

POS 4258
Politics in Fiction and Film
Fall 2014

Mr. Craig
209 Anderson Hall
Phone: 273-2377
Office Hours: Tu/Th 10:30-11:30,
We 2:00-3:00, and by appointment
scrcraig@ufl.edu
www.clas.ufl.edu/users/scrcraig/

Novels:

Jeff Greenfield, *The People's Choice* (1995)
Brendan DuBois, *Resurrection Day* (1999)
Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (2004)
Christopher Buckley, *Boomsday* (2007)
Roland Merullo, *American Savior: A Novel of Divine Politics* (2008)
Ralph Reed, *The Confirmation* (2010)

Research articles:

Kenneth Mulligan and Philip Habel, "The Implications of Fictional Media for Political Beliefs," *American Politics Research* (January 2013).
Diana C. Mutz and Lilach Nir, "Not Necessarily the News: Does Fictional Television Influence Real-World Policy Preferences?" *Mass Communication and Society* (2010).
Stanley Feldman and Lee Sigelman, "The Political Impact of Prime-Time Television: 'The Day After,'" *Journal of Politics* (May 1985).
Silvo Lenart and Kathleen M. McGraw, "America Watches 'Amerika': Television Docudrama and Political Attitudes," *Journal of Politics* (August 1989).
R. Lance Holbert et al., "The West Wing as Endorsement of the U.S. Presidency: Expanding the Bounds of Priming in Political Communication," *Journal of Communication* (September 2003).
Michael Pfau et al., "Influence of Prime-Time Television Programming on Perceptions of the Federal Government," *Mass Communication & Society* (2001).

Films:

The Last Hurrah (Spencer Tracy, 1958)
Norma Rae (Sally Field, 1979)
Wag the Dog (Dustin Hoffman/Robert DeNiro, 1997)
Primary Colors (John Travolta, 1998)
Thank You for Smoking (Aaron Eckhart, 2006)
Charlie Wilson's War (Tom Hanks, 2007)
Rendition (Reese Witherspoon/Jake Gyllenhaal, 2007)
Milk (Sean Penn, 2008)
The Hunger Games (Jennifer Lawrence, 2012)
Lincoln (Daniel Day-Lewis, 2012)
The Fifth Estate (Benedict Cumberbatch, 2013)
Opening Day Bonus: *Seven Days in May* (Burt Lancaster, 1964)

Television:

The West Wing (Martin Sheen, selected episodes, 1999-2006)

This course uses the sometimes true but usually make-believe stories told in popular novels and Hollywood motion pictures to provide insights into the nature of real-life politics in the United States. The focus is on *process* (political competition and decision making) rather than *substance* (public policy), and each of the stories we encounter raises issues that are relevant today as they were when the tale was originally told. We will consider, for example, whether the temptations of politics and power are beyond the capacity even of fundamentally decent people to resist; whether the actions of organized interest groups promote or undermine the principles of representative government; whether the media glare of contemporary politics weakens the capacity of our leaders and institutions to govern; and whether modern candidate-centered campaigns pose as great a threat to popular democracy as some critics believe. Our goal is not to use politics as a basis for studying the mass culture; that is a course better taught elsewhere (say, in English or Fine Arts). Instead, we will be using elements of the mass culture as a means for better understanding the character of our politics.

Warning: Several of the assigned books and films contain strong language and/or adult themes. Students who might find this offensive should consider taking another course.

Grades will be based on the following:

Periodic short essays	50 percent
Attendance and participation	30 percent
Thematic Essay/Final Exam	20 percent (due Friday, December 12, 4:00 p.m.)

Students are required to write a short essay (2-3 pages each, featuring issues or themes raised in the book/film) for any four books and any four films (including *The West Wing*) among the titles listed on the previous page; a hard copy of these essays must be turned in at my office (209 Anderson Hall) by 11 a.m. on the Tuesday following our discussion of a book/film. The thematic essay (5-7 pages) involves a similar but somewhat more in-depth review of at least one additional book and one additional film (or two books, or three films) drawn from the supplemental list provided below or approved by the instructor. The nature of these assignments, and of the (optional) final exam, will be discussed more fully in class. All essays will be graded for content and grammar and returned to students with comments.

