

Politics and Politicians in Films: Contrasting Viewpoints in American and Foreign Films

James W. Salterio, Jr.
Barbara Jordan High School for Careers

INTRODUCTION

This seminar, *Great Films and How They Shaped American Politics*, stimulates my love of films and my passion for politics. I teach Spanish to students from 9th to 12th grades. This unit, however, will be aimed at my 11th and 12th grade students who are in my Spanish for Native Speakers and Spanish AP Literature courses. Because of the length of some of these films, the unit will be spread over two semesters. A small film library will be available for viewing to students who have their own DVD players at home.

President George W. Bush's frequently quoted remark "The world changed after 9/11" is echoed by many others. To many who have lived outside the United States for long periods of time, and to a majority of people living in foreign countries, the world has not changed, but the United States has caught up with the perils of our modern world.

After students have read this unit, they will be able to discern that the American point of view that we observe and so readily accept in U.S. films dealing with controversial political issues is often not shared by persons of other nations who may see the same issues from a different perspective and may reach different conclusions. Students will be exposed to films that stimulate diverse interpretations, will be challenged to rethink their own perceptions, and will reach their own conclusions after having weighed the various facets of an issue. To achieve this end, they will watch an American film and a foreign film, or two American films which present totally different angles on the same issue. Then they will compare and contrast the manner in which each film presents the issues.

All of the films we will study must be placed within a historical context. Students will be asked to investigate historical references. Teacher handouts will be used to provide a background for the films, especially for those that deal with the Cold War. We will emphasize the growing role of the media in shaping our ideas, specifically in politics. The growing use of propaganda in films and television will also be scrutinized.

Students will be given a questionnaire to serve them as a guide to films that they will watch. These questionnaires will ask provocative questions regarding the main issues of each film and will spur them to engage in hoped-for lively discussions. Having compared a battery of films, students will be asked to write an essay on the films analyzed. The essay should focus on one major issue exposed in the films they watched. Opinions presented in each film will be used to make their argument.

Some questions that might be included in questionnaires are:

1. Is the film based on a book, or is the script original? If the film is based on a book, who is its author and what are his political views? Is the film faithful to the book? How successful is the transfer from one medium to another?
2. What is the main issue presented in the film? Are both sides of the issue presented fairly or biased? If biased, what is the source and what are the intentions of said bias?

3. Is the film propaganda, or are both sides of each argument given fair and equal treatment? If the film is propaganda, what idea is it trying to sell? Whom does it profit?
4. If a film is based on actual historic events, are these portrayed accurately? Has the chronological order of the real events been rearranged to heighten the film's climax? When is tinkering with history for box office success dishonest? If an event is taken out of context, will its elimination affect the ending of the film? Would it lessen the film's impact?
5. What other films that we have discussed have received a similar treatment of the themes now being discussed? How are they similar? How do they differ?
6. Is the film shot in color or black-and-white? Many of the Cold War films were shot in black-and-white. Why would a director choose to film in black-and-white when color was available in the fifties and sixties?
7. Are special effects used in the movie? Are they essential to the visual telling of the story or are these effects gratuitous?

Films are our most popular form of entertainment and education. Because films are a *visual* storytelling medium – this is especially true of action films that include special effects – they are able to leap across borders and be easily understood by other moviegoers. Most foreign moviegoers know America only through the visual images that they perceive in American films.

Most American moviegoers do not enjoy foreign films because the pace is slow and they contain too much dialogue, and many younger American moviegoers will not watch movies made in black-and-white or made before the 1970s. Because of this bias, they miss out on many important political films made during this period. If successful, this unit will kindle students' interest in these "old-fashioned" films.

In the early 1960s, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the building of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy intensified the numerous fears of the American public. Hollywood tried to cash in on these fears at the box office by making films that preached Armageddon. Among these Cold War films were *On the Beach* (1959), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *Seven Days in May* (1964), *Fail-Safe* (1964), *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1965), and *The Bedford Incident* (1965). Other films dealt with assassination plots, cover-ups, and corruption in the highest levels of government, such as *The Day of the Jackal* (1973), *The Manchurian Candidate* (1952), *All the President's Men* (1973), and *Z* (1969). Still other films were based on revolution/terrorism/colonialism and terrorism/international corporation colonialism. These films include *The Battle of Algiers* (1967) and the recent *Syriana* (2005).

OBJECTIVES

The student will gain a more profound understanding of current historical events in other cultures.

