

AML 4170
Fall 2023 / Turlington 2322
R 6th-8th periods
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THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NOVEL

Welcome! Throughout this semester, we will embark on a literary journey through some of the most significant works in American literature, exploring the intersection of politics, society, and the human experience. By delving into these novels, we will gain insights into the complexities of power, social structures, and the human condition.

This course will examine five remarkable novels written by American authors who have left an indelible mark on literature and helped shape the discourse around political and social issues. We will delve into the themes, characters, and narratives of these works, and analyze the texts' perspectives on topics such as race, gender, social justice, and the impact of political systems. Our reading list includes *Meridian* by Alice Walker, *Native Son* by Richard Wright, *1984* by George Orwell, *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, and *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Each of these novels offers unique perspectives on the American experience, and we will explore how they contribute to the broader tradition of American Political Novels.

Throughout the course, we will engage in lively discussions, delve into thematic analysis, and examine the historical and cultural context in which these works were written. By critically engaging with these texts, we will develop our understanding of the power of literature to challenge prevailing ideologies, provoke thought, and inspire social change.

I encourage you to participate actively in class discussions, share your perspectives, and engage with the texts on a deep and analytically astute level. This course is an opportunity to expand your understanding of literature as a medium for social and political critique, and to develop critical thinking skills that will be valuable beyond the classroom.

I look forward to embarking on this intellectual journey with each of you. Let's dive into the rich tapestry of American Political Novels and discover the transformative power of literature together.

Required Texts and Materials

PLEASE NOTE: you will need a pack of 3X5 index cards.

1. *Meridian* by Alice Walker
2. *Native Son* by Richard Wright
3. *1984* by George Orwell
4. *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair
5. *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 (8/31):

- Introduction to the course and syllabus overview
- Overview of the American Political Novel as a genre
- Background on the authors
- Organization Note: Students will self-select discussion groups for the duration of the course.

Weeks 2-3 (9/7-14):

- *Meridian* by Alice Walker
 - Week 2: “Meridian”
 - Week 3: “Trueman Held” – “Ending”
 - Discussion Focus: Exploring themes of race, gender, and activism
 - Thematic Analysis: Examining the impact of societal expectations and the pursuit of personal freedom
 - Organization: Small group discussions and sharing of insights within discussion groups.

Weeks 4-5 (9/21-28):

- *Native Son* by Richard Wright
 - Week 4: Book One
 - Week 5: Book Two -Three
 - Discussion Focus: Analyzing the effects of racism and social oppression
 - Thematic Analysis: Exploring the complexities of identity and the limitations imposed by societal expectations
 - Organization: Group discussions within discussion groups to analyze specific chapters or themes.

Weeks 6-7 (10/5-12):

- *1984* by George Orwell
 - Week 6: Part One (Chapters 1-6)
 - Week 7: Part Two (Chapters 7-12)
 - Discussion Focus: Analyzing the totalitarian regime and its control mechanisms
 - Thematic Analysis: Examining themes of surveillance, power, and manipulation of truth
 - Organization: Class-wide discussions and **Impromptu** discussions to analyze dystopian elements and societal implications.

Week 8 (10/19):

- **Preparation Day for Group Presentations**
 - Students will meet with their assigned groups to collaborate and prepare for their group projects and presentations.
 - Organization: Group work, discussions, and preparation.
- **Take Home Midterm Exam Opens**
 - Comprehensive examination on the themes, analysis, and discussions of the course so far.

Weeks 9-10 (10/26-11/2-9): **Midterm Exam due in Canvas 10/26 by 11:55 pm**

- *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair
 - Week 9: Chapters 1-17
 - Week 10: Chapters 18-31
 - Discussion Focus: Examining the harsh working conditions and exploitation in the meatpacking industry

- Thematic Analysis: Exploring themes of labor rights, capitalism, and socioeconomic inequality
- Organization: Active participation in class discussions and critical analysis of the novel's depiction of the industrial system. Class-wide discussions and **Impromptu** discussions.

