

Political Science 87
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Fall Quarter 2008
W 10 - 11:50
October 1 - 29
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POWER IN FICTION

Objectives

Power is a crucial aspect of politics. Indeed, many political scientists define their discipline as the study of power. Many individuals seek power, and power can be pursued, used, and abused in various ways. This course will explore four prominent works of fiction, set in very different societies and times. The objective of the course is through reading and discussion of these books to develop a better understanding of the pursuit, uses, and abuses of power.

Approach

This is a freshman seminar, and there are no prerequisites. There will be five seminar meetings. Class attendance is required, and except for the first day of class you should come to class prepared to discuss the literature assigned for that day. The initial meeting will be partly organizational, and we shall also explore the nature of power and its uses and abuses. The remaining four seminar meetings will be devoted to four works of fiction. You will have to write a brief discussion paper (1000 words or more) on one of these readings. The generic paper topic is: "How this book/play helps me understand the pursuit, use, and abuse of power." Papers are due no later than 5 pm the day before we discuss the book in class, or preferably earlier. They should be handed in or left in an envelope outside my office (SSB 384). All dates and class schedules are subject to change through announcement in class.

Books and Materials

The following books have been ordered by the bookstore:

Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People*

Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*

C. P. Snow, *The Masters*

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

Paperback editions are available through the bookstore, but you should feel free to use any edition you can find. All readings will also be placed on library reserve.

Calendar

October 1: INTRODUCTION: POWER, POLITICS, AND FICTION

Readings:

Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*. Prentice-Hall 1963, ch. 5 ("Power and Influence").

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*. University of Illinois Press 1982, ch. 1 ("Power and Participation").

October 8: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Reading: Ibsen

October 15: CHALLENGING POWER

Reading: Achebe

October 22: ABUSE AND POWERLESSNESS

Reading: Solzhenitsyn

October 29: SEEKING POWER THROUGH BARGAINING AND PERSUASION

Reading: Snow