The student will understand the movie industry's use of the medium to tap into society's hopes and fears, to define good and evil, and to increase their knowledge of their own and other cultures.

Students will gain greater understanding of the American cultural crisis during the Cold War, highlighting the fears of the American people, McCarthyism, and the cult stature given the "Spy Game" on films.

Students will learn about historic political corruption and cover-ups by governments. They will learn about the balance of power in the U.S. Government, the constitutional rights of rights of the individual, freedom of the press, and other current issues.

UNIT BACKGROUND

The Battle of Algiers (La bataille d'Alger) (1967)

The Battle of Algiers is directed by Gillo Pontecorvo based on the memoirs of one of the National Liberation Front's (FLN) military commanders, Saadi Yacef. After rejecting biased scripts by Franco Solinas and Saadi Yacef, and while sympathetic with the Algerian nationalist cause, the Italian producers insisted on a neutral point of view. The final screenplay depicts the suffering and cruelty on both the French and the Algerian sides.

The film recreates part of the struggle, from November 1954 to December 1960, of Algerian revolutionaries seeking their independence from French rule. Beginning with the creation of revolutionary cells in the Kasbah, the conflict between the Algerians and the European powers leads to increasing acts of violence, and atrocities are committed on both sides. The FLN takes over the Kasbah by executing native Algerian criminals, and by using urban guerrilla tactics, i.e., terrorism, against French colonials, who parry by assassinating or capturing the leaders of the revolt and using indiscriminate violence against native Algerians. The arrival of paratroopers under General Philippe Mathieu turns the tide, employing torture, intimidation, and murder to combat the FLN. Mathieu's lecture to his troops on how to conduct anti-terrorist warfare and cut the head off the FLN is cold and deliberate.

During a press conference Colonel Mathieu is questioned regarding the methods applied to obtain information, precisely, the use of torture. He replies: "The word 'torture' isn't used in our orders. We use interrogation as the only valid police method against clandestine activity.... We could talk for hours to no avail, because that isn't the problem. The problem is this: The FLN wants to throw us out of Algeria, and we want to stay.... We are soldiers. Our duty is to win. Therefore, to be precise, it's my turn to ask a question. Should France stay in Algiers? If your answer is still yes, then you must accept all the necessary consequences." The film cuts to scenes that show a rebel being water-boarded, another being burned with a blow torch, a third being beaten while hanging upside down, and the last being administered electrical shocks. (The torture scenes were removed for the U.S. and British premiere, and the film was banned for five years in France.)

Using these and other tactics, Colonel Mathieu is able to dismantle the rebels' cells and quell the rebellion. But the quest for independence infects the Algerian people. French colonial power cannot win the "hearts and minds" of the people. Colonel Mathieu admits this when he tells reporters, "It's not warriors we need...." "Then what?" a reporter asks. "Political will," replies Mathieu, "Sometimes it's there and sometimes it's not."

The film ends by displaying demonstrations and rioting by Algerians, suggesting that although the Algerian revolutionaries lost the battle to the French Army, they won the war. President Charles de Gaulle pronounced Algeria's independence in 1962.

Although the film is based on actual events, the names of some of the characters were changed. Mostly, non-professional Arabs were cast in the movie, including Saadi Yacef, who plays a fictionalized version of himself called El-hadi-Jafar. French actor Jean Martin, who plays Colonel Mathieu, is the only professional in the film. Thousands of Algerian extras, some with unusual, Fellini-like faces, were used in the crowd scenes, and as a chorus in the Kasbah. This was especially effective in giving the film its documentary feel.

Much has been said of the film's stunning realism. Pontecorvo and his cinematographer Marcello Gatti filmed in black-and-white and used numerous experimental techniques to give the film the feel of a newsreel or a documentary. With Saadi as their guide, Pontecorvo and Solinas spent two years choosing locations in Algiers where the events in the film unfold. Using hand-held cameras during the mob scenes gave Pontecorvo's cinematographer the flexibility to mingle

with and follow the crowd, seemingly recording events as they occur. Only Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane* managed to capture so successfully the reality-based or docudrama style.

The impact of this film still reverberates today. Former national-security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski remarked, "If you want to understand what is happening right now in Iraq, I recommend *The Battle of Algiers*." In 2003, the film was shown by the Directorate for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict at the Pentagon. A flyer for the screening contained the following: "How to win a battle against terrorism and lose the war of ideas." *The Battle of Algiers* is still considered the best film made on revolution.

