

An authentic scale model of the plaza in which President Kennedy was assassinated is one of many attention-grab-

bing devices used by Dr. George Michael Evica—seen here holding a pointer—in his unusual U. of Hartford course.

A New College Course

They Study the JFK Assassination

by Jonathan Braun

HARTFORD, CONN.

Is the Warren Commission Report on the assassination of John F. Kennedy accurate? Was Lee Harvey Oswald really the lone gunman responsible for the President's death, or was there a conspiracy? And if there really was a plot, who else was involved—and why?

If questions like this trouble you, perhaps you ought to enroll in ISP-223, a course in the University of Hartford's Interaction Studies Program entitled "Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963: The JFK Assassination."

The 25 students taking the experimental, three-credit course being taught by Profs. George Michael Evica and Harald Sandstrom seem to have been attracted by the air of mystery that still hangs over the assassination—an event most of them are obviously too young to remember in any significant way.

"I was only 6 years old when it took place," says Zachary Obedin, an 18-year-old freshman. "This is my chance to find out what happened."

"It all comes down to this," says Professor Evica, "exactly what happened in Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Tex., on Nov. 22nd, 1963, between 12:30 and 12:32 in

quite a learning experience for them."

A required, 30-page typewritten research paper focusing on a specific aspect of the assassination will be the main factor in determining each student's final grade.

"My topic is the autopsy conducted on the President," says Zachary Obedin. "It's pretty grim stuff—and pretty chilling, too."

The unmistakable sense of fear—the notion that they are wading into murky and potentially dangerous waters—is common among those in a three-hour class that meets Wednesday afternoons.

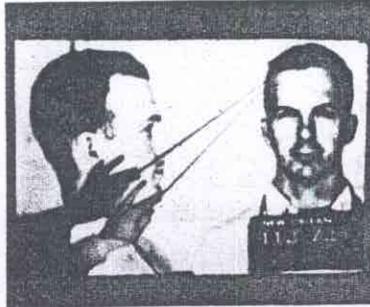
"I attended the October conference," says Mimi Spillane, a sophomore whose research area is the news media coverage of the assassination. "Because of that experience I wanted to learn more about the case. Now that I have, I'm scared."

'Something ugly'

"We all are," adds Professor Sand-

strom the afternoon?"

An English professor with 21 years of teaching experience—more than 10 of them at the University of Hartford—Evica is director of the Connecticut Citizens Commission of Inquiry, a statewide organization whose sole purpose is pressuring for a Congressional reopening of the inquiry into President Kennedy's assassination. The group is one of 85 similar chapters that are affiliated with the Washington, D.C.-based



Pointing to a slide of the man accused of killing Kennedy, Evica raises the theory "Lee Harvey Oswald" was not one man—but an alias used by many.

Citizens Commission of Inquiry, headed by the controversial assassination investigator Mark Lane.

"The course is really an outgrowth of a national conference that was sponsored by the Connecticut Commission and held here at the university last October," Evica says. "We had 3000 people participating in four days of discussion. There was a great outpouring of student interest, and it seemed obvious that many students were into this subject in a serious way. So Harald Sandstrom and I teamed up, approached the administration and convinced them to let us give a full, one-semester course wholly devoted to exploring the assassination."

Initially, 30 students enrolled in the course, but five dropped out because of the heavy work load.

In-depth research

"This is no easy ride," explains Sandstrom, a youthful, soft-spoken political science professor. "For many of these students—and they seem to be an exceptional group—it is the first time they have ever been asked to do a piece of in-depth independent research. It's

strom. "There's the feeling of being on the threshold of something very big and very ugly."

Subject matter aside, much of the course's supercharged atmosphere can be attributed to Professor Evica and his dramatic teaching style — compelling, enthusiastically delivered lectures peppered with sarcasm and a variety of attention-grabbing devices. They may include a frame-by-frame showing of the critical 22 seconds of the "Zapruder film" of the assassination, or a series of slides of the rifle Oswald allegedly used to kill the President, or a presentation built around an authentic scale model of Dealey Plaza—the only such model, says Evica, in existence outside Washington FBI headquarters.