Weeks 11-14 (11/16-30):

- "The Grapes of Wrath" by John Steinbeck
 - Week 11: Chapters 1-12 (Group One presentation—40 minutes)
 - Week 12: **NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**
 - Week 13: Chapters 13-21 (Group Two presentation—40 minutes)
 - Week 14: Chapters 22-30 (Group Three presentation—40 minutes)
 - General discussion focus: Exploring the impact of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression on migrant workers
 - Thematic Analysis: Examining themes of resilience, community, and the pursuit of the American Dream
 - Organization: Analyzing key scenes, discussing the socio-political context of the novel, and comparing with other texts studied.
 - Course Wrap-Up

Grade Distribution

GROUP PRESENTATIONS –50 pts

These forty-minute panel sessions probe previously discussed questions and explore new ones. You will find panel assignments in Canvas under "People." Be creative in your presentations. Do not line up and give reports. I repeat: DO NOT. Have fun with this project! Present your analysis and interpretations through narration while acting out a scene or revising a scene; stage a debate or a trial; juxtapose the novel with artwork, music, or poems. Be sure to involve the class. Only your imagination limits the possibilities!

One class period is dedicated to panel planning so there should be no excuse for any member's lack of participation. From this planning period, the panel is expected to produce a one paragraph abstract of the proposed presentation and submit it to me during the next class period. The first group should plan to do this earlier (if my assistance is required). In addition, each panel group is asked to write a brief summary of the group's work, individual effort, and the panel's contribution to the class objectives. This two- or three-page summary is due the week following the panel presentation. A grade is assigned for this paper and averaged with panel presentation grades. I record only the final score.

Response Papers—200 points

You should focus your response paper on your group presentation text and readings. You can develop an idea presented in the group report, but you must go beyond it by using additional

research and analysis. Your response paper must be no more than five (5) pages long, excluding bibliography, and are due a week after your group's presentation.

Demonstrate your knowledge, compare theories, and engage the text -- the more original your contemplations and assessments, the better your grade. Keep the course objectives in mind when writing (but you may also expand your comments beyond this boundary). Research the text or topic you are considering and share your thoughts. Research is a requirement of the response papers. Include at least two sources. Without presenting evidence of outside research and its consideration in the paper, you will earn no more than 187.5 points (or 75%). Submit your paper via Canvas (see upload site under "Assignments"). If you run into problems, see me.

250 points—Other

Points breakdown is available in Canvas under "Assignments."

Attendance: I take attendance very seriously and expect you to come to class every day on time. Bring a 3X5 card to class each session, which alerts me to your presence. Turn it end when requested during each session. See "Entrance Passes" and "Preparation /Participation" below for additional information concerning these cards as well as their role in attendance grading.

You are allowed up to three unexcused absences, your grade will automatically drop a half letter grade after the third unexcused absence. If you reach nine (totaling three weeks of class) absences, you will automatically fail the course and should withdraw from the class or you will receive an "E" for the semester. No Incomplete grades are given for this course.

Caveat: Excused absences are permitted if you provide a typewritten letter documenting an illness, a family crisis, or participation in a university sponsored event. All students should consult with me to make up material missed during an excused absence. For additional information, please see our University guidelines cited in the "Course Policies" section of this syllabus.

Entrance Passes: Purchase a pack of 3x5 index cards. These cards are rollcall passes and will be used to inform me of your attendance and reading progress. Bring one with you every class session. Without an entrance pass you will be considered absent so be sure to put your name on them and turn them in when asked. Tardy attendees' cards will be collected at the end of class. Tardiness will be recorded and considered during grading. Consistent tardiness will result in a final letter grade reduction.

Preparation / Participation: All readings and take-home assignments must be prepared and ready for each class session. Take notes concerning the reading assignment. On your 3X5 cards, prepare a discussion question just in case you are called on to do an impromptu discussion. Poorly constructed, irrelevant, or perfunctory comments will result in point reductions in this area of grading. I do not want you to tell me you liked a particular reading, for instance. Your response to assigned readings must be intelligent, thoughtful, and scholarly. Identify why the material is valuable to our class discussion (or objectives) or how the material engages themes and topics under survey.

