

Brigham Young University

**American Politics through Literature**  
**PS 320**

B. Daynes  
346 MARB  
Office hour: Wed. 10-11 [740 SWKT]

Winter 2009  
12:30-1:45 MW

**I. The Intent of the Course:**

This course is an exploration of politics and literature, and their interconnection. Class members will thoroughly examine these twelve novels during the course of the semester focusing on both specific political themes in the novel assigned, as well as discussing the political insights found in these novels. This is not an English literature course and we will be looking for answers in the novel to this primary question:

**“How can literature aid our understanding of politics?”**

The novels should be read with this in mind.

**II. Requirements for the Course:**

A) **20% of your grade** will be based on: a **midterm examination** based on the first seven novels assigned that will be administered on **2 March 2009**.

B) **30% of your grade** will be based on: a **comprehensive final examination** that will assess your integrative knowledge of all of the novels and political concepts we have talked about in the class. It will be administered on **17 April 2009**. Please do not plan other activities for this time. Everyone will take the exam at the scheduled hour, unless you have an emergency situation come up. You must agree to this if you want to stay in the course.

C) **20% of your grade** will be based on: a 15-20 minute **oral presentation** developing one of the themes you will choose from the novels we will read.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the oral report something should be said about the author and his\her background for writing about the political topic on which you will focus. Eight to ten minutes of your presentation should be given to laying a groundwork and a foundation for the assigned theme, telling us about the political phenomena, concepts, institutions and policies that might be involved in the theme. The

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<sup>1</sup> The time may vary according to the size of the class. If there is more than one presentation, the time may be slightly shortened to work both presentations in within the class time frame. More than one of you will be assigned to the same novel but on a different theme. I will have you all rank these novels with three optional themes where possible. I will then assign you one of the novels and themes that you will use for both your oral presentation and your research paper. My priority will be to cover as many of the novels and themes as possible.

remaining time should look at the particular novel's contributions to our understanding of the theme. Specific examples from the novel should be noted where the writer either helps us or hinders our understanding of the political concepts in question. The presenter should remember the primary course question in developing the theme for the presentation, namely, how does this novel aid our understanding of the political theme I am developing.

The object of the oral is, first, to discuss all of the novels and as many of the topics as possible. Topics will be assigned based on your ranking preferences of the novels. Your oral presentation **SHOULD NOT BE READ** from a paper or other text. The presentation is to **engage the entire class**; feel free to use any visual aids, handouts, overheads, or power points in your presentation that would assist you. Where there is one presentation on the novel, the first day will be devoted to the presentation, with the second day devoted to political insights of the novel in general. If there are two or more presentations on the same novel--focused on different themes, there will be two or more presentations on the first day. Where possible we will keep the second day for a discussion in general of the novels. If you choose a power point presentation, I may ask you to give me a copy of it for future classes, so please put your name/names on one of the slides. Send it to me with your name first and the novel name second as an attachment.

D) **30% of your grade will be based on: a 10-12 page research paper** (double spaced) for those registered in **PS 320**; and a **12-15 page research paper** (double spaced) that is to be based on your oral presentation, but which should incorporate any of the written commentary that you may receive on your oral presentation. The paper is to be written and researched as any term paper is, with proper citations, bibliography and endnotes. As in the oral presentation, at least 3-4 pages (of a 12 page paper) should be directed to establishing a background on the theme in question, with the remaining portion of the paper directed to examining the novel's particular contributions to the theme. The last two pages can respond to the question whether fiction is an enlightening way of learning about political phenomena. All papers, except for the person assigned the last novel in the term, will be handed in not later than **March 30th** in order that all will be read before grades are due. The person assigned the last two novels will hand their papers in on or about **April 13** in order to take account of any class and instructor input. While late papers will be accepted, 5% will be deducted from the grade you would have received, had the paper been turned in on time, for each 24 hour period beyond the deadline (except for Sundays). Please paginate your paper; staple it; and please remember that no roman numerals are to be used for endnotes.

