

History/Political Science 315
McKnight
Office Hrs. (TBA)

Fall '92

*Corrected /
revised version*

The Politics of Assassination

Texts for Course: Harold Weisberg, Whitewash I: The Report on the Warren Report; Warren Commission, Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy; David Garrow, The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.; G. McKnight (ed.), Documents Manual on Politics of Assassination.

Statement of Purpose: The essential purpose of the course is to examine how American institutions responded or failed to respond to the major political assassinations of the 1960s--John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. The instructional content of the course includes a variety of materials: monographs, government documents, articles, t.v. cassettes, films and class discussion. The instructor regards all of these instructional devices equally important for furthering the basic purposes of the course. The expectation is that at the end of the semester the student will have a more meaningful historic context within which to judge these momentous events and will be better able to evaluate their continuing impact on our form of government, the political and social order, and will understand why a course like this is necessary.

Procedure: This is a course for students interested in teaching themselves and each other about the major political assassinations of the 1960s. It will require reading in government documents (made available under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act), analyses of these documents, and active participation in class. The quality of the course depends largely upon the assigned readings, which I have carefully assigned, and the quality of student participation over which I have no control.

Requirements: Students are responsible for the assigned weekly readings and will respond to these orally in class and in a "journal format" which will be turned in at the end of each class session. The weekly journal entry should be at least 2-3 double-spaced type-written pages. I will comment on these journals and return them the following week. The journal is not a book report; rather it should reflect your personal responses, questions, intellectual or emotional, to what you have read and your efforts to respond to the questions posed by the instructor with each weekly assignment. Then suggested questions for each class period are provided to get you started on the material and will serve as the basis for class discussion. However, they are not meant to restrict you in any way. For example, your entries might ask how the reading fits together with or contradicts what you have already read or know. Does it interest you, or move you in any way (fear, anger, surprise, etc.). Does it suggest new lines of analysis? There are no "wrong" answers in the journal; the only failure is the failure to respond. In short, the journal should represent an ongoing dialogue between the student and the course curriculum.

Grades and all that: Grades in this course will be arrived at roughly in the following manner:

Journals and class participation. . . .	60%
Midterm exam or book report option	20%
Final exam (comprehensive). . . .	20%

September 1st . . . Orientation . . .

Housekeeping chores
Class: Background lecture on JFK in 1963
(designed to help with next week's assignment).

September 8th . . . Dallas in Perspective

Readings: Senate Hearings[Church Committee]:

"Institutionalizing Assassination: The 'Executive Action' Capability," pp. 181-190.

Senate Hearings[Church Committee]: "Executive Action Programs Against Castro," pp. 71-90. All on Library Reserve.

Read also: Fletcher Prouty, "President Kennedy and the Vietnam War," and National Security Memoradums # 55 and # 263. (Note if reading material is not expressly listed as being on Library Reserve it can always be found in the Documents Manual).

Newspaper exercise: Be sure you read JFK's American University Speech found in the New York Times for June 11, 1963. (Hood Library microfilm).

Some Questions: To your mind what relevance does the material contained in the Church Committee hearings have for any investigation into the assassination of JFK? What is the importance of JFK's American University speech in terms of the Cold War and as a contxt for Dallas? Why should NSM # 55 and 263 be regarded as key documents as applied to future U.S. covert actions and JFK's Vietnam policy?

Note to readers: The selected material for this assignment was chosen to provide some of the atmosphere or context to JFK's assassination. For example, it is important to note that the Warren Commission knew nothing about the CIA's "Executive Action" programs in general and nothing about those specifically targeted against Fidel Castro. As far as the NSMs 55 and 263, read the language carefully and be as analytic as possible. (Instructor will focus on these in a bit of detail in class).

September 15th . . . The Warren Commission and Its Case

Readings: The Warren Commission Report, Chpts. 1, 3, and 4 (and any others you are curious about).

Read also: Weisberg, Whitewash I (hereafter cited as WWI), Chpts. 1, 2, and 3.

