activities and depend on the initiatives of student organizations or lecturers who are enthusiastic about the method. Second, many of these activities are not registered in digital systems, have different formats and some are not even disclosed outside the undergraduate course in which they are carried out.

In the next section, which films are used in the teaching of IR and their correspondent goals.

What, when, and with which goal films are used in the teaching of IR in Brazil

Graphic 2 displays that lecturers who resort to films as an educational tool widely use them, both in fiction and documentary, both in the classroom and for in-home activities. This means that, once these lecturers begin to use films in the process of teaching, these lecturers recognize several moments and contexts in which these resources contribute to the educational process.

By considering lecturers who either use films only in the classroom or solely recommend films for in-home activities, it is remarked that there is a preference for handling materials in the classroom. Perhaps this preference is related to the possibility of thinking and debating with students about the exhibited material, for guiding their attention to the goals intended with the use of the film, at the detriment of a more loosen interpretation of the content provided by the film.

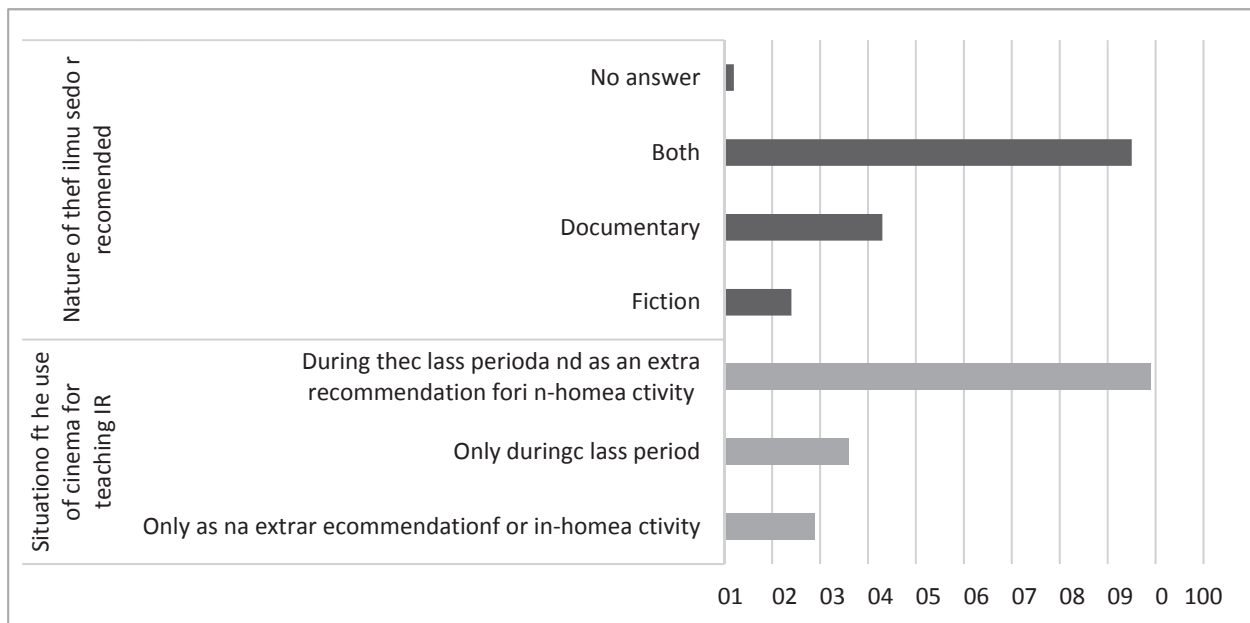
By considering the isolated and sole preference either for documentaries or for fictional films, lecturers prefer documentaries. This preference for documents may be linked to the very own nature of these films: “approaching concepts and questions about which there is a significant social interest or debate” (Nichols 2005,10). In documentaries, there is also a more plural narrative, because, in these works, the specialized literature recognizes that there is an intertwining phenomenon that encompasses at least three components: the filmmaker’s history, the history of the film, and the audience’s history (Nichols 2005, 93). By coupling these elements with the fact that this type of work is generally



aimed at approaching reality — even though a documentary cannot be confused with reality —, the use of documentaries can represent, for the lecturer, a more graphic and more complex tool for approaching a specific topic of content, as it does occur in reality itself.