E) **10% of your grade will be based on:** Your contributions to the class, class attendance, class preparation and participation are all essential to make this sort of class successful. All of you are expected to read each of the novels prior to the days they will be discussed. **THIS IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL**. You must come to class prepared to discuss the political importance of each of the novels. While daily attendance will not be taken, unannounced attendance sheets will be passed out on selected days to determine who is in regular attendance.

### **III. Grading Policy:**

I repeat here the section on what grades mean from the BYU Bulletin: Undergraduate Catalog: (p.25):

The grade given in a course is the teacher's evaluation of the student's performance, achievement, and understanding in that subject as covered in the class. The following adjectives indicated the meaning of the letter grade:

<b>A</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>Minimum passing</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>

Hence, the grade **A** means that the student's performance, achievement, and understanding were excellent in the portion of the subject covered in the class.

There are prerequisites that qualify students to be admitted to the more advanced classes offered by a department. A senior has added experience, understanding, and preparation and, consequently, progresses in courses that would have been impossible when the student was a freshman. The level of performance, achievement, and understanding required to qualify for each grade that carries credit. . . is higher in a more advanced class than in those classes that precede it, and the student is prepared to work at this higher level.

### **IV. Statement regarding Plagiarism and Sex Discrimination:**<sup>2</sup>

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of **cheating on exams** or **plagiarizing on papers**. Brigham Young University does not tolerate plagiarism. When a student uses a purchased research paper, the work of another, the ideas or words of another, or portions therefrom, and represents this as his or her own work without giving proper credit, then that student has plagiarized the source. Any student who . . . plagiarizes the work of another [or cheats on any exam or assignment] risks a failing grade on the particular assignment, a failing grade in the class, and appearance before the Honor Code Council. You may want to see <http://www.byu.edu/honorcode> for specific examples of intentional, inadvertent plagiarism.

**Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972** prohibits **sex discrimination** against any

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<sup>2</sup> Portions of this statement was developed by our former Dean, Clayne Pope, of the College of Family, Home and Social Science.

participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Opportunity Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24 hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any **disability** which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Opportunity Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

There are prerequisites that qualify students to be admitted to the more advanced classes offered by a department. A senior has added experience, understanding, and preparation and, consequently, progresses in courses that would have been impossible when the student was a freshman. The level of performance, achievement, and understanding required to qualify for each grade that carries credit. . . Is higher in a more advanced class than in those classes that precede it, and the student is prepared to work at this higher level.

## **V. Required Books for Purchase:**<sup>3</sup>

- . Adams, H., *Democracy: an American Novel*
- . Warren, R., *All the King's Men*
- . Lewis, S., *Kingsblood Royal*
- . Steinbeck, J., *Grapes of Wrath*
- . Clark, W., *Oxbow Incident*
- . Grisham, J., *Pelican Brief*
- . Okada, J., *No No Boy*
- . Lewis, S., *It Can't Happen Here*
- . Patterson, *Protect and Defend*
- . Clancy, T., *Executive Orders*
- . Twain, M., *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*
- . Orwell, G., *1984*

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<sup>3</sup> Editions other than the ones sold in the bookstore may, of course, be read. Pages, of course, do not always coincide. Many of these novels are also in the Library. However, there are many advantages in having your own copy of the book rather than a library edition since I will be calling your attention to particular passages that you may want to mark.

## **VI. Schedule for Course:**

January 5, 7 . . . . .	Introduction
January 12, 14, 21 . . . . .	Democracy
January 26, 28, February 2 . . . . .	Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court
February 4 . . . . .	Protect and Defend
February 9 . . . . .	Pelican Brief
February 11 . . . . .	It Can't Happen Here
February 18, 23 . . . . .	Grapes of Wrath
February 25 . . . . .	<u>Midterm</u>
March 2, 4 . . . . .	All the King's Men
March 9 . . . . .	Kingsblood Royal
March 11, 16, 18 . . . . .	No No Boy
March 23 . . . . .	Oxbow Incident
March 25, 30, April 1 . . . . .	Executive Orders
April 6, 8 . . . . .	1984
April 13 . . . . .	Last Day—review +
April 17 . . . . .	<u>Final</u>