CAVEAT: With so many choices built into the structure of the course, there is no excuse for failing to complete the required eight short essays. Any missing essay will therefore receive a grade of zero, so don't lose track of where you stand. There will be no opportunities for extra credit at the end. On the other hand . . . Students who complete all eight short essays by November 1 will receive a one-half letter grade bonus on any two of them (their choice, so long as the accompanying quiz grade was not a zero).

THREE MORE CAVEATS: (1) Students may submit only one essay based on an episode of *The West Wing*. (2) Those who write a short report on an assigned film (such as *Primary Colors*) should not choose the original book version for their thematic essay. (3) Although there will be a quiz on the research articles discussed in class on December 3, no written assignment will be accepted for

this topic.

ONE FINAL CAVEAT: In the past, some students have assumed that they are only required to read four books, and to watch four films. This is incorrect: You are expected to read/watch all of the assigned books/films. In an effort to encourage everyone to do so, there will be a pop quiz prior to the discussion of each one. The questions will be simple, and easily answered by anyone who has completed the assignment; there even may be a few occasions when students are invited to submit possible quiz questions. Incorrect answers (or unexcused absences) will be treated as evidence that the work was not done, and taken into account when that portion of your grade based on attendance and participation (see above) is calculated. Further, if someone turns in an essay but fails the quiz for a particular book/film, it will suggest that shortcuts may have been taken in writing the essay – and the grade for that essay will be adjusted accordingly.

Minus grades will (if appropriate) be assigned in this course. Information about grades and grading policies at UF can be found at:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Students are bound by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on the written essays, will suffer appropriate sanctions and be referred to university authorities for further action.

Any student with a handicap or special need should notify me (and coordinate with Student Services at 202 Peabody Hall) as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. Every effort will be made to accommodate your situation within the guidelines set forth by the university.

A class listserv has been established so that I can send you occasional announcements and keep you informed about any changes that might occur in the schedule. You are automatically on the list by virtue of being enrolled in this course. You must, however, be sure either to check the email in your gatorlink account on a regular basis, or to forward all gatorlink messages to an account that you use more frequently.

COURSE OUTLINE

<u>Part 1</u> Aug 27	<u>Introduction</u> General discussion Film: <i>Seven Days in May</i> (118 min., watch/discuss)
<u>Part 2</u> Sep 3	<u>All Politics Is Local</u> Film: <i>The Last Hurrah</i> (121 min., watch/discuss)
<u>Part 3</u> Sep 10 Sep 17	<u>The Political Game</u> Book: <i>The People's Choice</i> (discuss) Film: <i>Primary Colors</i> (144 min., watch) Film: <i>Primary Colors</i> (discuss)

<u>Part 4</u>	<u>Government at Work</u>
Sep 17 (continued)	Film: <i>Charlie Wilson's War</i> (102 min., watch/discuss)
Sep 24	Film: <i>Lincoln</i> (150 min., watch/discuss)
Oct 1	Book: <i>The Confirmation</i> (discuss)
<u>Part 5</u>	<u>Creating Images</u>
Oct 1 (continued)	Film: <i>Wag the Dog</i> (96 min., watch/discuss)
<u>Part 6</u>	<u>Threats at Home and Abroad</u>
Oct 8	Book: <i>Resurrection Day</i> (discuss)
	Film: <i>Rendition</i> (122 min., watch/discuss)
Oct 15	Film: <i>The Fifth Estate</i> (128 min., watch/discuss)
<u>Part 7</u>	<u>Grassroots Politics</u>
Oct 22	Film: <i>Milk</i> (129 min., watch/discuss)
Oct 29	Book: <i>Boomsday</i> (discuss)
<u>Part 8</u>	<u>Special Interests</u>
Oct 29 (continued)	Film: <i>Thank You for Smoking</i> (92 min., watch/discuss)
Nov 5	Film: <i>Norma Rae</i> (110 min., watch/discuss)
<u>Part 9</u>	<u>Could It Happen Here?</u>
Nov 12	Film: <i>The Hunger Games</i> (142 min., watch/discuss)
Nov 19	Book: <i>The Plot Against America</i> (discuss)
<u>Part 10</u>	<u>Culture Wars</u>
Nov 19 (continued)	TV: <i>The West Wing</i> , "Pilot" (watch)
	TV: <i>The West Wing</i> , "The Supremes" (watch)
Nov 26	No class
Dec 3	TV: <i>The West Wing</i> (discuss both episodes)
	Book: <i>American Savior</i> (discuss)
<u>Part 11</u>	<u>Fiction and Political Attitudes</u>
Dec 3 (continued)	Article: "The Implications of Fictional Media" (discuss)
	Article: "Not Necessarily the News" (discuss)
<u>Part 12</u>	<u>End Game</u>
Dec 10	Make-up quizzes, other business TBA
Dec 12 (Friday)	Thematic essays and final exams due

