

POS 4258
Politics in Fiction and Film
Fall 2006

Mr. Craig
209 Anderson Hall
Phone: 392-0262, ext. 285
Office Hours: Tu-Th 10:30-1:30 p.m.,
and by appointment
sccraig@ufl.edu
www.clas.ufl.edu/users/scraig/

Novels:

John Buckley, *Family Politics* (1988; out of print)
Ward Just, *Jack Gance* (1989)
Christopher Buckley, *Thank You for Smoking* (1994)
Jeff Greenfield, *The People's Choice* (1995)
Jim Lehrer, *The Last Debate* (1995)
Tom Lowe, *Spin* (1998)
Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (2004)

Movies:

The Candidate (Robert Redford, 1972)
All the President's Men (Robert Redford/Dustin Hoffman, 1976)
Guilty by Suspicion (Robert DeNiro, 1991)
City Hall (Al Pacino/John Cusack, 1996)
Wag the Dog (Dustin Hoffman/Robert DeNiro, 1997)
Primary Colors (John Travolta, 1998)
Deterrence (Kevin Pollack, 2000)
The Day Reagan Was Shot (Richard Dreyfuss, 2001)
The Quiet American (Michael Caine/Brendan Fraser, 2002)
All the King's Men (Sean Penn, 2006)

Television:

The West Wing (Martin Sheen, selected episodes)

This course uses the 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 will 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 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 represent 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	25 percent
Thematic Essay	25 percent (due Thursday, December 7, 4:00 p.m.)
or Final exam (essay)	25 percent (due Tuesday, December 12, 9:00 a.m.)

Students are required to write a short essay (2-3 pages each, involving analysis of issues 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; these essays must be turned in at the next class meeting following our discussion of that particular book or film. The thematic essay (5-7 pages) involves a similar but slightly 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 being built into the structure of the course, there is no excuse for failing to complete the required eight short essays. For each missing essay, your overall grade for the course will be dropped by one full letter grade (e.g., from an A to a B if you turn in seven of the eight, from an A to a C if you turn in six of the eight, and so on). Don't lose track of where you stand because there will be no opportunities for extra credit at the end.

ANOTHER CAVEAT: In the past, some students have assumed that they are only required to read four books, and to watch four films. This assumption 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 whenever a book or film is discussed. The questions will be simple, and easily answered by anyone who has done the assigned work. Incorrect answers (or unexcused absences) will be taken as evidence that the work was not done, and will be taken into account when that portion of your grade based on attendance and participation (see above) is calculated.

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

Part 1

Aug 24 (Th)

Introduction

General discussion

Part 2

Aug 29 (Tu)

Aug 31 (Th)

Sep 5 (Tu)

On the Campaign Trail

Film: *The Candidate* (watch)

Film: *The Candidate*, continued (watch)/class shortened

Film: *The Candidate* (discuss)

Part 3

Sep 7 (Th)

Sep 12 (Tu)

Sep 14 (Th)

Creating Images

Film: *Wag the Dog* (watch)

Film: *Wag the Dog* (discuss)

Book: *Thank You for Smoking* (discuss)

Part 4

Sep 14 (Th, continued)

Sep 19 (Tu)

Sep 21 (Th)

The Political Game

Film: *Primary Colors* (watch)

Film: *Primary Colors* (discuss)

Book: *Spin* (discuss)

Part 5

Sep 21 (Th, continued)

Sep 26 (Tu)

Sep 28 (Th)

Freedom of the Press

Film: *All the President's Men* (watch)

Film: *All the President's Men*, continued (watch)

Film: *All the President's Men* (discuss)

Book: *The Last Debate* (discuss)

Part 6

Oct 3 (Tu)

Oct 5 (Th)

Oct 10 (Tu)

The Arrogance of Power

Film: *The Quiet American* (watch)

Film: *The Quiet American*, continued (watch and discuss)

Film: *All the King's Men* (discuss)

Part 7

Oct 12 (Th)

Oct 17 (Tu)

Oct 19 (Th)

Oct 24 (Tu)

Government at Work

Film: *The Day Reagan Was Shot* (watch)

Film: *The Day Reagan Was Shot* (discuss)

TV: *The West Wing*, "The Supremes" (watch and discuss)

Book: *The People's Choice* (discuss)

Part 8

Oct 26 (Th)

Oct 31 (Tu)

Nov 2 (Th)

Nov 7 (Tu)

Nov 9 (Th)

Threats at Home and Abroad

Film: *Deterrence* (watch)

