

UHON 302-021
Business in Film and Literature
Spring 2015

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Course description

This class will focus on portrayals of corporations, their managers, and their employees in film and literature. Through these media we will develop some common themes around the portrayal of business (*writ large*) in fiction and compare that with actual business behavior. We will discuss why positive views of business and businesspeople are so scant in fiction with an eye towards discerning the underlying drivers of such portrayals. In a nutshell, business brings much that is both good and bad into the world, yet fictional accounts of business seem to focus on the bad. During our 15 weeks together we'll try to get to why.

Course materials

There are 5 assigned readings for this class:

Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller
Liars Poker by Michael Lewis
Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguru
The Maltese Falcon by Dashiell Hammett
The Moon is a Harsh Mistress by Robert Heinlein

We will also watch a movie every other week to allow you to take some time in doing the readings.

In addition to keep pace with the world of business, you are also **strongly encouraged** to subscribe to a business periodical (*Business Week*, *Financial Times*, *Fortune*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*).

Course requirements and grading

In developing course requirements and a grading scheme, I have tried to include a broad range of assignments that encompass not only the course material but also oral and written communication skills:

Class participation and engagement	30 %
Three short reaction papers	20 %
First longer paper	20 %
Final paper	30%

Any total score over 85 will earn an A. 70-85 will earn a CR. Under 70 will be a NC. But, this is subject to change as I see how the course develops. If you ever have any questions about your standing in the class, please ask me.

Participation and engagement. As a seminar, this class will rely heavily on input from every student, including yourself. The quality of the classroom experience will depend heavily on the participation and active engagement of the students. Therefore, attendance will be a critical element of our collective learning. Equally important is active *class engagement* with the course material and with the other seminar participants.

Short reaction papers. These 2 page papers require you to respond to any material from the class. These papers should communicate any feelings elicited by the reading or film in question. You must write one reflection paper in response to a film and one in response to a reading. The source material for the third is up to you ☺.

First longer paper. The first paper, which must be longer than 7 pages allows you to explore any topic you find of interest in any of the material we cover in the first half of the class, so long as it relates to the topic of the portrayal of business. Thus, for example, you can focus on a single character, a subtheme from a film or reading, or compare and contrast two (or more) works of fiction that we've covered. This paper is less structured than the final paper, but, as a collectivity will allow us to draw out some themes that we're perceiving thus far in the course

Final paper. This assignment involves you directly addressing any one of the themes we uncover during the semester. In this paper, you pick a theme and discuss where we see that theme surface in the material we covered in class. However, you need not constrain yourself to the material in class, outside films and literature are appropriate to discuss the theme you have chosen. In addition to documenting the theme in movies or literature, you also need to discuss why this theme in fictional portrayals of business developed. Since this is the first time a course like this has been taught in honors, part of the semester will be devoted to further structuring this assignment. This paper needs to be no shorter than 10 pages.

Policies and procedures

Reasonable accommodation will be given to any individual with a legitimate disability. Please contact the instructor privately for arrangements. If you are a qualified person with disabilities who might need appropriate academic adjustments, please communicate with me as soon as possible so that we may make appropriate arrangements to meet your needs in a timely manner. Frequently, we will need to coordinate accommodating activities with other offices on campus. Course materials can be made available in alternative formats.

Finally, if I can be helpful to you in any way as we proceed through the course, please see me during office hours, make an appointment, or send me an email.

Appendix 1: Summary schedule

Sess. #/date	Topic	Reading
	Business in Film and Literature	
1 M 1/12	Intro	<i>No reading for this class</i> , but begin reading <i>Death of a Salesman</i>
2 W 1/14	<i>GlenGarry Glen Ross</i> , Part I	<i>No reading</i>
3 M 1/19	<i>Martin Luther King Day</i>	<i>No class</i>
4 W 1/21	<i>GlenGarry Glen Ross</i> , Part II	<i>No reading</i>
5 M 1/26	<i>GlenGarry Glen Ross</i> Discussion	<i>No reading</i>
6 W 1/28	Death of a Salesman Discussion	Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller
7 M 2/2	<i>Wall Street</i> , Part 1	<i>No reading for this week</i> , but begin reading <i>Liars Poker</i>
8 W 2/4	<i>Wall Street</i> , Part 2	
9 M 2/9	<i>Wall Street</i> Discussion	
10 W 2/11	<i>Liars Poker</i> Discussion	<i>Liars Poker</i> by Michael Lewis
11 M 2/16	<i>Office Space</i> , Part 1	<i>No reading for this week</i> , but begin reading <i>Never Let Me Go</i>
12 W 2/18	<i>Officer Space</i> , Part 2	
13 M 2/23	<i>Office Space</i> Discussion	
14 W 2/25	<i>Never Let Me Go</i> Discussion	<i>Never Let Me Go</i> by Kazuo Ishiguru
15 M 3/2	<i>Citizen Kane</i> , Part 1	<i>No reading for this week</i> , but begin reading <i>Maltese Falcon</i>
16 W 3/4	<i>Citizen Kane</i> , Part 2	
M 3/9-13	No class	<i>Spring Break</i>
17 M 3/16	No class	Work on paper
18 W 3/18	<i>Citizen Kane</i> and <i>Maltese Falcon</i> Discussion	<i>Maltese Falcon</i> by Dashed Hammett
19 M 3/23	Can organizations care and in group & out group in orgs	Liedtka, Jeanne M. 1996. Feminist Morality and Competitive Reality: A Role for an Ethic of Care?. <i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i> , 6: 179-200. Richards, J., & Marks, A. 2007. Biting the hand that feeds: Social identity and resistance in restaurant teams. <i>Int. Journal of Business Science and Applied Management</i> , 2(2) 42-57. Begin reading <i>Moon is a Harsh Mistress</i>
20 W 3/25	The American Dream	
21 M 3/30	<i>Hudsucker Proxy</i> , Part 1	
22 W 4/1	<i>Hudsucker Proxy</i> , Part 2	
23 M 4/6	<i>Hudusucker Proxy</i> discussion, last questions on paper	Paper 1 exploring a major theme from class due at midnight to Learn site.
24 W 4/8	Whom do companies serve?	Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, "Managing for Stakeholders", introduction Friedman, "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" http://www.forbes.com/sites/donaldldelves/2011/03/09/whom-do-public-companies-now-serve/
25 M 4/13	Read each other's papers	Papers on Learn
26 W 4/15	Scenes from <i>Avatar</i> , Part 1	
27 M 4/20	Scenes from <i>Avatar</i> , Part 2	
28 W 4/22	<i>Avatar</i> Discussion	
29 M 4/27	<i>Moon is a Harsh Mistress</i> discussin	
30 W 4/29	Wrap up discussion of business in film and literature	<i>No reading</i>

Final paper due by midnight the day of the scheduled final for this class.