

Political Science 5810
SENIOR SEMINAR
Politics (American) and Literature
Autumn 2006

REMEMBER TO REGISTER TO VOTE.

Instructor

Lauren Holland
302 OSH, x 1-4910

Office Hours:

T. & Th. 3-4 & by appointment.
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This class seeks to expand our understanding of American government and politics through the reading and interrogation of works of fiction. The tomes and classic texts generally used in political science courses focus exclusively on informing through historical fact, event analysis and thematic repetition. Novels allow us to experience how political actors lived and felt about the events of their historical period, and to share in the authors' subjective perspectives of the American political system. Novels invite us to question the appropriateness of past governmental actions and speculate on the future consequences of current political events.

The course is designed to fulfill the requirements of the senior seminar for political science majors. These requirements include becoming competent in the use and application of appropriate writing skills, demonstrating critical thinking, engaging in academic research, and delivering presentations orally. The initial weeks of the course focus on developing students' written, analytical and research skills in anticipation of the writing of a major research paper during the final weeks of the semester. In advance of the final project, weekly written assignments are required to encourage students to hone their writing and analytical skills as well as introduce you to the appropriate stages of research. The seminar designation of this course mandates active student involvement in weekly class meetings. Students are required to come to class having read and being prepared to discuss the readings.

Each novel will be discussed during two class meetings. During the first meeting we will situate the novel in the appropriate historical context by recreating the events of the time when the novel took place. Relevant periods, events and/or institutional arrangements include the status of Native Americans and women during the Puritan reign in Massachusetts (17th century), the political status of the American colonies and the events culminating in the Declaration of Independence during the 18th century, the institution of slavery in the 19th century, the nature of "democracy" during the Gilded Age, due process and justice for African Americans during the 20th century, the Vietnam War, and the status and effectiveness of social welfare policies during the 20th and 21st centuries. At the same time, details about the authors will be considered as a

way to understand what motivated the writers to produce their works. During the second class meeting the book will be discussed.

Required Texts*

Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*

Jeff Shaara, *Rise to Rebellion*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Henry Adams, *Democracy: An American Novel*

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Sapphire, *Push*

Diane E. Schmidt, *Writing in Political Science: A Practical Guide, 3rd ed.*

All of the novels and the Schmidt book are available in the University of Utah bookstore. UU Bookstore now has a used book section on the 1st floor. I have tried to locate the least expensive editions. The books also may be purchased through the internet or at any reputable bookstore in new or used form.

*Additional readings have been placed on reserve in Marriott Library. These also are available as Electronic Reserve.

Warning: At least two of the novels (*Beloved* and *Push*) assigned for this course include material that may conflict with the core beliefs of some students. Some of the novels include material that may make students feel uncomfortable, even depressed. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Written Assignments: **28%**. Short (2-3 paged) writing assignments are required on a regular basis and are due in class. Specific questions relevant to the novel and designed to develop your writing and research skills will be distributed in advance. Students are expected to write in accordance with the syntax and mechanics of edited American English. Assignments will be graded for both writing (spelling, grammar, sentence structure and organization) and content. Late assignments will be marked down one grade per day.

Class Participation: **22%**. Each student is expected to attend class regularly. The ONLY valid reasons for not attending class are illness, a family EMERGENCY or an athletic commitment. Regular family or work commitments, including weddings, family vacations or job interviews out of town, are NOT valid excuses. If this course conflicts with your work schedule or family responsibilities, then drop the class.

Research Paper: 50%. Each student will select a “political” novel other than one discussed in class as a basis for a major research paper (15-20 pages). The novels must be approved in advance by the instructor. The paper will require that you use the novel to interrogate the conventional wisdom on the events and/or historical/ political period/ topic that is the subject of your book. You are required to meet with the instructor on October 3rd or 4th to discuss possible topics and books. A preliminary research hypothesis and outline are due during the time of your second individual appointment with the instructor on October 24th or 25th. A research proposal is due at the time of your final individual appointment on either November 16th or 21st. Three weeks have been set aside to provide for independent research. During these three weeks you will prepare a rough (but as complete as possible) copy of the paper. During the last weeks of the semester, students will present their research findings orally to the class. A final version of the paper will be due on staggered dates depending upon the date of your oral presentation. The preliminary hypothesis and outline (5 points), research proposal (5 points), first draft (10 points), oral presentation (5 points) and final paper (25 points) will be graded *independently*.

Everyone begins with 100 points. Your grade is determined by how many points you *lose* during the course of the semester. As an example, if you have one unexcused absence, fail to turn in an assignment on time and/or submit an incomplete or inadequate draft of your paper, you could lose as many as 9-16 points leaving you with a 91 or even an 86 for a final score (assuming all of your other assignments are perfect).

The class meets in Business Classroom 203. You are required to arrive to class on time (1:00 p.m.) and stay until the end of the hour (2:40).