IMPROMPTU Discussions

I will select several students (during class) to enter into discussions guided by issues raised in your notes or issues assigned for responses. If you are selected to engage in an impromptu discussion, you are required to extend your entrance card to a one to two-page paper and submit it via Canvas under “Impromptu Discussions.” You must bring depth to the idea on the floor for discussion as well as offer your own remarks for consideration. Discussions will proceed as follows:

1st Speaker—offers commentary on the assigned reading

2nd Speaker—responds with reflections on the opening statement

You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.

1st Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #2 with depth of insight

2nd Speaker—adds additional information from his or her own notes

1st Speaker—responds to the additional information

(You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.)

2nd Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #1 with depth of insight

Speaker #2—concluding statements

Speaker #1—concluding statements

Speaker #3—Summary of the issues raised

Summary participants review what was argued or discussed and offer insights overlooked or not fully considered. The selected summary speaker must summarize highlights of the conversation--do not repeat everything--and should introduce related information

from additional texts read that week, texts read in previous weeks, or his/her own entry pass.

Open Class Discussion—volunteers from the class and professor offer insights

This pattern will repeat with new speakers. Be prepared for participation without prior notice.

After you engage in an impromptu "Table Talk" discussion, you are required to extend your comments to a one to two-page paper and submit it in Canvas before the beginning of the next class session.

Participation: Students should complete all readings and assignments prior to the class meeting and participate fully in class discussion. Assessment for participation is made in the areas of attendance, engagement, leadership, teamwork, and originality.

Strong participation includes:

1. only excused absences with no recorded tardiness
2. adherence to course policies, assignments and guidelines
3. evidence that readings are completed and ready for class discussions
4. outside research done and shared with class on multiple occasions
5. clear and respectful exchanges with other students and the professor
6. volunteering to enter or begin discussions (brief presentations included)
7. leadership within small group activities noted by reporting out for the group or taking a guiding role
8. an understanding of teamwork and one's responsibility to advancing positive class or group dynamics
9. originality in thought, discussion and response paper information and sharing
10. encouraging others' ability to enter or sustain participation in discussions
11. engaging questions from the professor or other students without hesitation or persuasion

Rubric

“A” level participation is strong in all key areas and earns 100-90 points.

“B” level participation, albeit promising, is notably weak in two key areas and earns from 89-80 points.

“C” level participation is notably weak in three key areas and earns from 79-70 points.

“D” level participation is significantly weak in Three or more of the key areas and earns from 69-60 points

below 59 points. is failing level participation.

Exams, Quizzes and Other Assignments: There may be pop quizzes—no makeup quizzes. Your performance during class, progress evaluations (tests and quizzes) and in-class discussions will determine if a final exam is necessary. I will inform you of my decision. There will be a midterm exam due in Canvas on Oct. 26th.

Extra Credit (5 bonus points): *This is an optional assignment.* You may give a fifteen-minute oral report to the class on an issue or author under discussion. You decide what you want to do. All reports must be approved prior to presentation, however. Submit a short proposal describing what you plan to do. The assignment will earn scores ranging from 1/2 to 5 points (added to your overall course score).

POINT DISTRIBUTION AND GRADING CRITERIA

All papers and short essay quizzes are evaluated on content, originality, creativity, connections to course objectives, and form (grammar, spelling, bibliography, etc.). Grades will be calculated in terms of possible score percentages with no curve. You are guaranteed an A or A- if you earn 450 points or more out of 500 possible points (90 %+).

435 to 449 (87% +) B+	385 to 399 (77 % +) C+	335 to 363 (67 %+) D+
415 to 434 (83% +) B	365 to 384 (73 %+) C	315 to 334 (63 %+) D
400 to 414 (80 %+) B-	350 to 364 (70 %+) C-	300 to 314 (60 %+) D-

Grading Criteria

Assignments will be graded on how proficiently they meet expectations in the key areas of content, organization, and grammar/mechanics and prose style.

Strong content includes:

- A clearly delineated and/ or interpreted topic
- A strong, clear, and logically developed thesis that is supported by fully developed ideas in the form of relevant textual evidence and research
- Ideas that show evidence of independent thinking
- Commentary that explains how the concrete details support the thesis. Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection.