Oil Crisis 1973

An event that had a great impact on all industrialized nations was the 1973 oil crisis triggered by the Arab members of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), Egypt and Syria, who said they would not ship oil to nations that supported Israel in its conflict against Egypt and Syria. On 19 October, President Richard Nixon asked Congress for \$2.2 billion in aid for Israel. The next day Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil producing countries imposed a total oil embargo on the United States. The price of Saudi oil increased from \$1.39 per barrel on January 1, 1970, to \$8.32 on January 1, 1974 (Perkins 84). As a result, significant changes in U.S. policy occurred. After 1973, oil became an obsession. Washington began negotiations with the Saudis to guarantee that never again would the U.S. suffer an oil embargo. With the rise of China and India as major industrial powers and oil consumers, the competition for oil has become critical. With its release of *Syriana*, Hollywood pulled no punches in showing the no-holds-barred struggle among the industrialized countries for control of oil in the Middle East.

***Syriana* (2007)**

Based on former CIA operative Robert Bauer's 2002 memoir *See No Evil* and adapted for the screen by writer/director Stephen Gaghan, *Syriana* is a film about oil and greed that explores the complexities of the roles played by the U.S. Government, the U.S. business conglomerates, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), in fierce, deadly competition with China, India, and other industrialized countries to control the oil in the Middle East. These three pillars of modern capitalism, for which John Perkins coined the word "corporatocracy" (26), conspire to control oil-producing nations by lending them vast amounts of money for building their infrastructures, which they will never be able to repay. The contracts for designing and constructing these infrastructural projects and the long-term contracts for maintenance and repairs are awarded to major U.S. corporations, among them Bechtel, Brown and Root, Halliburton, and Stone and Webster.

Unlike the other films whose linear plots are easy to follow, *Syriana* has several events occurring simultaneously, cast with an equal number of interesting characters, with all its scenes ultimately wound into an integral, interconnected part of the whole. The film follows the lives of four characters -- CIA operative Robert Barnes (George Clooney), financial advisor Bryan Woodman (Matt Damon), Oil Company Lawyer (Jeffrey Wright), and young Pakistani laborer Wassim (Mazhar Munir), all of whose lives intersect at crucial moments and converge in the film's climax.

Robert Barnes (George Clooney) is a battle-scarred, disillusioned CIA operative who begins to grow a conscience. He is sent to Beirut, Lebanon to arrange the kidnapping and murder of Prince Nasir Al-Subaai (Alexander Siddif). In Beirut, Barnes is kidnapped, tortured, and saved, ironically, by the Hezbollah.

Dean Whiting (Christopher Plummer), a Washington insider for forty years and founding father of Whiting and Sloan law firm, is worried that Barnes will reveal facts about the plot to assassinate Prince Nasir and is having Barnes investigated. If we have any doubts about CIA

operative Barnes' brutal side, they are swept aside by his threats against Dean Whiting. "If anything happens to me or my family," Barnes threatens, "an accident, an accusation, anything, then first your son will disappear, his body will never be found. Then your wife. Her body will never be found either. This is guaranteed. Then, whatever is the most dangerous thing you do in your life, it might be flying in a small plane, it might be walking to the bank, you will be killed. Do you understand what I'm saying? I want you to acknowledge that you do understand so that we're clear and there won't be any mistakes."

Bennett Holiday (Jeffrey Wright) is a Washington corporation lawyer running due diligence on a merger between Texas oil giant Connex and the smaller Killeen Oil that is being investigated by the Justice Department. His investigation leads him to Danny Dalton (Tim Blake Nelson), who has swindled 37 million dollars from the Government of Kazakhstan.

Danny is called in to testify before Congress. Outraged, he confronts Bennett and makes the following speech equaled only by Michael Douglas's "Greed is good" speech in *Wall Street*: "Corruption? Corruption ain't nothing more than government intrusion into market efficiencies in the form of regulation. That's Milton Friedman. He got a goddamn Nobel Prize. We have laws against it precisely so we can get away with it. Corruption is our protection. Corruption is what keeps us safe and warm. Corruption is why you and I are prancing around here instead of fighting each other for scraps of meat out in the street. Corruption ... is how we win."

To guarantee the merger, however, the Attorney General's office wants "another body." Bennett cynically tells oilman Jimmy Pope (Chris Cooper), "We're looking for the illusion of due diligence. Two criminal acts successfully prosecuted give us that impression." Pope provides Bennett with another body. Bennett becomes an insider. Invited to the Oilman of the Year banquet, he is conspicuously seated next to Dean Whittier. In the end, Bennett loses all his ethical bearings, and even his drunken father repudiates him.

