



**POSC 490: SEMINAR
POLITICS AND
LITERATURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

**Dr. Margaret Hrezo
Monday 6:30-9:30
OFFICE HOURS: M 5-6; W 11-12;
T/R 12:30-1:30**

710 Clement Street—831-6172

This seminar rests on the premise that politics is more than institutions and that there are other essential political concepts besides power. Politics begins with a number of opinions that each age and culture must sort out for itself. But how? The reliance on power by “neutral administrative states” as the standard for measuring opinions led Albert Camus to call the twentieth century a “corpse factory.” This reliance on power also has seemed to increase human feelings of alienation and separation from politics—even in the most democratic regimes. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in particular have become wary of universal political truths and principles and distrustful of institutions and power. Where do we look for the pieces of politics that we have lost?

Maybe the place to look is to our stories. Politics may seem far away from our lives, fears, hopes, and problems. But our stories seem to link us together both as people of a culture or nation and as human beings. To paraphrase Russell Baker, our stories remind us that life is a braided cord of humanity that stretches far further than one individual’s journey from “diaper to shroud.” Often literature reveals a society’s or an age’s hopes, aims, and worries about those concepts better than do standard works of politics. Literature can enrich the study of politics tremendously through what it reveals of the human condition and of human dreams. This semester we will read a variety of 20th century fiction for hints of their visions of political community. There will be a common reading list discussed each week. In addition students will read 2-3 other books from one culture and prepare a paper and presentation in which they analyze the authors’ treatment of themes related to politics.

Required Reading:

Robert Penn Warren	<i>All the King's Men</i>
Thomas Pynchon	<i>Vineland</i>
Toni Morrison	<i>Paradise</i>
Carlos Fuentes	<i>The Years with Laura Diaz</i>
Erich Maria Remarque	<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>
Chinua Achebe	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Ignazio Silone	<i>Bread and Wine</i>

There will be no class on Monday, March 18, 2002.

Grading:

Journals	30%
Participation	40%
Paper	20%
Final Discussion	10%

We will begin every class with approximately 30-minutes of journal writing. You must come to class prepared to begin your journal with an honor-code pledge that you have completed the reading assigned for the week. Some journal entries will be free-writing exercises; others will have specific topics. These journals will form the basis for the week's discussion.

This will not be a lecture class, although I will try to pull the discussion together from time to time. Thus, your participation is the key element and will account for 50% of your final grade. Attendance is essential. The only excused absences will be for official university business. If some major problem arises, let me know and we'll try to work around it. More than one unexcused absence will have a detrimental effect on your grade.

There is a paper required for this class. It should be 10-12 pages long, typed double space. Use the MLA or Chicago style manuals for guidance on format, endnotes, bibliographies, etc. Pick two works from one culture on the reading list below. There is an American quota and I must approve all choices. Choose books that are new to you. Analyze those two works in terms of class discussion. Compare them with other works we've read in the class. Develop a theme or argument concerning the relationship of these works to politics. You will be grading according to the following criteria:

Surface errors	10 points
Following directions	10 points
Creativity	10 points
Theme or argument	20 points
Support for theme/argument	20 points
Integrating class material and books we've read in common into your analysis	30 points

Don't forget to attach an honor pledge that all work in the paper is your own. Remember anything that is not common knowledge or that is not your own original idea must be cited.

Final discussion will take place during the exam period. Each of us will talk about his/her paper and we will use those summaries to try to pull together some themes to take away from the semester.

Schedule:

- I. Politics and Literature
 - A. What is politics
 - B. The connection between politics and literature
 - C. Reading: handouts by Martha Nussbaum (1-14-02)

- II. Some traditional concerns
 - A. *All the King's Men* (1-21-02 and 1-28-02)

- III. Politics and consciousness
 - A. *Things Fall Apart* (2-04-02)
 - B. *Vineland* (2-11-2 and 2-18-02)
 - C. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2-25-02)
 - D. *Bread and Wine* (3-4-02)

- IV. Community, conformity, and relationships
 - A. *Paradise* (3-25-01 and 4-1-02)
 - B. *The Years with Laura Diaz* (4-8-02, 4-15-02 and 4-22-02)

- V. Paper Chats
 - A. February 4, 2002—You must have picked your extra books by this date. Bring your list to class.
 - B. March 4, 2002—You should have a theme or argument by this point. Describe it in 3-5 sentences and list three related ideas from class that you can use to support your theme/argument.
 - C. April 8, 2002—Your paper is due. I have found it does not help students to make papers due at the final class of the semester. You're already stressed and trying to push too much into the end. There is a surface error policy on these papers. I will grade your paper and return it to you by April 15, 2002. However, I will not record your grade until all surface errors are fixed. That means when you hand in your revision, you also must hand in your original paper on which I marked the errors.