Film: *Deterrence* (discuss)

Film: *Guilty by Suspicion* (watch)

Film: *Guilty by Suspicion* (discuss)

Book: *The Plot Against America* (discuss)

Part 9

Personal Portraits

Nov 9 (Th, continued) TV: *The West Wing*, "Abu el Banat" (watch and discuss)
Nov 14 (Tu) Book: *Jack Gance* (discuss)

Part 10 The Politics of Character
Nov 16 (Th) Film: *City Hall* (watch)
Nov 21 (Tu) Film: *City Hall* (discuss)
Nov 23 (Th) Thanksgiving
Nov 28 (Tu) Book: *Family Politics* (discuss)

Part 11 Overview
Nov 30 (Th) Student reports on thematic essays
Dec 5 (Tu) TBA

Supplemental List

Books:

Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (1946)
Edwin O'Connor, *The Last Hurrah* (1956)
Allen Drury, *Advise and Consent* (1959)
Irving Wallace, *The Man* (1965)
Gore Vidal, *Washington, D.C.: A Novel* (1967) / *Lincoln: A Novel* (1984)
John Buckley, *Statute of Limitations* (1990)
Christopher Buckley, *The White House Mess* (1995)
Anonymous/Joe Klein, *Primary Colors* (1996) / *The Running Mate* (2000)
Ward Just, *Echo House* (1997)
Ev Ehrlich, *Big Government: A Novel* (1998)
Peter Lefcourt, *The Woody* (1998)
Brendan DuBois, *Resurrection Day* (1999)
S. V. Date, *Smokeout* (2000)
Richard North Patterson, *Protect and Defend* (2000) / *Balance of Power* (2003)
Jeffrey Frank, *The Columnist: A Novel* (2001)
David Nevin, *Eagle's Cry* (2000) / *Traitor* (2001)
Michael Kelsay, *Too Close to Call* (2001)
Claude Walker, *Currents of Power: A Modern Political Novel* (2001)
William Kennedy, *Roscoe* (2002)
Max Barry, *Jennifer Government* (2003)
Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Power Game: A Washington Novel* (2004)
Note: Those who write a short report on the film *Primary Colors* or *All the King's Men* should not choose the original book version for their thematic essay.

Movies:

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (James Stewart, 1939)
All the King's Men (Broderick Crawford, 1949)
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, 1964)

Dr. Strangelove (Peter Sellers, 1964)

Seven Days in May (Burt Lancaster, 1964)

Z (Yves Montand, 1969)

The Conversation (Gene Hackman, 1974)

The Parallax View (Warren Beatty, 1974)

Network (Faye Dunaway, 1976)

Being There (Peter Sellers, 1979)

The Seduction of Joe Tynan (Alan Alda, 1979)

Missing (Jack Lemmon/Sissy Spacek, 1982)

Power (Richard Gere, 1986)

Betrayed (Debra Winger/Tom Berenger, 1988)

Bob Roberts (Tim Robbins, 1992)

Hoffa (Jack Nicholson, 1992)

The American President (Michael Douglas, 1995)

Nixon (Anthony Hopkins, 1995)

The Politician's Wife (Juliet Stevenson, 1996)

Bulworth (Warren Beatty, 1998)

The Insider (Al Pacino/Russell Crowe, 1999)

The Contender (Joan Allen, 2000)

Deterrence (Kevin Pollack, 2000)

Thirteen Days (Kevin Costner, 2000)

Path to War (Michael Gambon/Donald Sutherland, 2002)

Silver City (Chris Cooper, 2004)

Good Night, and Good Luck (David Strathairn, 2005)

Syriana (George Clooney, 2005)

Thank You for Smoking (Aaron Eckhart, 2006)

Note: Those who write a short report on the book *Thank You for Smoking* should not choose the film version for their thematic essay.

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. start class "enrollment wizard"
7. enter class ID (1166214) and password (thumbsup)
8. end "enrollment wizard"

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 politics in fiction/film
3. from there you can submit your paper, just like adding an attachment to an email

Each book/film will have its own assignment folder. The first seven have already been created, from *The Candidate* through *The Last Debate*; others will be added as we go along. Don't take the "date due" indicated online too literally – written copies of all essays must be handed in to me during the class period following our discussion of the book/film, and you must submit an electronic copy to turnitin.com on the same day. Any assignment that is turned in late (without approval of the instructor) will be docked one letter grade per day. Any assignment that does not constitute original work by the author will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct (see above).