-research supporting materials (note: Google searches are fine for starters, but please use academic journals and books for strong research effort)

Strong organization includes:

-The effective arrangement of points that reveals itself in very good incorporation of evidence (use of summary, paraphrase) and the sparing and judicious use of quotations

-Rounded and well-connected paragraphs

-The use of appropriate transitions

Strong grammar, mechanics, and prose style is characterized by:

-Mature sentence structure, syntax, and diction

-Strong audience awareness as evidenced in the use of appropriate style, register, tone, and vocabulary

-Little to no errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation as well as less than three fatal errors in the entire document

-The formatting of document in keeping with prescribed guidelines—including length of response submissions

Rubric

The “A” (or A-) submission has strong content, strong organization, AND strong grammar/mechanics and prose style. To receive an “A” or “A-” work needs to offer support in the form of textual evidence and secondary research materials (using direct quotes and paraphrase), present original insight in argumentation, and be organized clearly and logically with sources documented using MLA style guidelines.

A “B” submission is notably weak in ONE of the above key areas.

A “C” submission, albeit promising, is notably weak in TWO or more of the above key areas.

A “D” submission is significantly weak in TWO or more of the above key areas.

Additional information concerning UF grading policies may be found on the undergraduate catalog web page <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Course Policies

- *“Fatal Errors” Policy:* Students must meet high standards in writing. To this end, all written assignments must meet minimal presentation criteria to be acceptable. These standards address spelling, punctuation, format and basic grammar. The term *Fatal Errors* refers to formal writing errors of form. Specifically, they include the following and will be identified in evaluated written assignments by error number:
 1. Each different word misspelled,

2. Each sentence fragment,
3. Each run-on sentence or comma splice,
4. Each mistake in capitalization (capitalize Black and White when referring to individuals, communities, or ideas),
5. Each serious error in punctuation that obscures meaning, including errors in the use or failure to use italics and quotation marks,
6. Each error in verb tense or subject/verb agreement,
7. Each instance of ending a sentence with a preposition,
8. Each improper citation, or lack of citation, where one is needed
9. Each misuse of words (*who* for *that* or unwarranted use of clichés, for instance) and reference problems,
10. Poor Paragraphing or lack of paragraphing,
11. Lack of conformity with assignment format.

Papers with more than **three (3) fatal errors on any one page** or more than **seven (7) for the entire document** will be returned to the student and will suffer a half letter grade deduction.

Only one resubmission is allowed. Penalties for final course papers (where there is no time for a resubmission) will be based on the relative importance of the assignment to the determination of the final course grade. This policy applies to all assignments, excluding entrance cards and portfolio progress grading (if applicable).

- Cell phones and computers: Cell phones must be muted during the class session. If an emergency occurs and you have to respond to calls or texts, please leave the classroom. Computers (iPads or other electronics) are allowed for note taking, access to eBooks and presentations only. Anyone using a computer for any other purpose will be asked to deliver the device to me for retrieval after class. You may record the class (presentations, for instance) with my permission only.
- Papers / Journals: All papers must be typed and double spaced using the 8 1/2 x 11-page layout with one-inch margins all around. Use Courier or Times font at 12-point size. Documentation and form should follow the MLA style manual. Number all pages after the first within the upper right margin.
- Grade Disputes: Questions about assigned grades are acceptable during my office hours only. If my written responses do not address your concerns, I will explain why a grade was earned. With the exception of miscalculation or oversight, I will not consider grade changes. **Please do not ask; I consider it harassment.** You may consult the English

Department Associate Chair, for grade appeals, however. Please note: appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

- Missed class sessions: Make up work for approved absences must be addressed within one week of your return. See me for submission deadlines for missed work within this time frame.
- Late submissions will suffer a half letter grade reduction.
- *“Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> (Links to an external site.).”*

University Policies

In-Class Recording

- Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is

posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) -- Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website. GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>.
- Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>.
- Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.
- Student Complaints Campus:

https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf.

- On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>.

Academic Honesty:

Honor Code. “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.” This oath represents UF’s commitment to academic honesty and integrity. “Cheating, plagiarism, bribery, misrepresentation, conspiracy and fabrication” are violations of the Honor Code. All students must abide by the student honor code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration,

see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student---honor---code.aspx>[Links to an external site.](#)

Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>[Links to an external site.](#)

COURSE EVALUATIONS: “Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>[Links to an external site.](#)”