Regarding the use of documentaries as educational tools, Munster and Sylvest (2015) stated that documentaries have an inherent educational potential, whether for what is displayed or for what is said about a certain event or theme. However, studies performed by Zanella and Neves (2017) with IR students revealed that, under the perspective adopted by students, the mediation provided by lecturers in the use of documentaries is essential for organizing the process of learning, whether through the presentation and previous discussion of the theme or through provoking the student’s stance for facts and relations among actors and driving forces, for instance.

Graphic 2 — Nature of films and context of use for teaching



Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

Regarding the educational goals which are intended in the use or recommendation of films (Graphic 3), 40% of the lectures affirmed to use films in order “to provide additional information on a specific event (e.g.: the UN Peace Mission in Haiti) or on a theme (e.g.: the defense human rights)”. In a way, this reflects the preference by lecturers for documentaries, which add the connection of the content to information and perspectives held by several individuals on a studied reality. Other 40% of lecturers informed to use films mainly in order “to illustrate how a given IR theory, economic school, political

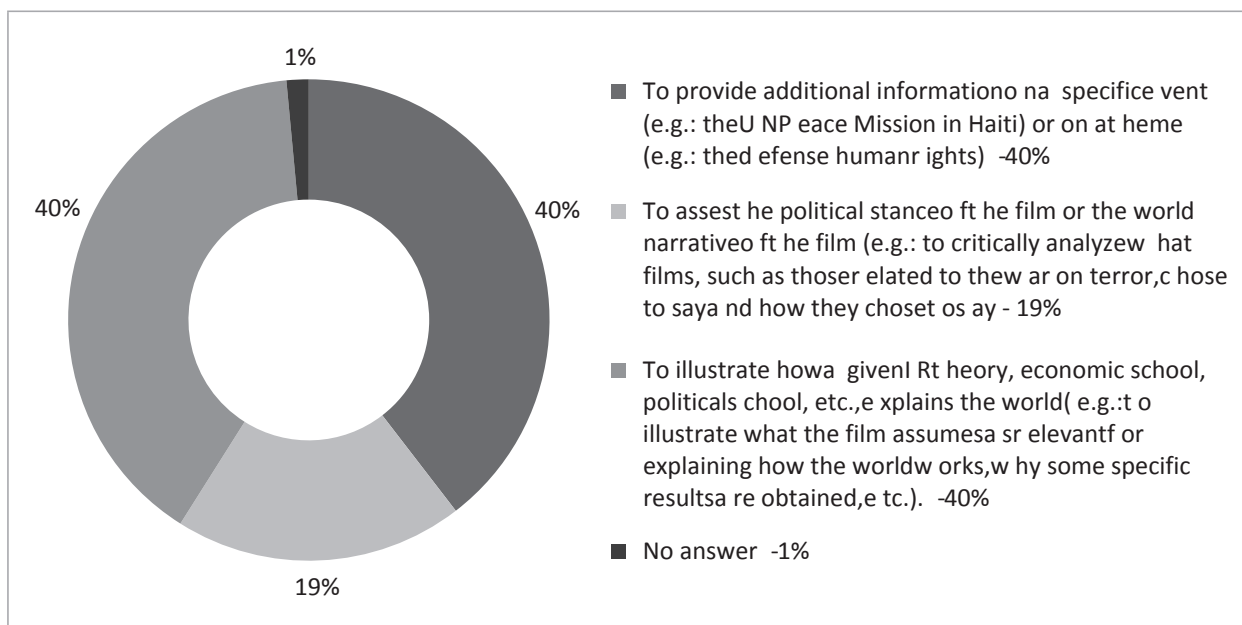




school, etc., explain the world (e.g.: to illustrate what the film assumes as relevant for explaining how the world works, why some specific results are obtained, etc.).” This is related to a demanding approach; and, in our perspective, this is the most difficult educational approach stemming from the cinema. Teaching, in this case, means to drive or to provoke the student’s thinking to go beyond evident information displayed on the screen and therefore reach the set of ideas and cause-effect relations stemming from both the content and the structure of the film. An important example of this approach is the systematic assessment of IR theories through films, in accordance to Cynthia Weber (2014) at the end of each chapter of her book “International Relations Theory: a critical introduction”. This research shows that lecturers in Brazil are committed to developing a similar approach in the classroom. Finally, 19% of the respondents affirmed to use films “to assess the political stance of the movie”, indicating lecturers’ perception that movies carry the perspective of those who create them (Shapiro 2009), a world view, with certain foundations, stereotypes and even purposes.

