

Imagination, Art and Politics

Spring 2017

Tues/Thurs

12:00pm – 1:20pm

220 Stubbs

COURSE NUMBER: POLI 4090

CREDIT HOURS: 3

PREREQUISITE: None

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Josh Bowman

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225-578-2383

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OFFICE HOURS: Tues. and Thurs, 10:30a – 11:30am and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Henry David Thoreau once wrote that “The world is but a canvas to our imaginations.” But what is the imagination? What is the “picture” we paint on this canvas? What influences the human imagination and how does the *quality* of imagination impact everyday life?

For the individual, political beliefs and behavior always indicate more than an adherence to a particular platform, ideology, culture or even a set of values. Politics occurs within a comprehensive view of life, and our political behavior and beliefs draw on an intuition of reality, which helps direct our action. We act in the world in which we find ourselves and which we perceive through our imagination. We imagine the kind of world in which an action has to be taken before that action takes place. Our actions and related experiences in turn shape our imaginations and the way we behave. While one can observe a connection between specific values, cultural prejudices and ideological preferences and political activities, attention to the broadest context and sources of these particular influences discloses the large and pervasive role of the imagination as our most fundamental sense of what life is like. The imagination in this wider sense provides the general background for our preferences, directs reason and ultimately shapes our will and behavior. The quality of a person’s imagination is especially indicative of the nature of the person’s political morality, just as the latter influences the quality of the imagination.

In this class, “politics” encompasses more than views on such issues as war, property, slavery and the size of government. Politics is more than the “art and science of government,” a set of policy preferences or party platforms, the distribution and practice of power, the management of scarce resources or the processes by which a group of people makes and executes decisions. These elements do characterize the “political,” but they do not operate beyond imagination. We will also include ethical questions of “how shall we live?” theological and moral inquiries as to the nature of the “Good” and cultural reflections regarding tradition, value and identity.

Given the centrality of imagination to who we are as human beings, it follows that works of the creative imagination have considerable importance for social and political life. There is a sense in which the political landscape is the very tip of an iceberg shaped by film and literature, television and advertising, the visual and performing arts, poetry, music and more. The problem is that we seldom give much thought to the relationship between imagination and politics. We neglect the role art plays in what we believe, how we act toward others, how we construct policy and how we vote. It shapes the content of campaigns and media, influences race relations, foreign policy, and colors the way political actors diagnose and respond to a given problem.

Rather than passively and uncritically consuming the information, media and entertainment we are inundated with daily, this class provides a way to be more proactive and intentional in the way we encounter the world around us. The goal of this class then, is not so much to learn a series of facts and theories, but to cultivate a way of reading and asking questions. The hope is that, in the end, we will be better equipped to account for our own imaginations and to meaningfully engage with others.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All the King's Men, by Robert Penn Warren (any English edition)
ISBN: 9780156030960

Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk (any English edition)
ISBN: 9780805062977

The Plague by Albert Camus & Translated by Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage International, 1991)
ISBN: 9780679720218

Andy Catlett: Early Travels by Wendell Berry (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2006)
ISBN: 9781593761646

Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare (Folger Shakespeare Library, Simon & Schuster, 2004)
ISBN: 9780743482745

The Oedipus Cycle by Sophocles, Translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (Mariner Books, 2002)
ISBN: 9780156027649

Amusing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman (New York: Penguin Books, 2005)
ISBN: 9780143036531

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Will, Imagination and Reason by Claes G. Ryn (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997)
ISBN: 9781560009184

A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8th Ed., by Kate Turabian (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 2013)
ISBN: 9780226816388

OTHER READINGS

A substantial amount of the reading assigned in this class, such as additional short stories, speeches, images of works of art, films, YouTube clips, and e-books will be distributed in class and on Moodle. You may also want to purchase your own copies of Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, and Augustine's *City of God* and *Confessions*.

FILM SCREENINGS

Periodically, students will be asked to view selected films outside of class. While viewing the films is required, attendance at the scheduled screenings is not required. The purpose of the screenings is to avoid taking time away from crucial in-class discussion and to prevent the need for having students purchase the movies separately. When viewing the movies, students are encouraged to take notes in preparation for discussing the films in class and online in the Moodle Forums/Assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation

Substantive class participation, expressing both familiarity with and contemplation of course readings, media and topics, will be considered in the evaluation of final grades. This course is deliberately oriented toward frequent, open discussion, and all students should be prepared to contribute to the conversation.