Reading List:

American Writers

Richard Wright	<i>Native Son</i>
Ishmael Reed	<i>Mumbo Jumbo</i>
Toni Morrison	<i>Jazz</i>
Jean Toomer	<i>Cane</i>
Thomas Pynchon	<i>Gravity's Rainbow, Mason and Dixon, The Crying of Lot 49</i>
Gore Vidal	<i>Empire</i>
Ursula K. LeGuin	<i>The Dispossessed</i>
Edwin O'Connor	<i>The Last Hurrah</i>
Eugene Burdick	<i>The Ugly American</i>
John Gardner	<i>Grendel</i>
Joan Didion	<i>Democracy, Political Fictions</i>
Upton Sinclair	<i>The Millennium: A Comedy of the Year 2000</i>
B.F. Skinner	<i>Walden II</i>
Ray Bradbury	<i>Something Wicked This Way Comes, Fahrenheit 451</i>
Walter M. Miller	<i>A Canticle for Leibowitz</i>
Ernest Callenbach	<i>Ecotopia</i>
Isaac Asimov	<i>Foundation Trilogy</i>
John Irving	<i>A Prayer for Owen Meany</i>
Tom Wolfe	<i>Bonfire of the Vanities, A Man in Full</i>
James Baldwin	<i>The Fire Next Time</i>
Ralph Ellison	<i>Invisible Man</i>

Tom Robbins	<i>Electric Kool Aid Acid Test</i>
John Dos Passos	<i>USA</i>
Saul Bellow	<i>Seize the Day</i>
Sinclair Lewis	<i>It Can't Happen Here</i>
Rudolpho Anaya	<i>Bless Me, Ultima</i>
Ayn Rand	<i>Fountainhead</i>
John Edgar Wideman	<i>Philadelphia Fire</i>
Danzy Senna	<i>Caucasia</i>
Mat Johnson	<i>Drop</i>
Jervey Tervalon	<i>Understand This</i>
Colson Whitehead	<i>The Intuitionist, John Henry Days</i>

Latin Writers

Marian Azuela	<i>The Underdogs</i>
Eduardo Galeano	<i>The Book of Embraces, Genesis, Faces and Masks, Century of the Wind</i>
Isabel Allende	<i>The House of Spirits</i>
Mario Vargas Llosa	<i>Death in the Andes, The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta, The Feast of the Goat</i>
Julia Alvarez	<i>In the Time of the Butterflies</i>
Eduardo Sguiglia	<i>Fordlandia</i>
Jorge Borges	<i>Everything and Nothing</i>

African Writers

Chinua Achebe	<i>A Man of the People, Things Fall Apart*, Anthills of the Savannah</i>
J.M. Coetzee	<i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>
Naguib Mahfouz	<i>The Beggar, The Thief and the Dogs, Autumn Quail</i>
Alan Patton	<i>Cry the Beloved Country</i>
Nadine Gordimer	<i>Burger's Daughter, The Conservationist</i>

European and British Writers

T.H. White	<i>The Once and Future King</i>
John Le Carre	<i>The Constant Gardener, The Little Drummer Girl, Our Game, The Tailor of Panama</i>
Graham Greene	<i>The Comedians, The Power and the Glory, The Quiet American, Our Man in Havana</i>
Anthony Burgess	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i>
Joseph Conrad	<i>The Secret Agent</i>
Evelyn Waugh	<i>Scoop, Black Mischief, Sword of Honor Trilogy</i>
Milan Kundera	<i>The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, The Unbearable Lightness of Being</i>
Alexander Solzhenitsyn	<i>A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, The Cancer Ward</i>
Primo Levi	<i>The Drowned and the Saved</i>
Corti	<i>The Red Horse</i>
Albert Camus	<i>The Plague, The Stranger</i>
Thomas Mann	<i>The Magic Mountain, Dr. Faustus</i>
Jose Saramago	<i>Blindness</i>
Arthur Koestler	<i>The Call Girls</i>
Aldous Huxley	<i>Brave New World</i>
George Orwell	<i>Coming Up for Air</i>

Asian Writers

Jhumpa Lahiri	<i>Interpreter of Maladies</i>
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni	<i>The Arranged Marriage, Sister of My Heart</i>
Michael Ondaatje	<i>Anil's Ghost</i>
Arundhati Roy	<i>The God of Small Things</i>