

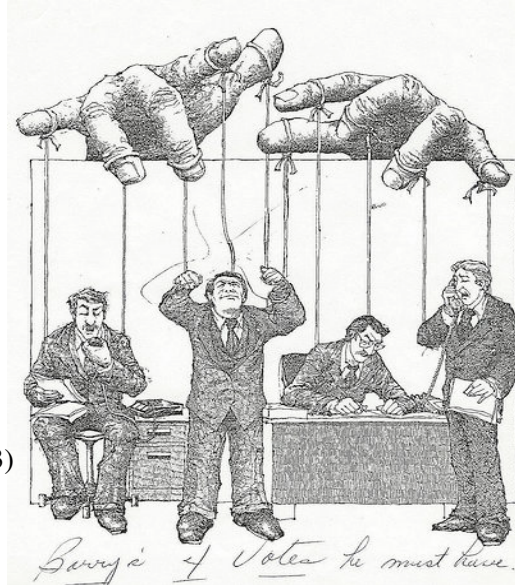
# **pLAYING pOLITICS:** **psychology, performance, strategy and the elections in real time**

FALL 2016

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*class times:*  
Wednesday, 6 – 9:30 pm  
Saturday, 10 - 5 pm  
(Oct 8 & 22, Nov 5 & 19, Dec 3)

*classroom:* SEM II – D1105



WINTER 2017

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

CRN: 10076

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

## **program description**

From socialists to tea-partiers, from partisans to independents, the 2016 electoral cycle is already shaping up to be a “doozie.” With no incumbents in the presidential race, the free-for-all early debates of the Republicans have been matched with a dynastic struggle among Democrats and, nationwide, state-level politics have become ever more important in the face of a dysfunctional Congress. How this turns out is anyone’s guess, but one thing is certain: it will not be boring! Join geographer John Baldrige and stage director Mark Harrison as we hone our skills as critically minded citizens in a two-quarter program that considers American politics from the perspectives of psychology, geography, performance art, and social relations.

With the US presidential election season as backdrop, we will engage with American politics at all levels, local, state and national. We will delve into the use and construction of political power—how it leverages cultural trends and reflects the geography of the electorate. We will examine how tactics of performance are employed to create images that have purchase on the political stage. Satire, rhetoric, “spin,” appeals to values, the invocation of class struggle, portrayals of the Constitution, bi-partisanship, race relations, gender rights—all of these will be part of our curriculum. What roles do citizens play? We will critique the campaigns as they unfold in real time—political ads, talking points, debates and damage control. And we will analyze plays, narrative and documentary films, and other forms of art and entertainment to determine how they have historically reflected or shaped political action and thought. Once the election results are in, what will “lame duck” politicians hope to accomplish? What choices will the new president-elect make in assembling a new cabinet?

Winter Quarter will see the Inaugural Address (and the first 100 days) of a new president as well as the start of new national and state congressional sessions. How do newly elected and continuing politicians frame their plans for the future? 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 in each quarter. 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 and propaganda?
- 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 have we learned from following politics in “real time?”

**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 books (available at Evergreen Bookstore):**

- Mike Bartlett. *King Charles III*
- Thomas Frank. *Listen, Liberal (or, Whatever Happened to the Party of the People)?*
- Matt Lewis. *Too Dumb to Fail: How the GOP Betrayed the Reagan Revolution to Win Elections*
- Drew Westen. *The Political Brain: the Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*
- Sean Devine. *Daisy* (pdf, not for sale at bookstore)

**Other recommended readings and excerpt sources**

- Ann Coulter, *Demonic*
- Joel Schechter. *Durov’s Pig* (e-book)
- Dan Gillmor. *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*
- George Lakoff. *Don’t Think of an Elephant*
- Sondra Myers, ed. *The Democracy Reader*
- Quintus Tullius Cicero, *How to Win an Election*
- Tony Kushner. *Lincoln* screenplay
- Mark Levin. *Liberty and Tyranny*
- Frank Luntz: *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear*

**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 may include:**

- “Politics in Real Time”: A weekly carefully written summary of current events, hot issues, and satirical moments. Will be discussed during the first week of class.
- Follow a Political Contest: With a partner, follow a particular contest; each of you becomes an expert on one candidate, and both of you report back to the class before election day.
- Field trip: We will be attending *King Charles III* at the Seattle Repertory Theatre.
- Political Engagement Project: a 2-3 page analysis of your experience will be handed in when you do your presentation.
- Other writing may include: Short essays, study questions or other critical writing or screening assignments
- Reading notes: (see end of syllabus)

**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:**

Students are required to keep a well-organized and comprehensive portfolio of their work in the program. It will be turned on the final day 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. "Follow a Political Contest" notes and presentation materials
5. "Political Engagement Project" notes and presentation materials
6. All materials and notes from in-class lectures, workshops, and other activities
7. Your detailed reading and event watching notes
8. Performance/film screening worksheets, clearly labeled and in chronological order.
9. A separate section with any make-up assignments approved and accepted by faculty
10. A complete draft of your self evaluation for the program
11. 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).