Supplemental List

Books:

Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (1946)
 Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1951)
 Edwin O'Connor, *The Last Hurrah* (1956)
 Allen Drury, *Advise and Consent* (1959)
 Robert A. Heinlein, *Starship Troopers* (1959)
 Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962)
 Irving Wallace, *The Man* (1965) / *The R Document* (1976)
 Gore Vidal, *Washington, D.C.: A Novel* (1967) / *Lincoln: A Novel* (1984)
 William Safire, *Full Disclosure* (1977) / *Scandalmonger* (2000)
 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986)
 John Buckley, *Family Politics* (1988) / *Statute of Limitations* (1990)
 Ward Just, *Jack Gance* (1989) / *Echo House* (1997)
 Christopher Buckley, *Thank You for Smoking* (1994) / *The White House Mess* (1995) / *Florence of Arabia* (2004) / *Supreme Courtship* (2008)
 Anonymous/Joe Klein, *Primary Colors* (1996) / *The Running Mate* (2000)
 Jim Lehrer, *The Last Debate* (1995)
 Charles McCarry, *Shelley's Heart* (1995)
 Ev Ehrlich, *Big Government: A Novel* (1998)
 Tom Lowe, *Spin* (1998)
 S. V. Date, *Smokeout* (2000)
 Richard North Patterson, *Protect and Defend* (2000) / *Balance of Power* (2003) / *The Race* (2007)
 William Kennedy, *Roscoe* (2002)
 Max Barry, *Jennifer Government* (2003)
 Jeffrey Frank, *Bad Publicity: A Novel* (2004)
 David Mizner, *Political Animal* (2004) / *Hartsburg, USA: A Novel* (2007)
 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Power Game: A Washington Novel* (2004)
 Frank M. Robinson/John F. Levin, *The Great Divide* (2004)
 Hannes Artens, *The Writing on the Wall* (2007)
 Brendan DuBois, *Twilight* (2007)
 Jeffrey Frank, *Trudy Hopedale* (2007)
 Jamie Malanowski, *The Coup* (2007)
 Thomas Mallon, *Fellow Travelers* (2007)
 Tom Perrotta, *The Abstinence Teacher* (2007)
 Dennis Lehane, *The Given Day* (2008)
 Ralph Reed, *Dark Horse: A Political Thriller* (2008)
 Curtis Sittenfeld, *American Wife: A Novel* (2008)
 Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008, 2009, 2010)
 John Birmingham, *Without Warning* (2009)
 Allan Airish, *The Faithless: A Political Thriller* (2012)
 Thomas Mallon, *Watergate: A Novel* (2012)

Movies and TV:

The Birth of a Nation (Lillian Gish, 1915, 180-minute version)
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (James Stewart, 1939)

