

**POS 4258: Politics in Fiction and Film**

**Class Periods:** Wednesday periods 6-8, 12:50-3:50 pm ET

**Location:** Zoom (id circulated in Canvas) and LIT 101

**Academic Term:** Spring 2021

**Instructor:**

Stephen C. Craig

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(352) 273-2377 (infrequently monitored in Spring 2021)

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:00, Wednesday 11:00-12:30, and by appointment, Zoom id 831-661-6708

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**Assigned Works:**

Books (5):

Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (2004)

Roland Merullo, *American Savior: A Novel of Divine Politics* (2008)

David Pepper, *The People's House* (2016)

Thomas Mullen, *Lightning Men* (2017)

Tom Rosenstiel, *Oppo* (2019)

Each of these titles can be purchased either new or (more cheaply) used on amazon.com. All except *American Savior* are available on kindle. If you choose to buy from a private seller, keep in mind that delivery could take up to two weeks or more.

Research articles (2):

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).

A copy of these articles (which also can be accessed directly through Smathers Library) are posted in the Files folder on Canvas (<https://elearning.ufl.edu>).

Films (16):

*All the President's Men* (Robert Redford/Dustin Hoffman, 1976)

*Guilty by Suspicion* (Robert DeNiro, 1991)

*Wag the Dog* (Dustin Hoffman/Robert DeNiro, 1997)

*Primary Colors* (John Travolta, 1998)

*Milk* (Sean Penn, 2008)

*Lincoln* (Daniel Day-Lewis, 2012)

*Eye in the Sky* (Helen Mirren, 2015)

*Sicario* (Emily Blunt, 2015)

*Spotlight* (Michael Keaton/Rachel McAdams, 2015)

*Suffragette* (Carey Mulligan, 2015)

*Snowden* (Joseph Gordon-Levitt, 2016)

*Detroit* (John Boyega, 2017)

*The Post* (Tom Hanks/Meryl Streep, 2017)

*The Front Runner* (Hugh Jackman, 2018)

*Bombshell* (Charlize Theron/Nicole Kidman/Margot Robbie, 2019)

*The Hunt* (Betty Gilpin/Hilary Swank, 2019)

All titles can be streamed on amazon prime, though some are only available for purchase (not rental) or are free with a 7-day trial subscription to HBO or Starz. New and used copies of the dvd's for these films also can be purchased either directly from amazon or from private sellers (again, take the delivery window for the latter into account when ordering).

Television (1):

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

You can stream this series on Netflix or purchase it (dvd or streaming) on amazon prime.

### **Course Overview:**

This course uses the sometimes true but other times 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 mainly on *process* (political competition and decision making) rather than *substance* (policy), and each of the stories we encounter raises issues that are as 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: Some of the assigned books and films contain strong language and/or adult themes. Students who might find these things offensive should consider taking another course.

Several changes have been made in this course to accommodate the fact that it is being taught online. In the past, much class time was spent watching an assigned film and then discussing it immediately after. With the online (or hybrid) version, students must access and watch films on their own, with breakout groups being created during the designated class period to allow for discussion.

Realistically, however, a 3-hour discussion is unlikely to hold anyone's attention from start to finish. As a result, I will spend some time at the beginning of each class session "lecturing" (though I use this term loosely) on one or two topics related to the week's assigned works – after which we will move to breakout sessions. Discussion will also be facilitated by (a) talk points written by students and distributed by me to the class and (b) one or more (usually) short internet articles relating to the week's theme(s) that everyone is expected to read and be prepared to comment on. Additional information about how this is going to work will be provided at our first meeting on January 13.

Another change is that students will be required to watch more films – but also write fewer short essays (5 rather than 8) – than in the past. Looking at the course overview, you will see that the semester begins at a fairly leisurely pace: an introductory session (during which students will be able to ask questions) in week #1 followed by a discussion of just one movie, *Lincoln*, in week #2. After that, however, two works (either two films, or one film and one book) are assigned in most weeks. Since it takes longer to read a book than it does to watch a movie, book discussions are scheduled 2-3 weeks apart.