Attendance of all classes is mandatory and will be taken at the *beginning* of each class. **If you are late to class, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor at the end of class.** Each absence after the 3rd will incur a 20-point deduction from the final grade. For example, a student earns an 850 (B) based on course assignments, but was absent a total of 6 times. 60 points would then be deducted from this grade, and the student would end up receiving a 790 (C+) for the course. A student who misses more than 7 classes (unexcused) in the semester will automatically fail the course. With this in mind, please reserve your quantity of permitted absences for true emergencies.

Forums and Web Assignments

10 separate weeks of the course, students will be required to contribute to an online discussion forum (or some other online activity) via Moodle. The topic(s) of the forum will be related to the readings or other media and will be determined by the instructor. Students will be asked to offer their own contribution to the forum as well as respond to at least one other student's contribution. For each forum, be sure to read the instructor's directions carefully. Separate guidelines and expectations will be provided.

These forums will not be assessed on the basis of "right" or "wrong" answers, but participants should demonstrate familiarity with the assigned texts and media and provide evidence of careful, critical thinking. Students should use examples from the assigned readings and are encouraged to incorporate relevant examples from readings and media not assigned for class.

Film Review Paper

Students are to choose either one full-length feature film, or a single season of a television series for this assignment. This will be a 3-5 page paper in which the student incorporates the "concept" of imagination in "reading" a movie or similar work of visual art.

The paper should be 3-5 double-spaced pages, with 1-inch margins, Times New Roman, 12-pt font with no space between paragraphs. Chicago style citations (i.e. footnotes or endnotes) are required. Proper grammar and syntax will be incorporated into the final grade. More detailed guidelines will be provided in class and are posted on Moodle.

Midterm and Final Exams

A midterm exam and a final exam will be administered in this course to check comprehension of key concepts, readings and topics covered in this course. They will be multiple choice and short-answer. Study guides will be provided.

Research Paper

A research paper of at least 12 double-spaced pages is required for this class. The paper should have 1-inch margins throughout, Times New Roman, 12-pt font with no space between paragraphs. Chicago style citations (i.e. footnotes or endnotes) are required. Proper grammar and syntax will be incorporated into the final grade. Topics will be submitted individually to Dr. Bowman for approval, and a rough draft will need to be shown to the instructor at mid-term demonstrating substantial progress toward the final draft.

The paper can engage a wide variety of topics, including movies, television series, works of literature and the visual arts, plays, musical works, political campaigns, political movements, and more. The final product needs to show a grasp of the key concepts of the course, the incorporation of assigned readings, and substantial independent research and reflection on the relationship between imagination and politics in light of the chosen topic. The subject of this paper cannot be the same as that of the “Film Review,” but it may focus on one or more of the readings, movies or other works assigned for this class. Further details will be provided separately.

LATE WORK POLICY

Late papers will be deducted 10 points for every day they are turned in late. Work due at the beginning of class that is turned in during or after the end of class is considered one day late. **Any work more than 8 calendar days late will not be accepted.**

Late work may be turned in by e-mail, but I **strongly** prefer a hard copy when possible (especially for the large final paper). Assignments turned in to my campus mailbox must be “time-stamped” and signed by the secretary.

The forums and web assignments will be accessible over the course of several days (usually Mon. – Thurs.) and will be time-sensitive. Students who do not participate within the designated time-frame will not receive credit for the assignment. There are no exceptions to this.

OFFICE HOURS AND ASSISTANCE

I am committed to helping you navigate the requirements and material of this course to the best of my ability. In addition to my scheduled office hours, I welcome your questions by e-mail and am happy to meet you during office hours or by appointment any time I am available to do so. In general, I will always be available for my office hours. However, if you can give me a heads up that you plan to stop by, I would greatly appreciate it!

Center for Academic Success (CAS) offers valuable tools and strategies, both online and in person, to help you achieve your academic goals. Services include private consultations, workshops, tutoring, and peer-led study sessions to help maximize your learning potential. CAS provides strategies for time management, test preparation, test anxiety, note-taking, as well as concept-mapping and college-level reading strategies.