Class Reports: Compose a mini-biography for each member of the Warren Commission. These bios. should contain material pertinent to the workings of the Commission. For example, what were each member's political affiliations? Can you identify any of them as Kennedy liberals? What various roles did they have in the private and public sectors during their long careers? The best and quickest source for this information can be found in the reference work entitled Political Profiles--The Johnson Years found in the Hood Library (R923. 209/F124p). You should be able to fit this exercise on a single-spaced typewritten page. This is to be turned in with your weekly journal submission.

Some Questions: What witnesses did the WC choose to give credence to in their investigation? What witnesses did the Commission ignore? Most importantly, be sure you understand the WC's reconstruction of the shooting: How many shots were fired? What was the origin of these shots? Have a good idea of the wounds sustained by JFK and Gov. Connally according to the Report's findings.

In what areas does Weisberg, if any, convincingly challenge the WC's findings. If you have areas of confusion at the end of this assignment, write down in your journal the questions that are unresolved for you.

Class: Showing of the Zapruder film. / *wd Suidet*

September 22nd . . . The Warren Commission in Action--
--"Truth Was Our Only Client"

Note: There is a good deal of material to cover for this assignment. Instructor's best advice is to get started on it early.

Readings: Read the January 22 and 27th transcripts of the WC's Executive Sessions found in David Wrone (ed.), The Freedom of Information Act and Political Assassinations (distributed to class by instructor).

Read also: The "Tentative Work of the President's Commission" (the Outline). Read also the

following memos from D. Berlin to J. Lee Rankin, Jan. 30, 1964; N. Redlich to Rankin, March 26, 1964; and Redlich to Rankin, April 27, 1964.

Newspaper Exercise: Use the New York Times Index to find out who and exactly when the WC heard its first witness. Who was the first witness? Use this information to reflect back on the "Tentative Outline" and memos. What questions do you feel compelled to raise here? Turn this exercise in with the weekly journal.

Some Questions[Part I]: What is there in the January 22nd and 27th transcripts that persuaded the instructor to assign this material?

What is the nature of the so-called "dirty rumor" that plagued the Commission from the very outset? What agency(ies) stood to be compromised by this alleged rumor? What role does WC member Allen Dulles play in the January 27th meeting? How does the WC finally go about dealing with this "dirty rumor"? (Was this appropriate if "truth was their only client"? Explain).

What do the "tentative Outline" and accompanying memos tell you about the manner in which the WC went about solving the "Crime of the Century"? Finally, how would you characterize the WC's collective attitude

toward FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover? Speculate on the "why" of your answer.

Some Questions[Part II]: The FBI and Katzenbach wanted to get the Bureau's "Secret Report" on the JFK assassination in the WC's hands asap. (See Evans to Belmont 12/2/'63). Read carefully the Bureau's description of the shooting in the FBI's Commission Document # 1 (or CD-1). Compare CD-1's accounting of the shooting with reconstruction in the WC's final Report(last week's assignment). What questions does this comparison raise?

Of what importance is the Eisenberg memo?

The record of Hoover's phone conversations on the day of the assassination give you a feel for the state of mind of America's super cop on Nov. 22, 1963. What are your impressions after reading his account?

*E. W. did not
have CD-1 to be
hand of Report to Warren
Grand Jury
Warren's
opportunity to see
of Report for
Sullivan
FBI - Conf
Sullivan*

September 29th . . . The FBI and the Case--The Name of the Game is Control

Note: This session is perhaps the most crucial toward a full understanding of how the federal authorities went about their investigation into the JFK assassination. The operative word, especially as it applies to the FBI, is control--control of the investigation.

