

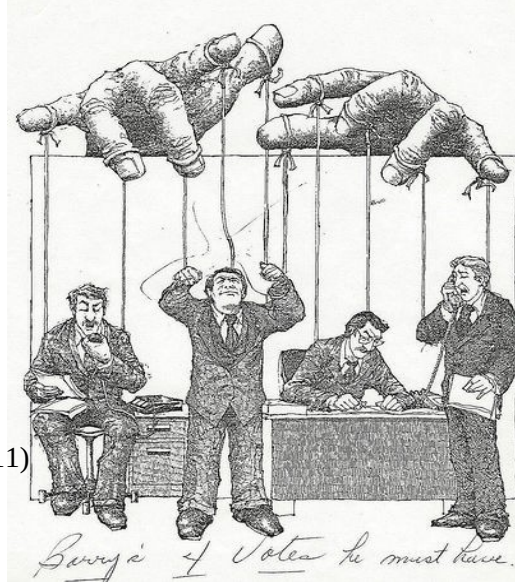
pLAYING pOLITICS:  
psychology, performance, strategy and the elections in real time

WINTER 2017

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**class times:**  
Wednesday, 6 – 9:30 pm  
Saturday, 10 – 5 pm  
(Jan 21, Feb 4, 11, 25 & Mar 11)

classroom: SEM II – D1105



WINTER 2017

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“Politics is just like  
show business”  
--Ronald Reagan

CRN: 20029

**Program website:** <https://sites.evergreen.edu/playingpolitics/>

## program description

The 2016 electoral cycle was unlike any other in modern history. The surprising election of Donald Trump—a billionaire developer, reality tv star and political neophyte—revealed an electorate clamoring for “change.” But change to what? In Fall Quarter we studied American electoral politics at all levels—local, state and national. We delved into the use and construction of political power—how it leverages cultural trends and reflects the geography of the electorate. Satire, rhetoric, “spin,” appeals to values, the invocation of class struggle and outrage, portrayals of the Constitution, bi-partisanship, race relations, LGBTQ and gender rights—all of these were part of our curriculum. We followed the campaigns as they unfolded in real time—through political ads, talking points, debates, and damage control. Fake news through social media became a significant factor in (mis)informing the public. We learned how tactics of performance are employed to create images that have purchase on the political stage. We also analyzed plays, narrative and documentary films, and other forms of art and entertainment to determine how they can reflect or shape political action and thought. In Winter Quarter we’ll consider the Inaugural Address (and the first 100 days) of President-elect Donald Trump as it compares to those of past presidents, as well as scrutinize the start of new national and state congressional sessions. How will newly elected and continuing politicians frame their plans for the future? How will the Democratic Party seek to resolve its internal contradictions and bolster its electoral appeal? What are the implications when a candidate wins the Electoral College but loses the popular vote by two million votes? Are there historical precedents that can help us understand this election? What will this mean for minorities? How might protest, in the form of theatre, marches and other actions, influence policy in the new administration? Will Trump govern on a hard right platform or tack to the center to appease the political opposition? What can we, as an informed electorate, anticipate from the next political cycle? Students who enroll in this program should expect to do independent research on the elections, study political rhetoric and events, analyze polls and election results, and gain a strong sense of the present state of affairs at local, state, and national levels, in the context of American political history. Expect a field trip to a stage performance or other relevant event. We will end this program as better informed citizens, more ready to exercise our rights from a position of knowledge.

**Additional questions and concepts that will inform our learning goals:**

- How do we, as informed citizens, distinguish between information, entertainment, propaganda and fake news?
- What is role of advertising, marketing, and public relations in politics?
- In what ways do politics and performance intersect in film, television and online?
- What is the role of popular culture? Of money? Of media concentration?
- How has “social media” and the Internet changed political discourse and electoral politics?
- What are frames, metaphors, and myths? How do they come about and what purpose do they serve?
- In what ways have the live performance and the screen mediums impacted political thought, action and presentation (packaging)?
- In an emotionally charged election, how can we maintain a critical stance or objective distance when the stakes are so high?
- What will the first 100 days of a Trump administration bring?

**Website**

Be sure to use the program website – <https://sites.evergreen.edu/playingpolitics/> for basic program information and to receive regular updates. Weekly READING materials (not including the required texts) and other class documents are **linked on CANVAS**.