The perspective of continuity of this research is therefore promising, in the sense of indicating how these lecturers perform this approach.

Graphic 3 — Main educational purpose when using films



Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

Finally, on Framework 5, it is possible to identify great satisfaction from the use of films as an educational tool. The majority of lecturers stated to have fully reached their intended goals. A reduced — albeit non-negligible — number of lecturers indicated the impossibility of assessing whether goals were indeed





reached. This can be ascribed to the recommendation of films as extra material to the addressed content, without being part of the evaluation activity performed by each lecturer. When they were questioned on the difficulties in employing films as educational tools, a majority affirms not to have any difficulty at all in using this tool (Framework 6). Regarding these alleged difficulties, there is some highlight for “lack of classroom and or audiovisual resources adequate for the exhibition” (37 mentions) and “lack of knowledge on adequate methodologies for using films as an educational tool” (27 mentions). By considering that the difficulty in access to resources is circumstantial at each institution where each lecturer works, the methodology is the aspect for which an eventual continuity of this research may contribute.

Framework 5 — Degree of successfulness of using films as an educational tool

Do you think that the defined goals for using or recommending films:	Number / Figure
Were fully reached	87
Were partially reached	36
Were not reached	0
I cannot assess it	9
No answer	2

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

Framework 6 — Difficulties in using films as an educational tool

For who used or recommended films — Which are the main difficulties that you would indicate in the use of films as an educational tool (more than one alternative could be selected):	Number / Figure
I use films and don't have difficulties / at all	56
Lack of classroom and/or audiovisual resources adequate for exhibition	37
Lack of knowledge on adequate methodologies for working films as an educational tool	27
Difficulty in obtaining films	24
Lack of films that serve to the aimed educational purposes	22
Lack of students' interest in the use of this tool	16
This practice is not encouraged by the course or institution	10
There is no time for the full exhibition of the film	3
Other indicated problems (lack of subtitles in Portuguese and internet-connection problems)	2

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).





The following section will summarize some conclusions and indicates the most promising ways to be paved by further research.

Final remarks

With the growth of IR as a field of knowledge in Brazil, there is an equally growing interest in educational matters related to this area. This text has intended to offer a panoramic view on the use of films as an educational tool for teaching IR. Overall, there was a perception that films — especially documentaries — are widely employed as educational resources in IR. However, there are situations in which the use of films is not recommended for addressing IR contents, whether because the content itself has no gains in being studied through cinema, or because the lecturer himself or herself does not know about adequate films for the intended educational goals. In any case, among the major difficulties alleged for the use of films — if it is not the major difficulty itself —, is the lack of a classroom and or audiovisual adequate resources for exhibiting films. In this case, the problem is posed by material resources available by the institution and the students and lecturers themselves can exert some pressure to obtain these resources. Differently, the significant mention by lecturers with difficulties in working with films because of unknowledge on adequate methodologies is one of the important data that emerged from this research, paving a way to be followed in future texts.

In parallel with the growth of the academic field of IR, it is necessary to consider the significant increase in access to films outside of Hollywood circuits to expand the use of cinema as an educational tool. In general, until recently, in countries like Brazil, the universe of films available was limited to a few national productions and a majority of works from major studios in the United States. With the profusion of the internet and streaming platforms, the availability of films of distinct nationalities and with different approaches has considerably expanded. If we add to this change the proliferation of TV series, also coming from nations with little-known film industries, the provision of audiovisual works reaches considerable diversity. This scenario is relevant because one of the problems pointed out by the teachers who answered the questionnaire was the lack of adequate works for the teaching of IR. This lack of adequate films pointed by lecturers from the Global South may be related exactly to the





thematic or narrative perspective inadequacy present in the most easily available films distributed in Brazil. For now, this is a reasoning that we present only as a hypothesis which, added to the adequate methodologies, will deserve better address in a continuation of our research.

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