A continuing interest

"He is an acknowledged expert in this field," says Sandstrom of the tall, bearded Evica. "I can't touch his expertise. But I can try to give it an additional academic dimension from the standpoint of political science."

Sandstrom says he has always been interested in the role of assassination in

politics. As for Evica, how did an English professor—a published author and poet whose specialties are myth and ritual in literature—get intensely involved in investigating one of the more tragic and puzzling episodes in American history?

"When Kennedy was killed, I mourned as everyone else did," Evica says. "Two days after, like millions of Americans, I saw Jack Ruby shoot Lee Harvey Oswald on television. From the moment that shot was fired, I suspected conspiracy. You see, I might have bought the theory of a single, crazed assassin . . . but not two in three days. That stretches credibility too much. So I began my own study of the case."

That was over 12 years ago — and Evica has been at it ever since.

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JFK CONTINUED

"I teach a course in tragedy," he says, referring to one of his four literature courses, "and I see a parallel between the JFK assassination and some literary figures. To me, Kennedy was the young hero who in a way captured the imagination, love and loyalty of a whole country . . . regardless of what is now said about his personal life. Like all heroic figures, he was filled with great passion. So it should come as no surprise to anyone that he was as interested in women, it appears, as they obviously were in him."

No single theory

A persuasive speaker, Evica denies being committed to any one theory regarding the case. "As an independent researcher," he adds, "I am now convinced that the so-



"A number of things don't add up, says Evica in reply to a question about the angle of entry of the fatal "single bullet" that has become the subject of so much controversy.

called single bullet theory is a fraud—that two, possibly three, rifles fired that day at Kennedy."

The single bullet theory is a product of the Warren Commission's finding that Commission Exhibit 399, an almost

perfectly intact, copper-jacketed lead bullet, entered the back of Kennedy's neck, exited just above his tie, and entered then Texas Governor John Connally's back, where it broke one of his ribs before exiting through his chest,

leaving a large "sucking" wound. According to the Warren Commission, the same bullet then passed through Connally's wrist, breaking bones, and finally embedded itself in his left thigh.

"The bullet," says Evica, "was supposed to have been found, according to the Warren Commission, on the floor of Parkland Memorial Hospital after it

allegedly fell out of the Governor's thigh while he was on a stretcher. Even more incredibly, it was found virtually unmarked. . . .

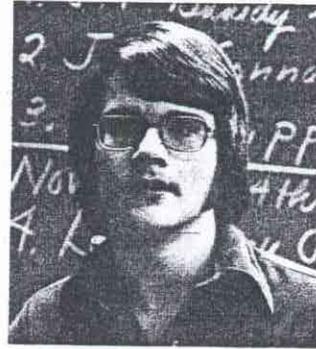
"The single bullet theory is really the key to the whole case. If you break that,

you prove conspiracy. Of course, it still doesn't tell you why or who."

One of the more bizarre questions with which Evica deals in his classroom lectures is the suggestion that there might have been more than one Lee Harvey Oswald. Clicking through a startling slide presentation of various photographs of the alleged assassin—



"I've learned a lot—and I'm scared," says Mimi Spillane, one of 25 taking the course.



"In a way, it's like studying to be a private detective," says freshman Zachary Obedin.

blowups that would lead an observer to believe he was viewing at least two different individuals — Evica states: "Perhaps we should consider the possibility that Lee Harvey Oswald was not one man at all, but a cover identity available to a number of intelligence agents who physically resembled each other."

Numerous angles

"There seem to be an infinite number of angles to the case," says class member John Richters, whose special topic is the Ruby investigation. A data processing manager from the neighboring Hartford area, Richters is not a matriculated university student. "But I am taking the course for credit," he points out. "It's costing me \$180 plus \$50 in books and lots of time in research."

Does the Hartford course signify a trend? Could be. At Monterey Peninsula College, a California two-year college, 40 students are taking English 195, a two-credit course that covers both the John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy assassinations. There may be others, too. Students these days are asking some hard questions and they aren't satisfied with the generally accepted, official answers.