Readings: The documents in this session should be reviewed in a sequential order:

- Group # 1 Katzenbach to Moyers, Nov. 24, 1963
 Evans to Belmont, Nov. 27, 1963
 (SAC) Little Rock to All Agents, Dec.
13, 1963
 Renfro to (SAC) Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963
- Group # 2 DeLoach to Mohr, Dec. 6, 1963
- Group # 3 G. Lardner in Wash. Post on Jerry Ford's
role on Commission
 DeLoach to Mohr, Dec. 12, 1963
 DeLoach to Mohr, Dec. 17, 1963
 Sullivan to Belmont, Feb. 7, 1964
- Group # 4 DeLoach to Tolson, March 4, 1967

Some Questions: Both Acting AG Katzenbach(read LBJ) and Hoover agreed from the outset on what central proposition about the JFK assassination? What role does Congressman Jerry Ford play in the investigation? Why do you think LBJ suspected the CIA in the Kennedy assassination? (What might have sparked his premonition in 1967?).

Some More Questions: Once Hoover and the Presidency had settled on the parameters of the investigation there were several critical areas that needed to be controlled. The following questions based on documents are posed to see if you understand these concerns at the top eschelon of the government:

Why did the FBI oppose the idea of a Presidential Commission to investigate the JFK assassination?

*Coordinate FBI/CIA
ADA Sullivan to Belmont - testimony to WC on "Agents"
Oswald.*

What was the Texas Inquiry and why did it present a "crisis" for Hoover and the White House?

Explain your understanding about the so-called "leaks." What was being leaked? Why was this a concern for Commission members, especially Senator Richard Russell? Who do you think was doing the leaking? And, most importantly, what was the motive for the leaking?

Lastly, the instructor will discuss in class the "Secret" tickler file.

ADA Sam Stern Interview here

October 6th. . . . The WC and the Evidence

Readings: The following are just a few case examples of how the WC handled the evidence in the case:

Group # 1 FBI memo from Cooke to Gallagher, Sept. 12, 1975.

Group # 2 WC Report on Oswald's presence on 6th floor
FBI document 11/23/'63 on Charles Givens
FBI document reporting Dallas cop Lt. Jack Reveill's observations about Givens
S. Meagher's "The Curious Testimony of Charles Givens."

Group # 3 FBI affidavits by Caroline Arnold

Group #4 Final Report by House Select Committee on Assassinations (1978).

Read also: Weisberg, WW I, Chpts. 5, 9, 12, and 13.

Class: Showing of the documentary "Reasonable Doubt"

Some Questions: Formulate your own questions and responses for this weekly journal. You should review the WC's conclusions about the shots and wounds sustained by JF K and Gov. Connally to refresh your memory before seeing "Reasonable Doubt."

Also: Read the pertinent parts on the

the JFK assassination in the Final report of the HSCA. The HSCA Report(1979) was based on a second look at Dallas and cost the American people over \$2,000,000 in tax dollars. Was this investigation worth the money? In short, was it an improvement over the WC Report of 1964? Can "We the People" trust government to conduct a fair and objective investigation into the Crime of the Century?

October 13th . . . Oswald: Assassin, Conspirator or Fall Guy

Readings: Weisberg, WWI, Chpts. 4, 6, 10, and 11.

Read also: WC Report, Chpt. 7

Class: There is no journal assignment for this week. Instead, we will meet with Harold Weisberg at a place to be assigned later. Weisberg will be available to answer your questions about "Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald" and other aspects of the JFK assassination. The above reading was assigned to help you formulate your questions.

October 20th . . . Midterm Exam or Book Report Due in Class

Note: If you have opted for a book report place it in the instructor's ~~sa~~ mail box before or on this date.

October 27th . . . King and the FBI--The Civil Rights Phase

Readings: Garrow, The FBI and MLK, Chpts. Chpts. 2,3, and 4.

Read also: King's "Time to Break Silence," King's public denunciation of the Vietnam war.

Newspaper Exercise: Using available sources found in the public record--books, newspapers, journals, etc.--reconstruct a chronology of King's public life and achievements and awards. (You may find all you need in King's obituary in the N.Y. Times, for example).

Class: Analysis of the FBI surveillance inventory on King by instructor. Also, background lecture material on King and the Vietnam war.

Some Questions: According to Garrow why was King regarded as a threat to the national security? If yes, how? If no, why did he attract such intense intense in his movements by the FBI? What, according to Garrow, was the primary goal behind Hoover's massive surveillance and harassment campaign against King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference?