All the King's Men (Broderick Crawford, 1949) / (Sean Penn 2006)
A Face in the Crowd (Andy Griffith, 1957)
Advise and Consent (Henry Fonda, 1962)
The Manchurian Candidate (Frank Sinatra, 1962) / (Denzel Washington, 2004)
The Best Man (Henry Fonda, 1964)
Dr. Strangelove (Peter Sellers, 1964)
Fail Safe (Henry Fonda, 1964)
Z (Yves Montand, 1969)
The Candidate (Robert Redford, 1972)
The Conversation (Gene Hackman, 1974)
The Parallax View (Warren Beatty, 1974)
All the President's Men (Robert Redford/Dustin Hoffman, 1976).
Network (Faye Dunaway, 1976)
Being There (Peter Sellers, 1979)
The Seduction of Joe Tynan (Alan Alda/Meryl Streep, 1979).
Missing (Jack Lemmon/Sissy Spacek, 1982)
Silkwood (Meryl Streep/Cher, 1983)
Power (Richard Gere, 1986)
Betrayed (Debra Winger/Tom Berenger, 1988)
Born on the Fourth of July (Tom Cruise, 1989)
Guilty by Suspicion (Robert DeNiro, 1991)
Bob Roberts (Tim Robbins, 1992)
Hoffa (Jack Nicholson, 1992)
The American President (Michael Douglas, 1995)
Nixon (Anthony Hopkins, 1995)
City Hall (Al Pacino/John Cusack, 1996)
The Politician's Wife (Juliet Stevenson, 1996)
Bulworth (Warren Beatty, 1998)
Pleasantville (Tobey Maguire, 1998)
The Insider (Al Pacino/Russell Crowe, 1999).
The Contender (Joan Allen, 2000)
Deterrence (Kevin Pollack, 2000)
Erin Brockovich (Julia Roberts, 2000)
Thirteen Days (Kevin Costner, 2000).
The Day Reagan Was Shot (Richard Dreyfuss, 2001)
Path to War (Michael Gambon/Donald Sutherland, 2002)
The Quiet American (Michael Caine/Brendan Fraser, 2002)
State of Play (James MacAvoy, 2003) / (Russell Crowe, 2009)
Silver City (Chris Cooper, 2004)
Good Night, and Good Luck (David Strathairn, 2005)
Syriana (George Clooney, 2005)
Babel (Brad Pitt, 2006)
Children of Men (Clive Owen, 2006)
The State Within (Jason Isaacs, 2006)

V for Vendetta (Natalie Portman, 2006)
Body of Lies (Leonardo DiCaprio/Russell Crowe, 2008)
Frost/Nixon (Frank Langella/Michael Sheen, 2008)
Nothing But the Truth (Kate Beckinsale, 2008)
Recount (Kevin Spacey, 2008)
W. (Josh Brolin, 2008)
District 9 (Sharlto Copley, 2009)
Fair Game (Naomi Watts/Sean Penn, 2010)
Casino Jack (Kevin Spacey, 2010)
The Company Men (Ben Affleck, 2010)
The Conspirator (James McAvoy, 2011)
The Ides of March (Ryan Gosling/George Clooney, 2011)
Too Big to Fail (William Hurt/Paul Giamatti, 2011)
Boss (TV, Kelsey Grammer, 2011-12)
The Newsroom (TV, Jeff Daniels, 2012)
Argo (Ben Affleck, 2012)
The Company You Keep (Robert Redford, 2012)
Elysium (Matt Damon, 2013)
House of Cards (TV, Kevin Spacey 2013)
Cesar Chavez (Michael Peña, 2014)

Note: Students may be tempted to take advantage of the large number of book and movie reviews that are available on the internet. In an effort to remove that temptation, all written assignments must be submitted to an online plagiarism service called turnitin.com. Here is how it works:

The first step is that you need to create a student profile:

1. go to www.turnitin.com
2. click on create user profile
3. fill in your personal email address
4. fill in your personal password
5. type of user: choose student
6. enter class ID (8230429) and password (thumbsup)
7. follow instructions

To log in after creating profile:

1. enter your personal email and password in the box on the upper right hand corner of the home page www.turnitin.com
2. click on POS 4258
3. from there you can submit your paper, just like adding an attachment to an email

Each essay has its own assignment folder. The procedure that you should follow is to (1) give a hard copy of the essay to me during class on the designated date, and (2) submit an electronic copy to turnitin.com at some point on the same day. Any assignment that is turned in late (without approval

of the instructor) will be penalized. Any assignment that does **not** constitute original work by the author will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct.

