Brigham Young University

American Politics through Literature
PS 320

B. Daynes
346 MARB
Office hour: 9:00-10:00 Tuesday and Thursday [740 SWKT]

Winter 2012
12:05-1:20pm

Description of the Course:

This course is an exploration of politics and literature, and their interconnection. Class members will thoroughly examine these ten novels during the course of the semester focusing on both specific political themes that have been extracted from the novels, as well as discussing the political insights found in these novels.

Objective #1:

We will focus on the main question that should be asked of each novel we read, namely, "How can literature aid our understanding of politics?"

- this will be measured by assigning every student an oral presentation and a 15-20 page paper based on one of the assigned novels focusing on one of the listed research topics.

For example, if a student selected Clark’s, Ox Bow Incident as the novel of his/her choice, there are several research topics from which to choose, viz.,

1. When is it acceptable in a political community to take the law into one’s own hands?
2. The meaning of “Justice” in American Democracy.
3. Is it worse to allow some citizens to remain outside the law but keep the law intact, than to allow those outside the law to undermine the law?
4. The soul of a nation is equal to the soul of man.

Students will develop one of these topics and then determine how the novel aids our understanding of this topic.
Objective #2:

Each of you should become familiar with the political consequences of all 10 of these novels

-This will be measured through your taking of two midterms and a comprehensive final that will assess your overall understanding of what we have read and discussed.

Objective #3:

Given these ten novels and the multiple research topics generated from each of them, you will become conversant with the subject matter in your discourse with others outside the classroom.

We will have scheduled general discussions on the novel pointing to aspects of the novel that have gone unmentioned during each student’s oral report in class. This will also allow more comprehensive answers to the essay questions asked on the tests.

The First Assignment

The assignment due tomorrow, Friday January 6, is to rank these ten novels according to your preference, along with three research topics in order of preference along side the novels. Hand this ranking into the department secretaries so I can assign a novel and research topic to each of you.

II. Requirements for the Course:

A) 20% of your grade will be based on: two midterm examinations, (each worth 10%) with each exam covering approximately half of the ten books. The first will be administered on 16 February 2012, and the second will be administered on about 29 March 2012.
B) 20% 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 18 April 2012, from 11:00 until 2:00 pm. 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.\(^1\) Given the number of students in the class, I want to team two of you together for the oral presentation. That will allow us between 12 and 14 presentations. If you know of a person that you would like to work with, when you rank the novels, sign up as a team. If you don't know anyone you would like to work with, I will assign two of you together based on your interest in the novel. While the oral will be by team and you both will get a group grade, the paper will be based on the same novel, but you will work separately and independently of one another on the paper.

The presentation should say something about the author and his/her background for writing about the political topic on which you will focus. Approximately 5 or 6 minutes of your presentation should be taken in 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 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 us in 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 you are developing.

We want to have at least one oral presentation on each of the novels—even the first one—in a week—covering as many of the themes as possible. For the team doing the first novel, the instructor will show the greatest "mercy" in grading the presentation since it is scheduled for the 17th of January.

Your oral presentation SHOULD NOT BE READ from a paper or from your power point or from another 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. Except for the presentation on the first novel, the first day we consider the particular novel will always be devoted to the presentation, with the remaining days focused on the 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 available for a discussion in general of the novels.

Submit to me: a written one page summary of your oral report and e-mail a copy of any power points you have used.

\(^1\) The time may vary according to the size of the class and importance of the topic. 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.
D) **30% of your grade** will be based on: a 15-20 page research paper (double spaced) that is to be based on your oral presentation, but you will not work with a team member on the paper. You will work individually on the paper. 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 15 page paper) should be devoted to establishing a background on the theme on which you focused, 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 concepts. All papers, except for the person assigned the last novel in the term, will be handed in not later than **March 29th** in order that all will be read before grades are due. The persons assigned the last two novels will hand their papers in on or about **April 10th** in order to take account of any class and instructor input. While late papers will be accepted, 5% for each 24 hour period from the grade you would have received, had the paper been turned in on time. 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, which are all essential to make this 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 the novels. A reading roll will be passed out each day to check your reading and attendance. Completing at least 90% of the reading will give you an **A** for this part of the course; completing between 80-59% of the reading will give you a **B** for this part of the course; and completing between 70-79% of the reading will give you a **C** for this segment of the course. Any less, I will let you figure it out.

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 indicates the meaning of the letter grade:

- **A**: Excellent
- **B**: Good
- **C**: Satisfactory
- **D**: Minimum passing
- **E**: Unacceptable

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.
IV. STATEMENT REGARDING PLAGIARISM:

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 new 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. General information about the honor code can be found at honorcode.byu.edu. Details about Academic Honesty are found at http://honorcode.byu.edu/content/academic-honesty-details.

Writing, submitted for credit at BYU, must consist of the student’s own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student’s own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current edition of Turabian’s A Manual for Writing of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations; and the latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style.

Academic Honesty Details— from the Honor Code Office:

- **Direct Plagiarism:** The verbatim copying of an original source without acknowledging the source.

