

OLLI: Spring 2014: US of Hollywood: Our Journey: 80 Years of Political Films

films screened this semester:

GABRIEL OVER THE WHITE HOUSE (1933)
MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON (1939)
ALL THE KING'S MEN (1949)
THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (1962)
BOB ROBERTS (1992)
THE IDES OF MARCH (2011)
or reference any other political films you've seen



questions / comparisons:

1. what view of our government & political processes do these films give us?
 - has that portrayal changed over the decades?
 - what view of "political machines" do the films give us?
 - is the system in the films moral & responsive to voters' needs?
 - is corruption at the same level in later films as in earlier films?
 - is salvation possible at end of each film?do films make use of the iconography of democracy (Lincoln Memorial, e.g.)?
 - do they challenge / criticize the existing political system?
 - what do these films say about the society of the times in which they were made?
 - what do these films say about the history of the times in which they were made?
 - what can they tell us about our own contemporary times?



2. what part does religion play in these films?
3. what part does big business play in these films?
4. what part does populism play in these films?

questions / comparisons: continued:



5. what place do women have in these films?
are they active politically or just moral support for males?
6. the media: has role of media in political films changed over past 80 years?
how have different films we've seen portrayed media? how do politicians use it?
what are the implications for our society of manipulation of media?
7. compare the political heroes of these films:
President Hammond: GABRIEL OVER THE WHITE HOUSE
Jefferson Smith: MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON
Willie Stark: ALL THE KING'S MEN
Major Bennett Marco: THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
Bob Roberts: BOB ROBERTS
Stephen Meyers: THE IDES OF MARCH
what are they like when they start out? how "attractive" are they?
what do they encounter along the way? do they change?
do these men attain power? if so:
what do they do with power? what does it cost them?
what happens to turn story toward finish? how do they end up?
is Willie Stark right? does good come from evil?
do these political heroes reflect the times in which the films were made?
8. does portrayal of conspiracy & paranoia in films reflect US society of different eras?
do films show realistic picture of paranoia of specific periods?
for example: sharp increase in number of films after JFK's assassination?
what does portrayal say about our society's progress towards stability & equality?
are we being brainwashed / programmed by manufactured images?
9. do political films influence how, if, or why we vote?
or do they merely reinforce beliefs we already hold?
do documentaries influence us more than fiction films?