The third pawn in this multiple plot is energy consultant Bryan Woodman (Matt Damon), who accepts an invitation to an Emir's estate in Spain in pursuit of business in the Middle East. Following the accidental death of his son in Spain, Prince Nasir offers his firm a \$100,000 contract. An unusual friendship based on trust grows between them.

During their budding relationship, Prince Nasir asks Woodman, "What do you suppose they're up to, my brother and these American lawyers? Tell me, what they are thinking." Brian answers, "What are they thinking? What are they thinking? They're thinking that it's running out ... it's running out. And ninety percent of what's left is in the Middle East ... This is a fight to the death. So, what are they thinking? Great! They're thinking keep buying. Keep playing. Keep buying yourself new toys. Keep spending fifty thousand dollars a night on a hotel room, but don't invest in your infrastructure. Don't build a real economy. So that when you finally wake up they will have sucked you dry and you will have squandered the greatest natural resource in history." Prince Nasir takes Woodman into his confidence and reveals his plan for his country's modernization

Under heavy pressure from Dean Whittier and the U.S. State Department, the weary, old Emir passes the emirate to Prince Meshal. Prince Nasir's contract with the Chinese is rescinded and given to Connex-Killeen.

In the last of four interwoven stories *Syriana* tries to present a plausible portrait of a young Pakistani's conversion to radical Islam. It is plausible, but unconvincing, because we cannot rationalize a man's decision to self-immolate. Wassim and his father are laid off when the Chinese are given control of the Emir's oil fields. Unemployment and hunger attract Wassim to the Madrass Community Farm where an imam preaches in favor of an Islamic state based on the

Koran. Lastly, he meets Egyptian terrorist Mohammed Sheik Agiza who woos him and recruits him into his terrorist cell.

The last act is played out during Prince Meshal's coronation. Barnes tries to intercept Prince Nasir's caravan of Hummers to warn him of a plot to assassinate him. The Prince's caravan is being monitored by Central Command, Tampa, Florida, from a missile-armed drone flying miles above the scene. Bennett is celebrating his moment of triumph at the "Oilman of the Year" Banquet in Houston, Texas. Wassim is on a fishing boat nearing the Liquefaction Natural Gas Facility now under the name of Connex-Killeen. The Prince's last words, "You're the Canadian," are uttered as a blinding flash destroys the Hummer and kills all surrounding it. Bryan escapes the blast and wanders out into the desert. Our last player, Wassim, rams a boat with the lost stinger missile against a super tanker docked near the natural gas facility, setting off a number of explosions.

Comparison of *The Battle of Algiers* and *Syriana*

The two films deal with different forms of imperialism. Classical imperialism is clearly demonstrated in France's attempt to keep Algeria. It fails because it tries to maintain possession of a foreign land and its native population that wants to drive the French out. France was viewed as a foreign occupation force, despite the large number of Frenchmen, many filling colonial government positions, who lived in Algeria. The neo-imperialism exposed in *Syriana* does not seek worldwide territorial expansion, even less governing a foreign people. Instead, it centers on controlling a nation's natural assets – in this case, dwindling oil reserves. *Syriana* includes major players in the game which makes for a complicated, crowded plot. Torture and murder practiced by both sides play major roles in this scenario. Although the Chinese are briefly present in the emirate, they are not major aggressive players in this film. In *Syriana*, the United States and Iran are vying for control of the Middle East. The CIA assassinates Prince Nasir, because he plans to build up his country's infrastructure, to award oil exploitation rights to the highest bidder (China), and to remove the middlemen (i.e., the speculators) from oil negotiations, while Iran backs the terrorist actions of Islamic radicals against the United States. The existing U.S. political climate allows for a highly critical view of the U.S. State Department's policies, something that would have been unlikely in the fifties.

In *The Battle of Algiers*, the Italian producers insisted on as unbiased a film as possible. The central question is, as Col. Mathieu asks, "Should France stay in Algiers?" The film explores the consequences of answering yes. Escalating violence, the killing of innocent civilians by both sides, the use of torture, and the spread of ethnic hatred are a few of the consequences explored in this film. Because the film wants to capture the feeling of a documentary, only one professional actor is used. In contrast, *Syriana* uses well-known actors which help us keep up with the different characters as they interact in this geopolitical thriller.