- **Paraphrased Plagiarism:** The paraphrasing, without acknowledgment, of ideas from another that the reader might mistake for your own.

- **Plagiarism Mosaic:** The borrowing of words, ideas, or data from an original source and blending this original material with one’s own without acknowledging the source.

- **Insufficient Acknowledgment:** The partial or incomplete attribution of words, ideas, or data from an original source.

Plagiarism may occur with respect to unpublished as well as published material. Acts of copying another student's work and submitting it as one's own individual work without proper attribution is a serious form of plagiarism.
Other Academic Misconduct—from the Honor Code Office

Academic misconduct includes other academically dishonest, deceitful, or inappropriate acts that are intentionally committed. Examples of such acts include but are not limited to:

- Inappropriately providing or receiving information or academic work so as to gain unfair advantage over others.
- Planning with another to commit any act of academic dishonesty.
- Attempting to gain an unfair academic advantage for oneself or another by bribery or by any act of offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting anything of value to another for such purpose.
- Changing or altering grades or other official educational records.
- Obtaining or providing to another an unadministered test or answers to an unadministered test.
- Breaking and entering into a building or office for the purpose of obtaining an unauthorized test.
- Continuing work on an examination or assignment after the allocated time has elapsed.
- Submitting the same work for more than one class without disclosure and approval.

V. STATEMENT REGARDING SEX DISCRIMINATION:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any 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 Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.
VI. STATEMENT REGARDING DISABILITIES:

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 Services for Students with Disabilities Office (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 Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

VII. Required Books for Purchase:²

. Warren, R., *All the King’s Men*
. Steinbeck, J., *Grapes of Wrath*
. Clark, W., *Oxbow Incident*
. Okada, J., *No No Boy*
. Sinclair, U., *The Jungle*
. Grisham, J., *Pelican Brief*
. Clancy, T., *Executive Orders*
. Twain, M., *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*
. Orwell, G., *1984*

²Editions 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.
VIII. Schedule for Course:

January 5, 10 ................. Introduction
January 12, 17, 19 .......... Democracy
January 24, 26 ............ Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court
January 31 .................... Pelican Brief
February 2, 7 ............. Grapes of Wrath
February 9 , 14 .......... The Jungle
February 16 ................. Midterm #1
February 23, 28 .......... All the King’s Men
March 1, 6, 8 ............... No No Boy
March 13 .................... Oxbow Incident
March 15, 20, 22 .......... Executive Orders
March 27 ..................... Midterm #2
March 29, April 5, ........ Midterm #2
March 2, 1984
April 10 ...................... Last Day—review
April 18 ...................... Final: 11:00-2:00 PM

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

IX. Course Outline:

A. Introduction: What is a Political Novel? (January 5, 10)

Required Readings: 3
LeCapra, D., History, Politics, and the Novel, PN 3343 .L33 1987
Howe, I., Politics and the Novel, Introduction, PN 3448 .P6 H6
Pfaelzer, J., The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896, PS 374 .UB P43 1984
Shurter, R. L., The Utopian Novel in America, 1865-1900, PS 374. U8 S5 1973

3 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, 17, 19)

**Required reading:**

- Adams, *Democracy: an American Novel*[^1]

**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 24, 26)

**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 “Forceocracy”: The Instant Establishment of Democracy. Is there a danger in trying to do this? Has the U.S. been successful in doing this?

[^1]: Please feel free, at any time, as we read through these novels to ignore passages that you might feel uncomfortable reading. Any of these novels may have sentences, phrases or even paragraphs that may be difficult to read even though I have tried to take care in selection of the novels that you are asked to read.
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?

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 the Environment (January 31)

Required Reading:

Grisham, J., Pelican Brief

Research topics:

- Supreme Court Justices: who they are, how they are selected, and who they represent

- The long-lasting nature of Court decisions

- Environmental preservation vs. energy development
E. Depression Era Migration Politics  (February 2, 7)

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

F. Ethnic City–Politics in the Midwest  (February 9, 14)

Required Reading:

Sinclair, The Jungle

Research Topics:

. Immigrant intrusion: problems of immigration in Northern cities

. Politics of food supply

. Migrant co-optation in a democratic society

. Purchase and sale of the vote in a democratic system

. The Jungle as a working tact of the Food and Drug Act and Inspection Act

. American Socialism: successes and failures
G. Midterm Exam #1  (February 16)

H. Southern Comfort—[not the drink!]  (February 23, 28)

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

. 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

I. War Crisis and Racism  (March 1, 6, 8)

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 Court? The public?

. 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?.

J. Western Politics—or the meaning of Justice (March 13)

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?
K. Terrorism and Major Disruption in Democratic government
(March 15, 20, 22)

Required reading:

Clancy, Executive Orders

Research topics:

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

. 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? Does
   Barack Obama? Compare the three of them.

. The impact of FLOTUS and POTUS on the political system

. The 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

L. Midterm Exam #2 (March 27)
M. *Is this our Future?* (March 29, April 3, 5)

**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

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

. Political relationships between the Rulers and the Ruled

**M. Last day: Review** + (April 10)

**N. FINAL:** (April 18---11:00-2:00pm)