### **Grades:**

Grades will be based on the following:

Periodic short essays	50 percent
Class participation	20 percent
Thematic Essay/Final Exam	30 percent (due Friday, April 23, 4:00 p.m.)

Minus grades will (if appropriate) be assigned in this course. Information about grades and grading policies at UF can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

The nature of the different components on which your grade will be based are as follows:

**Short essays:** Students will submit a 2-page essay (**single-spaced**, 12-point font, with a **bibliography** at the end that is not included in the page count) on five assigned works, at least two of which must be books. Your essay, which is due one week after we discuss the work in class, should examine one or (at most) two important themes raised in or suggested by the film/book. If multiple works assigned for a particular week are connected in a way that you find interesting, then you're free to reference both – but don't force the issue unless the connection makes sense. Strong essays from past students will be posted from time to time on Canvas to give you a better sense of what I'm looking for. In the meantime, here are some basic guidelines that you may find helpful:

- do not summarize at length (assume that I've read/watched the works you're writing about);
- do not review the book/film, except insofar as you think that it does or does not provide insights into the governmental or political process in the United States;
- do not simply regurgitate points made by myself or by other students during class discussion – bring some insight(s) of your own to the task; at the same time . . .
- purely personal opinions are bad (e.g., you're opposed to the U.S. using nuclear weapons), analytical discussions are good (e.g., what does the book/film tell us about the likelihood that such weapons will be used in a particular situation, or about the political consequences if they are used);
- try to focus on a single theme (two at the most, and only if they're related) so that you're able to do it justice;
- referencing outside sources isn't required, but it can strengthen your essay – especially if you're dealing with a topic about which you have little personal knowledge (e.g., the Cuban Missile Crisis);
- cite any book, article, internet source, film, TV show, or idea that is not your own; moreover . . .
- any assertion or observation that you make requires a supporting reference unless it is "common knowledge," e.g., Donald Trump was elected president in 2016 (a known fact) vs. the possibility that media coverage may have contributed to his success (supporting reference needed); and
- always remember that your challenge is to discuss the political process and government through the prism of what you have watched and read; making connections to the real world is very important here, i.e., provide examples (all the better if they're not the most obvious ones).

Essays should be submitted to the appropriate Assignments folder in Canvas **no later than 1 p.m.** on the day they are due. In most cases, they will be read, graded, and returned to students within a week of their completion. **Anything submitted after the deadline will be penalized up to one full letter grade, plus one additional letter grade if turned in the following day – after which the essay will not be read or graded at all.** With so many choices built into the structure of the course, there is no excuse for failing to complete all five 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. There are two key dates to remember here:

- to encourage you not to procrastinate, and to save me from having to read an ungodly number of essays at the end, at least three of your short essays (including one that is based on a book) must be completed and turned in by **March 24**; a further incentive for you to get an early start is that . . .

- students who complete their five required essays by **March 10** will receive a one-half letter grade bonus on either the thematic essay or final exam (whichever you choose to do).

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

Class Participation: As this is not a lecture course *per se* but instead relies heavily on discussion, the challenge is to find an approach that works with the (mostly) online format. As noted earlier, it is not realistic to expect that we would be able to maintain a free-flowing give-and-take for our full 3-hour running time on Wednesday afternoons. My solution is, first, to begin each class by presenting some ideas that might provide food for thought when we shift into discussion mode.

In addition, students are expected to develop at least one talk point for each assigned work by **5 p.m. the day prior to our class discussion on Wednesday**. Talk points should (a) be substantive, i.e., dealing with an issue raised by the book/film rather than bad acting, continuity errors, or anything along those lines; and (b) go beyond simply posing a question (what do you think of so-and-so? is this or that aspect of the book/film realistic?). While asking a well-thought-out question is fine, let me know what you think the answer to that question might be. Each talk point should be presented in a single-spaced (12-point font), full-bodied paragraph where you briefly – but not too briefly – present your thought(s) regarding whatever the topic happens to be. Failure to follow these guidelines will have the same result as not submitting talk points at all: You will receive a zero for the assignment. **Talk points should be submitted to the appropriate Assignments folder in Canvas by the deadline noted above. They will be reviewed and some will be shared with the class as possible discussion topics.**

