

Politics and Film: Political Science 3033
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“Politics is a drama taking place in an assumed and reported world that evokes threats and hopes... It is composed of the images and models into which people translate the reported news, for that translation is always necessary... The models, scenarios, narratives, and images into which audiences for political news translate the news are social capital not individual inventions. They come from works of art in all genres: novels, paintings, stories, films, dramas, and sitcoms... In a crucial sense, then, art is the fountainhead from which political discourse, beliefs about politics, and consequent actions ultimately spring.” Murray Edelman, From Art to Politics.

Requirements: Students are expected to attend all of the in-class film screenings on Tuesday evening (please be sure to sign the attendance sheet at the front of the room) as well as the two hour discussion seminar on Thursday evening. Students who miss more than 2 screenings may be penalized. It will be possible to watch the films a second time on Web CT. All of the reading materials can be purchased from TU Copy. Students will write a six page paper on each of the sections using the films we have watched and the essays that were assigned. The papers are due the Friday of the week following the end of each section. The final grade will be an average of the papers, though I will also take into account class participation.

A Liberal Narrative
John Ford and the New Deal

Young Mr. Lincoln (1939)
Stagecoach (1939)
The Grapes of Wrath (1940)

A Conservative Narrative
Frank Capra’s Populism

Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1936)
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)
Meet John Doe (1941)

The American Dream
according to Robert Rosson

Body and Soul (1946)
All the King’s Men (1947)
The Hustler (1961)

Competing Narratives
American Business on Film

Wall Street (1987)
Working Girl (1988)
Boiler Room (2000)

The War Film Narrative
Seeing Iraq

Three Kings (1999)
In the Valley of Elah (2007)