NOTE: The above schedule with its dates and topics is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

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## **VII. Course Outline:**

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### **A. Introduction: What is a Political Novel?**

(January 5, 7)

#### Required Readings:<sup>4</sup>

LeCapra, D., *History, Politics, and the Novel* PN 3343 .L33 1987  
Whalen-Bridge, J., *Political Fiction and the American Self*, PS 374 .P6 W47 1998  
Howe, I., *Politics and the Novel*, Introduction, PN 3448 .P6 H6  
Roller, J., *The Politics of the Feminist Novel*, PS 374 .F45 R65  
Pfaelzer, J., *The Utopian Novel in America*, PS 374 .UB P43 1984

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<sup>4</sup> Please glance over one of these reference, so that we can discuss what a political novel is and the connection between literature and politics. All of them are on Reserve in HBLL.

## **B. Democracy—one version** (January 12, 14, 21)

### Required reading:

- . **Adams, *Democracy: an American Novel***

### Research topics:

- . Corruption tolerance in a democratic society
- . The position of the president in the political system
- . Can democracy survive the Ratcliffes, the Carringtons, and the Mrs. Lees
- . Can the presidency survive the Hoosier Quarryman in office rather than a George Washington
- . Change of presidential administrations: Democracy's "soft spot"
- . For democracy to survive, need we agree with Mrs. Lee that: "underneath the scum floating on the surface of politics there is a healthy ocean current of honest purpose which sweeps the scum before it and keeps the mass pure."
- . Is democracy the same as most other governments or is it a distinct form of government

## **C. Democracy—another version:** (January 26, 28, February 2)

### Required Reading:

- . **Twain, *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court***

### Research topics:

- . A Republic—if you can keep it
- . Imposing [forcing] democracy on ill-prepared countries, or "Prestocracy": The Instant Establishment of Democracy. Is there a comparison with Iraq?
- . Michel's iron law of oligarchy: suggests that regardless of what sort of government you begin with you end with an oligarchy—the boss in the end can find few to support him. Does Michel's law fit the Boss' law?

Research topics: cont.

- . Despotism of heaven: the perfect government--Earthly despotism: the worst form of government
- . The "New Deal:" in King Arthur's time and in the 1930s
- . Blunting effects of slavery and aristocracy
- . Essentials in establishing a Republic
  - destroy the throne;
  - universal suffrage;
  - written\unwritten Constitution;
  - stocks abolished
  - free press
  - school system established
- .The End: Ye were conquerors; ye are conquered

**D. The Court and Interest Group Politics:** (February 4)

Required reading:

**Patterson, *Protect and Defend***

Research topics:

- . Political impact of abortion politics in the political system
- . Supreme Court politics
- . Pro-life v. pro-choice: its implications for society
- . Why is the control of social policies in American democracy so difficult
- . The importance of social issues on a President's social agenda

**E. The Court and the Environment:** (February 9)

Required reading:

**Grisham, J., *Pelican Brief***

Research topics:

- .Supreme Court Justices: Who they are and who do they represent?
- .The long-lasting nature of Court decisions
- .Environmental preservation vs. energy development

**F. Our Presidency?** (February 11)

Required reading: (April 4, 6)

**Lewis, S., *It Can't Happen Here***

Research topics:

- .Fascism in America
- .Buzz Windrip: Super Patriot?
- .Windrip's Fifteen Points of Victory
- .It Can't Happen Here: a Roman a' Clef?
- .Watergate, Iran-Contra and Windrip
- .One-person Rule in a Democracy
- .The Arrogance of Power: Windrip v. Bush\Cheney
- .Windrip and public apathy
- Centralization of power in Democracy
- The Role of the Military in Democratic government
- .Control of Fanaticism in Democratic Government

## **G. Depression Era Migration Politics** (February 18, 23)

Required reading:

.Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*

Research topics:

- . Depression era politics
- . Permanent scars inflicted by the Depression on American democracy
- . Building a political community:
  - Families—leaders—laws—codes
  - Privacy and other rights (civility)
  - Established governments
- . Impact of converting farm people to migrant workers
- . Democracy and regional hatred: the “Okies”
- . The politics of inequality