Participation in class is fundamental since improving oral conversation skills is a key objective of the course. Thus, students are required to have their cameras on from start to finish during our classes on Zoom. A default setting for those sessions is that participants will be muted when they enter, so you will unmute yourself when you comment orally during our whole-group conversations and when you are in small groups. I may also ask students to reply in the chat box for specific activities. Oral comments on camera and written comments in the chat box are considered activities for participation. If you have technical issues, please immediately consult UF IT Help to resolve them and then contact me so that I will be aware of your situation. **Zoom sessions will not be recorded by the instructor and may not be recorded by students.** As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded material is prohibited.

Final Exam/Thematic Essay: Although the thematic essay (5-6 **single-spaced** pages in length) is similar to the weekly essays, it involves a more in-depth discussion of at least one additional book and one additional film (or two books, or three films) drawn from the supplemental list provided in the course syllabus or approved by the instructor. The word thematic is important here: The works you select should be substantively linked in some reasonably clear-cut way. I will be happy to discuss this more fully with students later in the semester, though after you write a few shorter essays it should not be too difficult to figure out how to approach the assignment. The final exam will be open-book, take-home, and in essay format. Questions will ask you to explain which assigned works best illustrate a particular idea, and whether those works are realistic in their portrayal of contemporary American politics.

Students often ask me to explain the difference between a thematic essay and a take-home final exam. To me, it's fairly straightforward: While both require you to discuss broad themes relevant to politics today, (a) the essay means a little more work but allows you to control the agenda; in contrast, (b) the exam does not require any additional reading or movie-watching on your part but allows me to determine what you

write about. If it were me, I'd probably opt for the essay – but it's your call as to which approach you're most comfortable with.

Also note the following:

- Students may submit only one essay based on an episode (or on both episodes) of *The West Wing*.
- Those who write a short report on an assigned film (such as *Primary Colors*) should not choose the corresponding book version for their thematic essay.
- For the two research articles to be discussed in class on April 21, I will ask some specific questions that you should answer and submit as your "talk points" for the week. **These articles are not eligible for short essay topics** (stick with the movies/TV and books).
- If you cite one or more outside sources in any of your essays, be sure to include an alphabetical list of references at the end just as you would with a term paper in another class. In-text cites should take the following form: (Craig 2020) – do not use footnotes or insert full article/book titles in the text. If I want to know what (Craig 2020) is, I should be able to find out by looking at your list of references.
- For all written assignments, the only thing that should appear at the top of page one is your name. **Do not include the course number, my name, the date, a title for your essay, or any other information.**
- Before submitting any written assignment, review it carefully for errors in spelling, grammar, and/or capitalization. Regarding the latter, here is a partial list of terms that should be capitalized: Democrat (or Democratic Party), Republican (or Republican Party), Congress, Senate, House of Representatives, Supreme Court, White House, First Amendment, and the proper name of any individual. Terms that should not be capitalized include: president, vice president, senator, congressman/women, governor (unless these are used as a title, e.g., President Biden), and constitution. Also, be sure to use paragraph breaks as appropriate; paragraphs that run on for the better part of a page (or longer) and encompass more than one topic are difficult to read and will put your instructor in a grumpy mood as he decides what grade to assign to your work.

#### **Some concluding points:**

- Attendance either in class or via Zoom with cameras turned on is required. Students who can reasonably anticipate an absence should inform me by email as soon as is practical and prior to the anticipated absence. Absences may be excused with documentation of a University, military, or legal obligation, illness, or bereavement.
- 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.
- There will be times when I need to communicate with the class as a group. In those instances, I will do so either through Outlook (using a listserv) or, more often, via Canvas. Students should check their incoming mail regularly so as not to miss any important information. The best way for students to connect with me directly is through Outlook ([scrcraig@ufl.edu](mailto:scrcraig@ufl.edu)). If a reply is needed, I will try to get back to you fairly quickly.
- *A word about office hours:* Students who wish to talk with me should sign in via Zoom (my personal ID is 831-661-6708) during the hours indicated above. You will then be placed in a "waiting room" and I will get to you in the order of your arrival. If you are unable to connect with me during office hours, or if you wish to discuss matters that are confidential, feel free to request a one-on-one meeting and we will determine a time that works for both of us.
- Students who are enrolled in the F2F section should have been tested for COVID-19 by January 10 and cleared to be on campus. Anyone who has not been cleared by the day of class will not be allowed to attend. For those who do attend, you are responsible for cleaning your seat areas both before and after class.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### January 13