**Fall quarter readings (ISBN books available at Evergreen Bookstore):**

- Tony Kushner. *Angels in America (Millennium Approaches & Perestroika)* ISBN 9781559363846
- Shakespeare. *Titus Andronicus* ISBN 9780415048682
- Sanders, Bernie. *Our Revolution* ISBN 9781782833581

Excerpted readings may include (not for purchase):

- Hillyguse and Shields. *The Persuadable Voter*
- Thomas Frank. *Listen Liberal*
- Matt Lewis. *Too Dumb to Fail*
- Mary Ellen McCaffree. *Politics of the Possible*
- Russ Weston. *The Political Brain*

**Other recommended readings and excerpt sources**

- Dan Gillmor. *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*
- George Lakoff. *Don't Think of an Elephant*
- Mark Levin. *Liberty or Tyranny*
- Frank Luntz. *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear*
- Sondra Myers, ed. *The Democracy Reader*
- Jason Stanley. *How Propaganda Works*
- Tony Kushner. *Lincoln* screenplay

## OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

**Seminars and Class Preparation:** It is expected that you will have thoroughly and thoughtfully read and/or viewed the selections for seminar and whole-class discussions. You should be prepared to identify key themes *supported by specific passages in the reading/viewing selections*. Topics will come from central themes and texts.

**Other Assignments will include:**

- “Politics in Real Time”: A bi-weekly *carefully written* summary of current events, hot issues, and satirical moments during the first 100 days of the Trump administration.
- Political Engagement Project: local or national

- Other writing may include: Short essays, reading notes, study or screening questions or other critical writing

**We generally will not accept late assignments** nor guarantee that they will be evaluated for credit. (All essays must be typed, double spaced, and double sided where appropriate).

**Portfolio contents:**

Students are required to keep a well-organized and comprehensive portfolio of their work in the program. It will be turned on the final Saturday of class and returned during your evaluation conference. The *minimum* the portfolio must contain to be considered for full credit is:

1. Program Syllabus and signed Program Covenant.
2. Weekly agenda handouts (in chronological order)
3. Your weekly Politics in Real Time (PIRT) assignments in chronological order
4. "Political Engagement Project: notes and presentation materials
5. All materials and notes from in-class lectures, workshops, and other activities
6. Your detailed reading and event watching notes
7. Performance/film screening worksheets, clearly labeled and in chronological order.
8. A separate section with any make-up assignments approved and accepted by faculty
9. A complete draft of your self evaluation for the program
10. A complete draft of your Academic Statement in its current form

To ensure the most complete and accurate evaluation of your work, the portfolio should be clearly organized and labeled, and easy to navigate. A student evaluation of faculty must be submitted at the time of the evaluation conference, either in hard copy or to the online system.

**Workload and Time Commitments:**

Successful completion of an 8-credit college level program requires a substantial investment of time and effort. National college accreditation standards dictate that, for every credit hour offered, students will be expected to invest approximately 3 hours per week, including time spent in class. For an 8-credit program, that suggests an expected time commitment of 24 hours per week. Given that our in-class time averages to about 7 hours per week, that leaves 17 hours per week of home study, including reading, writing, research, film and television screening, debate watching, project work, etc. Faculty in this program, therefore, have developed the program with the following expectations, to meet the national accreditation standards:

**Expected Average Time Commitment Per Week**

- **Class time:** 7 hours per week
- **Homework time:** 13-15 hours per week

Note that these are *average* expected commitments, for the "typical" adult college student. Depending on reading abilities, writing skills, and other factors, some individuals may take longer to complete all assignments, while others may finish the work more quickly. In general, though, you should plan to invest your time each week in accordance with the expectations above.

**Reading Notes—format for your portfolio:**

For each reading assignment you will include the following. Reading notes must be clearly labeled, dated, and legibly written or typed:

1. Use whatever note-taking system makes the most sense to you, but include the important ideas, questions that are coming up as you read, and page numbers of sections you want to return to, etc.
2. In addition to your other notes, choose one particular passage (with quotation) that stands out to you. You don't have to write out the whole passage, but might do something like this, from Matt Lewis' *Too Dumb to Fail*:

From p 96, beginning "...while conservatives were abandoning popular culture and academia, they were *flocking* to politics. The problem is that, in a democracy, once you've lost the cultural

institutions, all political victories are temporary."

3. Summarize or describe what's going on in the passage you have chosen (which can include key terminology or concepts being covered).
4. Pose a question about that passage in connection with the reading assignment (or other materials).