TH August 24th: Explanation of course, & distribution of syllabus and assignments. Begin reading *Hope Leslie*. Hand out assignment #1.

T August 29th: What is a “political” novel? Writing in political science.

Readings:

Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel*, Introduction* (Xerox)
 Sharon M. Harris, *Redefining the Political Novel*, Introduction* (Xerox)
 Schmidt, Preface and Chapter 1

TH August 31st: The “original” Americans: Native Americans & Puritan settlers in Massachusetts. Republican virtue: freedom, race and gender. Who was Catherine Maria Sedgwick? How to be a good writer.

Readings:

Hope Leslie
 Schmidt, Chapter 7 & pp. 164-168.

T September 5th: Discussion of *Hope Leslie*. Assignment #1 due in class. Begin reading *Rise to Rebellion*. Hand out assignment #2.

TH September 7th: The impetus for independence and war: key events precipitating the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence. Who is Jeff Shaara? Research, stage 1: posing a research question or hypothesis.

Readings:

Rise to Rebellion

Schmidt, Chapter 1 (re-read) and Chapter 2.

T September 12th: Discussion of *Rise to Rebellion*. Assignment #2 due in class. Begin reading *Beloved*.

TH September 14th: Library Orientation. Class meets in the Marriott Library, Rm. 1715 at 1:00 p.m.

Reading:

Schmidt, pp. 40-63.

T September 19th: The institution of slavery. Who is Toni Morrison? Research, stage 2: survey of the literature.

Reading:

Beloved.

Schmidt, pp. 176-179.

TH September 21st: Discussion of *Beloved*. Assignment #2 due in class. Begin reading *Democracy: An American Novel*. Hand out assignment #4.

T September 26th. Politics during the Gilded Age. Who was Henry Adams? Research, stage 3: data collection.

Readings:

Democracy: An American Novel.

Schmidt, Chapter 5.

TH September 28th. Discussion of *Democracy: An American Novel*. Assignment #4 due in class. Begin reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

T October 3rd and W 4th: Individual meetings with instructor. This is a mandatory meeting. *Topic Selection*. Hand out assignment #5.

Reading:

Schmidt, Chapter 3.

TH October 5th: FALL BREAK. NO CLASS. Use this time to catch up with readings and work on developing a *preliminary research hypothesis and outline*.

Reading:

Schmidt, pp. 63-73 & Chapter 14.

T 10th: What is justice? Procedural versus substantive due process. Who is Harper Lee? Research, stage 4: Data analysis.

Readings:

To Kill A Mockingbird.

Schmidt, review Chapter 1.

TH October 12th. Discussion of *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Assignment #5 due in class. Begin reading *The Things They Carried*. Hand out assignment #6.

T October 17th. The Vietnam War. Just war theory. Who is Tim O'Brien? Research, stage 5: conclusions and implications of research.

Readings:

The Things They Carried.

Schmidt, review Chapter 1.

TH October 19th. Discussion of *The Things They Carried*. Assignment #6 due in class. Begin reading *Push*. Hand out assignment #7.

T October 24th and W October 25th. **No Class**. Individual meetings with instructor to finalize research topics. MANDATORY. *Preliminary research hypothesis and outline* due at the time of meeting.

Readings:

Schmidt, review pp. 63-73 & pp. 197-211.

TH October 26th. Social welfare policies. Who is Sapphire? How to construct a research proposal.

Readings:

Push.

Schmidt, pp. 211-213.

T October 31st. Discussion of *Push*. Assignment #7 due in class.

TH November 2nd: NO CLASS. Independent Research.

T November 7th: NO CLASS. Independent Research. ELECTION DAY: REMEMBER TO VOTE.

TH November 9TH: NO CLASS. Independent Research.

T November 14: Class resumes. Discussion of format for oral presentations, rough draft and final paper. Documentation, references, etc.

Readings:

Schmidt, Chapters 6, 8 & 11. Optional/ skim: chapters 12 & 13.

TH November 16th and T November 21st: NO CLASS. MANDATORY MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR TO DISCUSS THE STATUS OF YOUR RESEARCH. *Research proposal* due at this time.

Reading:

Schmidt, review pp. 211-213.

TH November 23rd: NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING BREAK. Work on research.

T November 28th: Student presentations.

TH November 30th. Student presentations.

T December 5th: Student presentations.

TH December 7th: Student presentations.

NOTE: ANY STUDENT FOUND GUILTY OF CHEATING ON THE ASSIGNMENTS OR PLAGIARISM ON THE FINAL PAPER WILL RECEIVE A FAILING GRADE FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE.

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Persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations to meet the expectations of this course are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible. Written documentation of the disability should be submitted during the first full week of the semester along with the request for special accommodations. Please contact the Center for Disabled Student Service, 160 Union Building, 581-5020.