After reading King's April 1967 "Time to Break Silence" how does this speech link King with JFK on the Vietnam war and American cold war priorities, if at all?

November 3rd . . . King and the Transformation of the Civil Rights Movement

Readings: Garrow, FBI and MLK, Chpts.

5 and 6

Read also(optional): G. McKnight, "The 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike and the FBI," on Library Reserve. This article gives useful background on King's Memphis campaign.

Read also: All the pertinent FBI documents in the "Documents Manual" to get a good idea of how an FBI COINTELPRO(Bureauspeak for "dirty tricks" operations)was targeted against King at about the Memphis strike and its aftermath:

Invitation to King to comit suicide and Sullivan to Belmont (Jan. 27, 1964)^mare simply to document the FBI's harted for King.

Moore to Sullivan, Feb. 29, 1968, also know as the "Black Messiah" letter

Moore to Sullivan, March 3, 1968, and blind memo attached entitled: "Do As I Say, Not As I Do."

ASSC C.O. Halter to SAC, Memphis, March 29, 1968, for FBI account of how King ened up at the all-white Rivermont Motel.

Walter Lane Bailey affidavit 4/12/'68
"Chicken-a-la-King" cartoon in Commercial

Appeal

St. Louis Globe-Democrat editorial entitled:
"The Real Martin Luther King" for March 30/31, 1968
FBI file captioned "Threat to American
Airlines and King," 4 pages
HSCA's characterization of the Globe-
Democrat editorial
Fred G. Folsom editorial in Wash. Post
Les Payne news story on King and his
return to Memphis on April 2, 1968.

Some Questions: Begin with certain relationships: King makes Memphis the beginning of the Poor People's Campaign (PPC). The PPC is scheduled to begin in Washington, DC on April 12, 1968. Who might have benefited from the Memphis March 28 violence? Why? What is the purpose of the FBI's campaign to villify King in the press over the March 28 violence? The March 28 violence forces King's hand. How? What tentative conclusions can you draw from all this? You put it all together in the sharpest analytical way you can. All of the documents listed play an integral part in this assignment.

History/PS # 315
Course Syllabus
Page eleven

Fall '92

December 1st . . . RFK Case--Status of the Evidence . . .

Readings: Dan E. Moldea, "Who Really Killed Bobby Kennedy?," Regardies(June 1987), pp. 58-84.

Moldea's article is the best composite and most recent summary of the critics' case against the official story of the RFK assassination.

Some questions: Do your best to be clear about the official story(The Los Angeles Police Department or LAPD)of the case. According to Moldea what are some of the new evidence that demands a reopening of the case?

Readings: Use the RFK documents in Manual in the following order:

A. LAPD doc. E-37. Gives concisely the official accounting of the shots and their trajectories. Compare this account w/:

1. Moldea article;
2. Karl Uecker's oral history(4 pages);
3. Other witnesses' testimony (5 pages)

B. FBI Report, June 8, 1968, and diagrams of bullet holes in the Ambassador Hotel pantry.

C. LAPD record of destruction of evidence

D. Chief of Detectives Houghton pages from SUS on Sandy Serrano's testimony.

1. LAPD file copy signed by Lt. Pena;
2. Affidavit by J. Ambrose;
3. Affidavit by police sgt. P. Sharage.

Some questions: Section A provides⁵ additional material on the crime scene. Does it refute or support the contentions made in the Moldea article? Basically, what is the single most crucial difference between the LAPD official story and what the critics contend about the crime scene?

History/PS #315
Syllabus
Page twelve

Fall '92

Some questions(cont.): What is the importance of the Serrano testimony assuming she is truthful? Why does the LAPD attempt to refute her testimony? Is Serrano's story corroborated? What is going on here? Is this proper professional police procedure?

Class: Excerpts from the Serrano interrogation by the LAPD(Hernandez).

December 8th . . . Final Session

Class: Review for the final exam

Class: Documentary of the RFC assassination