- General discussion

### January 20

- Film: *Lincoln*
- Sidney Blumenthal, "Sidney Blumenthal on How Lincoln Played the Political Game to Win," *Newsweek* (10/15/12).
- Bill Scher, "What Warren and Sanders Get Wrong about FDR," *Politico* (11/1/19).
- Ken Rudin, "Assessing Ronald Reagan at 100," *npr.org* (2/4/11).
- Jonathan Bernstein, "The Presidency Is All About Politics," *Washington Post* (8/29/12).

### January 27

- Film: *Guilty by Suspicion*
- Book: *The Plot Against America*
- Krishnadev Calamur, "A Short History of 'America First,'" *The Atlantic* (1/21/17).
- Jeffrey Frank, "The Willkie What-If: F.D.R.'s Hybrid-Party Plot," *The New Yorker* (7/28/15).

### February 3

- Film: *All the President's Men*
- Film: *The Post*
- Mark Jurkowitz et al., "U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided," Pew Research Center (1/24/20).
- Stephen J. Ceci and Wendy M. Williams, "The Psychology of Fact-Checking," *Scientific American* (10/25/20).

### February 10

- Film: *The Hunt*
- Book: *Oppo*
- Lee Drutman, "How Hatred Came to Dominate American Politics," *fivethirtyeight.com* (10/5/20).
- Arie W. Kruglanski/Robert B. Talisse, "Can Joe Biden 'Heal' the United States? Political Experts Disagree," *The Conversation* (12/20/20).
- Ross Butters and Christopher Hare, "Three-Fourths of Americans Regularly Talk Politics Only with Members of Their Own Political Tribe," *Monkey Cage* (5/1/17).

### February 17

- Film: *Primary Colors*
- Film: *Milk*
- Jill Lepore, "The Lie Factory: How Politics Became a Business," *The New Yorker* (9/24/12).
- Samantha Schmidt, "Americans' Views Flipped on Gay Rights. How Did Minds Change So Quickly?" *Washington Post* (6/7/19).

### February 24

- Film: *Eye in the Sky*
- Film: *Sicario*

- Lauren Cassani Davis, "Would You Pull the Trolley Switch? Does It Matter?" *The Atlantic* (10/9/15).
- Ron James et al., "No, Americans Don't Support Airstrikes That Kill Civilians, Even When They Target Terrorists," *Monkey Cage* (5/6/19).

### March 3

- Film: *Detroit*
- Book: *Lightning Men*
- Michael Tesler, "Support for Black Lives Matter Surged during Protests, But Is Waning among White Americans," *fivethirtyeight.com* (8/19/20).
- Meredith Conroy and Perry Bacon, Jr., "There's a Huge Gap in How Republicans and Democrats See Discrimination," *fivethirtyeight.com* (6/17/20).

### March 10

- Film: *Suffragette*
- Film: *Bombshell*
- Erin C. Cassese et al., "How 'Hostile Sexism' Came to Shape Our Politics," *Monkey Cage* (10/2/18).
- Kathryn Casteel and Andrea Jones-Rooy, "We Need a Better Way to Talk about 'Sexual Misconduct,'" *fivethirtyeight.com* (4/17/18).

### March 17

- Book: *The People's House*
- Film: *Snowden*
- David E. Sanger et al., "Amid Pandemic and Upheaval, New Cyberthreats to the Presidential Election," *New York Times* (6/10/20).
- Alex Tausanovitch and Danielle Root, "How Partisan Gerrymandering Limits Voting Rights," Center for American Progress (7/8/20).