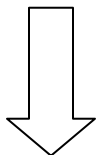
|B-31 Coates |225-578-2872 | cas@lsu.edu | www.lsu.edu/cas

GRADING

THERE WILL BE A TOTAL OF 1000 POINTS AVAILABLE IN THIS COURSE.

Attendance & Participation		100
Moodle Forums and Assignments	10 assignments, 30 pts each	300
Film Review Paper		125
Midterm Exam		100
Final Exam		100
Final Research Paper		275

A+	980 – 1000 POINTS		
A	930 - 979 POINTS	C+	780 – 799 POINTS
A-	900 - 929 POINTS	C	730 – 779 POINTS
B+	880 – 899 POINTS	C-	700 – 729 POINTS
B	830 – 879 POINTS	D	600 – 699 POINTS
B-	800 – 829 POINTS	F	Below 600 POINTS



**There will be no opportunities for extra credit in this course*

Grades will be posted on Moodle as they are available, but nearly 425 points will not be allocated until the very end of the class. With this in mind, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Bowman directly for a sense of how you're doing in the class. Moodle will not give a very accurate picture of your performance, with the exception of the weekly forum assignments.

SYLLABUS CHANGES

Due to a variety of circumstances the class agenda/schedule may deviate from the schedule made available the first week of the semester in the syllabus. As a result, due dates and reading schedules may vary. I will make every attempt to keep you aware of any needed changes and accommodate situations where alterations in the schedule create an inconvenience. Refer to Moodle regularly for updates to the course calendar.

CONTENT DISCLAIMER AND DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Any course on politics and art inevitably deals with *real life* behaviors, situations and human circumstances. As a consequence some material covered over the course of the semester will be potentially more *provocative* than others. Confronting uncomfortable and divisive topics and issues which we feel very passionate about is a necessary effect of this course. The intention is never to offend but to inform. As your professor, I am committed to approaching these topics as sensitively as possible and I expect students to do the same.

What do I mean by approaching these topics with “sensitivity”?

First, a productive conversation is always animated by humility. None of us know it all and we always have more to learn. This is not to say that confidence should be discouraged, but be ready to listen and to understand. Ask questions and be prepared to back up what you’re saying, or to say, “I was wrong” or “I may need to rethink that.”

Second, there is no place in this course for condescending language toward one another for any reason. Not only is it offensive, but it tends to hinder rather than help the conversation move along. You may think someone says something that is completely wrong, but disparaging another student’s character, intelligence or identity closes people off to learning and often distracts us from the core ideas and arguments. Now, one of the questions we’ll have to ask in this class is whether we can actually distinguish between a thinker and his or her thought and expression, but for talking between each other, we will aim for respect.

Tension, mystery, arguments, conflict, confrontation, division, disagreement and difference are at the heart of many of our favorite works of the imagination, and they are critical to a good class. But every person in a discussion must be treated with respect as persons with an inviolable dignity if that tension and disagreement is to be productive and educational.

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Cheating and/or plagiarism (the use of other’s work without giving credit or attempting to pass it off as your own) will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent that college rules allow. You are here to learn, develop new skills and to think in new ways. Taking the easy way out does not serve you or your future.

It is not a good enough excuse to say, “I didn’t know how to cite this!” Any time you quote or reference a source, proper citation is required. If you do not know how to cite something properly, I am more than happy to help you, as are the folks in the Center for Academic Success at Coates Hall B-31

You should also familiarize yourself with LSU’s Code of Student Conduct, which can be found online, as it pertains to academic dishonesty. Students who are suspected of plagiarism or cheating will be referred to the Office of Student Advocacy and Accountability for an investigation and possible penalty. This investigation could result in a zero for the assignment in question or a failing grade for the course. A second violation (for your full LSU career, not only in this course) could result in a suspension or expulsion from the university. If you plagiarize or cheat on an assignment I am required to report the matter. The process is out of my jurisdiction after that. Please keep this in mind and realize that it does not matter *why* you cheat or plagiarize, doing so for any reason and under any conditions will trigger the university’s investigative and disciplinary process for academic dishonesty.

For more on LSU’s definition of plagiarism, visit <http://students.lsu.edu/saa/students/plagiarism>

Schedule of Classes

*Updated 10 January 2017

JANUARY

Thursday, 12th - Introduction, Syllabus

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What is the Imagination?