Forty years after the release of *The Battle of Algiers*, Hollywood bares the inner workings of the "corporatocracy" in *Syriana*. The film attacks every aspect of the oil business. It exposes close ties between the U.S. Government and the large oil conglomerates that, in the name of national security, will go to any extreme, even murder, to ensure the steady flow of oil to the United States. It reveals how the oil corporation's interests override legal considerations as long as the "illusion" of legality is maintained by sacrificing a few of their own. It shows the U.S. government's involvement as kingmaker in the Middle Eastern countries, by the often used practice of demonizing those who oppose U.S. interests, and backing those who coincide with U.S. interests (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Augusto Pinochet, et al). *Syriana* questions the motives behind the Committee for the Liberation of Iran, which includes members of the large oil conglomerates, who state that "the reform movement in Iran is one (for which) the President has great hopes for the region and crucial to the petroleum security of the United States."

Syriana condemns oil for corrupting every institution in our government and every aspect of society. That is why when Danny says, “Corruption is what keeps us safe and warm,” we cringe at the truth his tirade reveals. The tentacles of the U.S. Government, mega oil corporations (Connex-Killeen), and the World Bank pressure an oil-rich emirate in the Middle East to reverse an oil extraction contract and an aging, weary Emir to pass the emirate to the U.S. pre-approved Prince Meshal. A nation no longer needs to occupy another and control its citizens to make it subservient to its wishes.

In the same way as *The Battle of Algiers*, *Syriana* reveals that the United States and Iran use the same terrorist tactics; the criticism, however, is harshest against the oil corporations and U.S. Government that try to keep secret their involvement in the failed plot to assassinate Prince Nasir, until they are finally successful in removing the rightful prince and breaking oil extraction contract with the Chinese.

The Cold War Goes to the Movies

Two nations emerge from the ashes of the Second World War to become world superpowers: The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). These two would face off in a Cold War lasting forty years. Deteriorating relations between the United States and the Soviet Union in the late forties and fifties heighten fears in the United States of a communist takeover and of a nuclear holocaust. The Second Red Scare was fed by the Soviet Union’s testing of its first atomic bomb (1949), Mao Zedon’s Communist takeover of China (1949), the Korean War (1950), Alger Hiss’s conviction for espionage (1950), and the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for stealing atomic bomb secrets for the Soviet Union.

In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) began investigating the motion picture industry. Producers, writers, and actors accused of having leftist leanings were blacklisted and unable to get work. Anti-communist vigilantes applied pressure on television sponsors, the source of the television network profits. Political beliefs became grounds for firing employees.

The Rise and Fall of Senator Joseph McCarthy

On February 9, 1950, in a speech before the Republican Women’s Club of Wheeling, West Virginia, Senator Joseph McCarthy produced a piece of paper which allegedly contained a list of 205 communists, and were known to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who were working for the State Department. McCarthy’s charges caused a media furor that incited the Senate to open hearings to investigate the charges. On July 17, 1950, the Tydings Committee found no grounds for McCarthy’s accusations. Unscathed, McCarthy continued to level charges against the government. The extensive media attention that the senator received made him the second best know political figure after President Harry Truman.

In 1953, the Republicans seized control of the Senate, and Senator McCarthy became chairman of the Committee on Government Operation and the Subcommittee on Investigations. In the same year, McCarthy investigated the Army Signal Corps, an investigation that found no spy ring, but his treatment of General Ralph W. Zwicker turned many of his supporters against him. On March 9, 1954, Edward R. Murrow narrated a television report exposing McCarthy’s witch-hunting tactics (*Good Night and Good Luck*). “His mistake,” stated Murrow, “has been to confuse dissent with disloyalty.” A jittery CBS gave McCarthy free time to refute Murrow. On April 6, McCarthy accused Ed Murrow of being “the leader and the cleverest of the jackal pack which is always found at the throat of anyone who dares to expose Communist traitors” (*Good Night and Good Luck*).

Between April 22 and June 17, 1954, the Army-McCarthy hearings were aired over national television. McCarthy was his own worst enemy during these hearings and his public approval

continued to slide. The climax of the hearings came when he accused a young lawyer of being a Communist which caused Joseph Nye Welch, the Army's chief counsel to reply: "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you no sense of decency?" (*Good Night and Good Luck*). The public soon lost interest in the Hearings and McCarthy's reputation sunk to a new low. On December 2, 1954, the Senate censured McCarthy for abusing his power.

McCarthy's heavy drinking led to liver ailments. He died on May 2, 1957, of acute hepatitis in the Bethesda Naval Hospital.