### March 24

- No class: Recharge Day (at least three of your five short essays must be completed by this date)

### March 31

- Film: *The Front Runner*
- Film: *Spotlight*
- Lisa Lerer, "In the Age of Trump, Can Scandal Still Sink a Politician?" *New York Times* (12/4/18).
- Aaron Blake, "A New Study Suggests Fake News Might Have Won Donald Trump the 2016 Election," *Washington Post* (4/3/18).

### April 7

- TBA

### April 14

- TV: *The West Wing*, "Pilot" (S01 E01) and "The Supremes" (S05 E17)
- Book: *American Savior*
- Jeremiah J. Castle et al., "Why Young White Evangelicals Aren't Likely to Leave the Republican Party," *Monkey Cage* (9/3/19).
- Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux and Laura Bronner, "Why Democrats Struggle to Mobilize a 'Religious Left,'" *fivethirtyeight.com* (5/29/19).

- note that students may write only one essay on *The West Wing*

#### April 21

- Film: *Wag the Dog*
- 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).
- research articles cannot be used for a written book (or film) essay
- final exam will be posted on Canvas immediately after class

#### April 23

- Thematic essays and final exams are due.

### **Supplemental List for Thematic Essays:**

#### 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)  
 Joe Klein (Anonymous), *Primary Colors* (1996) / *The Running Mate* (2000)  
 Jim Lehrer, *The Last Debate* (1995)  
 Jeff Greenfield, *The People's Choice* (1995)  
 Ev Ehrlich, *Big Government: A Novel* (1998)  
 Tom Lowe, *Spin* (1998)  
 Brendan DuBois, *Resurrection Day* (1999)  
 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)  
 Hannes Artens, *The Writing on the Wall* (2007)  
 Christopher Buckley, *Boomsday* (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) / *The Confirmation* (2010)  
 Curtis Sittenfeld, *American Wife: A Novel* (2008)  
 William R. Forstchen, *One Second After* (2009)  
 Allan Irish, *The Faithless: A Political Thriller* (2012)  
 Thomas Mallon, *Watergate: A Novel* (2012)  
 Steven Jacques, *Advance Man* (2014)  
 James R. Duncan, *Blood Republic: A Political Thriller* (2016)  
 Thomas Mullen, *Darktown* (2016)  
 Stuart Stevens, *The Innocent Have Nothing to Fear: A Novel* (2016)  
 Jennifer Close, *The Hopefuls* (2016)  
 Ben H. Winters, *Underground Airlines* (2016)  
 Jake Tapper, *The Hellfire Club* (2018)  
 David Pepper, *The Wingman* (2018); *The Voter File* (2020)