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## **H. MIDTERM EXAM** (March 2)

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## **I. Southern Comfort—[not the drink!]** (March 2, 4)

Required reading:

.Warren, *All the King’s Men*

Research topics:

- . Personality as an important concept to understanding American politics
- . Southern demagogues like Willie Stark: their influence on democracy
- . Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely: the rise and fall of Willie Stark
- . Approaches used by the boss: “either buy ‘em or bust ‘em” as Willie suggested
- . Politics: a matter of choices...there is always a price associated with choice

Research topics: cont.

- . The Boss' philosophy: sure there is some graft, but "just enough to make the wheels turn without squeaking."
- . Corruption in Government and Politics in Democratic government

**J. Racial Politics** (March 9)

Required reading:

.Lewis, S., *Kingsblood Royal*

Research Topic:

- .Black\white relations: past, present and future

**K. Racial Politics—of another sort** (March 11, 16, 18)

Required reading:

**Okada, *No No Boy***

Research topics:

- . Japanese-American politics in a democratic system
  - . Racial-profiling in times of crisis
- . The plight of the hyphenated American
  - could you be Japanese and American? Would the two mix?
- . Prejudice in times of war: Japanese Americans in World War II
- . The meaning of citizenship in times of crisis.
- . Preserving civil liberties of citizens in times of crisis
- . Who was to blame for the Japanese American situation? The president? The military? The voters?

.What can we learn about our democratic system in crisis from Japanese American Internment?

.Could Internment happen again against other minorities in times of crisis. Should this happen, what would this say about our Constitution and political system in times of crisis?.

## **L. Western Politics—or the meaning of Justice** (March 23)

Required reading:

**.Clark, *Oxbow Incident***

Research topics:

.When is it acceptable in a political community to take the law into one's own hands?

.The Meaning of Justice in American Democracy

. Is justice delayed justice denied?

. Is it worse to allow some to remain outside the law but keep the law intact, rather than to allow those outside the law to undermine the law?

. The soul of a nation = the soul of man

## **M. Terrorism and Major Disruption in Democratic government**

(March 25, 30; April 1)

Required reading: (March 9, 14, 21)

**Clancy, Executive Orders**<sup>5</sup>

Research topics:

. The stability and responsiveness of federalism  
-anything in the Constitution to respond to this crisis?

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<sup>5</sup>As a guideline to your reading of this rather lengthy novel, we will pay particular attention to the following pages: pp. 1-300; 365-800; and 1150-1200.

Research topics: cont.

- . Consequences of subjecting our system to severe pressures: how long is the recovery rate when the political elite is devastated?
- . Comparison of this tragedy with the burning of Washington in 1812; Pearl Harbor in 1941; and 9\11 in 2001. Is this a worse tragedy than the others, or were there similarities?
- . Democracy's soft spot: regime change
- . Difficulties for a caretaker VP assuming the office of president in times of crisis
- . What sort of person makes the best type of president? An amateur? a professional? Did Ryan have what it took to govern? Did George W. Bush? Compare the two.
- . The impact of FLOTUS and POTUS on the political system
- . Impact of Ryan's Catholicism on nominations to Supreme Court: compared to today's Court. What advantages\disadvantages did George Washington, Franklin Roosevelt and Ryan have as the only presidents to replace the entire Court?
- . Cabinet appointments: important internal support for the president
- . Whenever a president speaks, does he make policy? Does he represent America?
- . Court vs. president in their mutual expansion of power

**N. Is this our Future?** (April 6, 8)

Required reading:

**Orwell, 1984**

Research topics:

- . 1984: a warning for 21st century democracies
- . The Power of political language in controlling human nature and narrowing options
- . Privacy: The most difficult right to protect

Research topics: cont.

The essential act of war is destruction of the products of human labor

. Political relationships between the Rulers and the Ruled

O. **Last day: Review +** (April 13)

N. **FINAL:** (April 17---11:00-2:00)