Tuesday, 17th

READINGS: Plato *Republic*: Book II, 376e – Book III, 412b
Book VII (all)
Book X 595a-608b

The Bible Matthew 13:1-52, 20:1-16
(any version/translation) Mark 4
Luke 15

Augustine *Confessions* Book X, Ch. 7-19

SCREENING: *The Matrix* Wednesday, Jan. 18th 7:00pm
152 Coates

Thursday, 19th

READINGS: Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus/Rex, Antigone* (All)

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Tuesday, 24th -

READINGS: Aristotle *Poetics* (All)

SCREENING: *Architecture of Doom* Wednesday, Jan. 25th 7:00pm
152 Coates

Thursday, 26th -

READINGS: *Julius Caesar* Acts I-III

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Tuesday, 31st -

READINGS: *Julius Caesar* Acts IV-V

FEBRUARY

Thursday, 2nd

READINGS: Coleridge *Biographia Literaria*, Chs. IV, V, first par. of Ch. X, and all of Ch. XIII
Irving Babbitt *Democracy and Leadership*, Chs. 1-3
Hobbes *Leviathan*, Introduction – Chapter VI
Machiavelli *The Prince* Chs. VIII, XV- XIX, XXI

Proposed research paper topic due, with bibliography

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Imagination, Power and Political Morality

Tuesday, 7th

READINGS: *All the King's Men*, Chs. 1-2

Thursday, 9th

READINGS: *All the King's Men*, Chs. 3-4

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Tuesday, 14th

READINGS *All the King's Men*, Chs. 5-6

Film Review paper due

Thursday, 16th

READINGS *All the King's Men*, to the end
Robespierre "On Political Morality" <https://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/413/>

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Imagination, Order and History

Tuesday, 21st

READINGS Rousseau *Emile* (selections on Moodle)

Thursday, 23rd (Catch-Up Day)

READINGS None

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Tuesday, 28th – No class, Mardi Gras

MARCH

Thursday, 2nd

READINGS *The Plague*, Parts I-III

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Tuesday, 7th

READINGS *The Plague*, to the end
Camus *The Rebel*, Introduction, Part I and IV

SCREENING: *The Dark Knight Rises*

Thursday, 9th

Midterm Exam

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Tuesday, 14th

READINGS: *Fight Club*, Chs. 1-15

Thursday, 16th

READINGS: *Fight Club*, Ch. 15 – end

Rough draft of research paper due

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Imagination, Human Nature and Identity

Tuesday, 21st - Imagination and Ideology

READINGS: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
Russell Kirk – “What is Conservatism?”
Progressivism, Selected Writings (See Moodle)

Thursday, 23rd - Imagination, Identity and Human Nature

READINGS: Plato *Republic*, Book VIII – IX (543a - 576b)
Augustine *City of God*, Book XIII Ch. 14/ Book XIV Chs. 4-7, 10-13, 15-18, 22, 24-25, 28.
Hobbes *Leviathan*, Chs. XIII - XIV
John Locke *The Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. II-IV

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Tuesday, 28th - Imagination, Identity and Human Nature

READINGS: Wendell Berry “What are People For?”
“How to be a Poet”
R.W. Emerson “Self Reliance”

SCREENING: *Gattaca* - Time, Location TBA

Thursday, 30th - “America” and “Americans”

READINGS : Russell Kirk – “What are American Traditions?”
(More added later)

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APRIL

Tuesday, 4th - Imagination and Community

READINGS: *Andy Catlett*, Chs. I and II

SCREENING: *Poverty Cure* - - Time, Location TBA

Thursday, 6th - Imagination and Community

READINGS : *Andy Catlett*, to the end

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Tuesday, 11th – No Class, Spring Break

Thursday, 13th – No Class, Spring Break

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Tuesday, 18th – Media and Imagination

READINGS: *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, by Neil Postman, Chs. 1, 2

Thursday, 20th – Media and Imagination

READINGS: *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, by Neil Postman, Chs. 9, 11

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Tuesday, 25th – Imagination and Nature

READINGS: *Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson, Chs. 1-3
Thoreau, Selections from “Walking,” *Walden* and *The Maine Woods*

Final draft of research paper due

Thursday, 27th – No Class, Dr. Bowman Out of Town (?)

Thursday, May 4th 3pm-5pm –

Final Exam