#### Movies and TV:

*The Birth of a Nation* (Lillian Gish, 1915, 180-minute version)  
*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (James Stewart, 1939)  
*The Grapes of Wrath* (Henry Fonda, 1940)  
*All the King's Men* (Broderick Crawford, 1949) / (Sean Penn 2006)  
*Born Yesterday* (Judy Holliday/Broderick Crawford, 1950)  
*A Face in the Crowd* (Andy Griffith, 1957)  
*The Last Hurrah* (Spencer Tracy, 1958)  
*Advise and Consent* (Henry Fonda, 1962)  
*The Manchurian Candidate* (Frank Sinatra, 1962) / (Denzel Washington, 2004)  
*The Best Man* (Henry Fonda/Cliff Robertson, 1964)  
*Dr. Strangelove* (Peter Sellers, 1964)  
*Fail Safe* (Henry Fonda, 1964)  
*Seven Days in May* (Kirk Douglas/Burt Lancaster, 1964)  
*The Candidate* (Robert Redford, 1972)  
*The Conversation* (Gene Hackman, 1974)  
*The Parallax View* (Warren Beatty, 1974)  
*Network* (Faye Dunaway, 1976)  
*Being There* (Peter Sellers, 1979)  
*Norma Rae* (Sally Field, 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)  
*Matewan* (Chris Cooper/James Earl Jones, 1987)  
*RoboCop* (Peter Weller, 1987)  
*Betrayed* (Debra Winger/Tom Berenger, 1988)  
*Born on the Fourth of July* (Tom Cruise, 1989)  
*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)  
*Lone Star* (Chris Cooper/Kris Kristofferson, 1996)  
*Bulworth* (Warren Beatty, 1998)  
*Pleasantville* (Tobey Maguire, 1998)  
*Election* (Reese Witherspoon, 1999)  
*The Insider* (Al Pacino/Russell Crowe, 1999)  
*The Contender* (Joan Allen, 2000)  
*Deterrence* (Kevin Pollack, 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)  
*Silver City* (Chris Cooper, 2004)  
*Good Night, and Good Luck* (David Strathairn, 2005)  
*Syriana* (George Clooney, 2005)  
*Babel* (Brad Pitt, 2006)  
*Thank You for Smoking* (Aaron Eckhart, 2006)  
*The State Within* (Jason Isaacs, 2006)  
*V for Vendetta* (Natalie Portman, 2006)  
*Charlie Wilson's War* (Tom Hanks, 2007)  
*The Kingdom* (Jamie Foxx/Jennifer Garner, 2007)  
*Rendition* (Reese Witherspoon/Jake Gyllenhaal, 2007)  
*Body of Lies* (Leonardo DiCaprio/Russell Crowe, 2008)  
*Frost/Nixon* (Frank Langella/Michael Sheen, 2008)  
*Nothing But the Truth* (Kate Beckinsale, 2008)  
*Recount: The Story of the 2000 Presidential Election* (Kevin Spacey, 2008)  
*W.* (Josh Brolin, 2008)  
*District 9* (Sharlto Copley, 2009)  
*State of Play* (Russell Crowe, 2009)  
*Casino Jack* (Kevin Spacey, 2010)  
*Fair Game* (Naomi Watts/Sean Penn, 2010)  
*The Company Men* (Ben Affleck, 2010)  
*The Ides of March* (Ryan Gosling/George Clooney, 2011)  
*The Iron Lady* (Meryl Streep, 2011)  
*Too Big to Fail* (William Hurt/Paul Giamatti, 2011)  
*Boss* season one (TV/Starz, Kelsey Grammer, 2011)  
*Game Change* (Julianne Moore, 2012)  
*The Newsroom* season one (TV/HBO, Jeff Daniels, 2012)  
*Argo* (Ben Affleck, 2012)  
*The Company You Keep* (Robert Redford, 2012)  
*Elysium* (Matt Damon, 2013)  
*The Fifth Estate* (Benedict Cumberbatch, 2013)  
*House of Cards* season one (TV/Netflix, Kevin Spacey, 2013)  
*Cesar Chavez* (Michael Peña, 2014)  
*Selma* (David Oyelowo, 2014)  
*Snowpiercer* (Chris Evans, 2014)  
*Madam Secretary*, season one (TV/CBS, Téa Leoni, 2014-15)  
*Our Brand Is Crisis* (Sandra Bullock, 2015)

*The Runner* (Nicholas Cage, 2015)  
*Trumbo* (Bryan Cranston, 2015)  
*Truth* (Cate Blanchett/Robert Redford, 2015)  
*All the Way* (Bryan Cranston, 2016)  
*The Birth of a Nation* (Nate Parker, 2016)  
*Confirmation* (Kerry Washington, 2016)  
*The Handmaid's Tale* season one (TV/Hulu, Elisabeth Moss, 2016)  
*Miss Sloane* (Jessica Chastain, 2016)  
*Chappaquiddick* (Jason Clarke, 2017)  
*The Circle* (Emma Watson/Tom Hanks, 2017)  
*Get Out* (Daniel Kaluuya, 2017)  
*Blackkklansman* (John David Washington/Adam Driver, 2018)  
*On the Basis of Sex* (Felicity Jones, 2018)  
*The Hate U Give* (Amandla Stenberg, 2018)  
*Vice* (Christian Bale/Amy Adams, 2018)  
*Dark Waters* (Mark Ruffalo, 2019)  
*Just Mercy* (Michael B. Jordan, 2019)  
*The Assistant* (Julia Garner 2020)  
*Irresistible* (Steve Carell, 2020)  
*The Trial of the Chicago 7* (Eddie Redmayne, Mark Rylance, 2020)