The Manchurian Candidate (1962)

Director John Frankenheim's political thriller starring Frank Sinatra, Lawrence Harvey, Angela Lansbury, and John McGiver, *The Manchurian Candidate* is based on a best-selling novel by Richard Condon, adapted brilliantly for the screen by George Axelrod.

The film is set in the early 1950s during the peak of the Second Red Scare, McCarthyism, fear of plots to take over our government, the threat of nuclear war, and the emerging power of television to influence the American public and to influence politics. Politicians have always known that if you repeat the same stale phrases over and over they will be accepted by the public as fact, and the fledgling television medium as a willing accomplice made it easier to disseminate propaganda.

An American patrol led by Major Ben Marco (Frank Sinatra) is captured in Korea, turned over to the Russians, and taken to Manchuria. There, under drug-induced hypnosis, they are brainwashed for three days by a coalition of North Koreans, Chinese, and Russians. The Americans have been conditioned to believe that Staff Sergeant Raymond Shaw (Lawrence Harvey) has single-handedly led their escape from prison and across enemy lines to safety. Upon his return to the United States, Shaw is awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

We learn more about Shaw's family: his mother is an ambitious, dominating woman who has complete control of her husband, U.S. Senator Iselin (James Gregory), a weak, ultra-conservative, right-wing, caricature of über-bully Senator Joe McCarthy.

Major Marco begins to have recurrent nightmares. A flashback takes us to the famous dream/brainwashing sequence where Marco and his men believe they are at a women's garden club meeting listening to a female speaker lecture about hydrangeas. The camera slowly pans 360 degrees around the room and when it returns to the podium the communist spy, Yen Lo, is addressing specialists from the Pavlov Institute (Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine winner Russian Ivan Pavlov had *conditioned* dogs to salivate at the sound of different stimuli). To demonstrate his control over Shaw, Lo has Shaw strangle one of the prisoners and shoot another one, while the other members of the company remain sitting looking bored. The film's point of view shifts smoothly between the two versions of reality. Lo explains that Shaw has been trained to kill and having no memory, he has no remorse or guilt to give him away.

Having been promoted to the Army's Intelligence Division, Marco begins to pursue the meaning of these dreams. He testifies to the Chiefs of Staff about his growing suspicions about Shaw. The Chiefs believe he has not recovered from his Korean captivity and they reassign him as a Public Relations Officer.

Angela Lansbury plays Eleanor Iselin, one of the most diabolical female villains ever put on the screen. She controls her alcoholic husband, for whom she has plans to be president, and her son, who has unwittingly become the instrument of the communist plot to take over the government.

As her son Raymond Shaw, Lawrence Harvey plays a man whose suppressed anger lies just beneath the surface, and who despises his mother and stepfather. “He’s not my father,” he is quick to point out each time someone mentions that Senator Iselin is his father.

American patriotic symbols are used profusely as recurrent visual motifs throughout the film emphasizing the hypocrisy that often underlies all the flag-waving: Senator Iselin is reflected off the glass covering a portrait of Lincoln; Senator Thomas Jordan, Shaw’s mother’s arch enemy, stands before an enormous gilded American eagle; the party given for the Thomas’s opens with a close-up of an American flag made of caviar and Senator Iselin disguised as Lincoln. When Raymond shoots Senator Jordan, a low-angle shot shows the gun and American eagle above Raymond’s head; the scene in which Raymond and his mother confront each other opens with a close-up of a bust of Lincoln and a portrait of Lincoln over the fireplace, and many other scenes include patriotic images, clearly reminiscent of the gigantic faces of Stalin and Mao Zedong staring down during the proceedings that unfold in the dream sequence.

The Manchurian Candidate’s frontal attacks against Senator Joseph McCarthy recreate scenes from the Army-McCarthy hearings during which McCarthy waved a sheet of paper that he claimed contained a list of names of communists working in the Defense Department. Senator Iselin then has trouble remembering the number of card-carrying communists in the Defense Department and amends the number to 104 and then 275. Later, after arguing with his wife that he wants a number that is easy to remember, he pours Heinz (57 Varieties) ketchup on his steak, and brilliant satirical editing cuts to Senator Iselin, who now asserts before the TV cameras that there are 57 card-carrying communists working in the Defense Department. Ironically, conditioned by the repetition of Heinz 57 Varieties television commercials, Senator Iselin now easily remembers the number of communists working for the U.S State Department.

Axelrod’s script is not all *film noire*; it is meant as a satire and his brilliant script includes much humor. During the dream sequence, North Korean agent Yen Lo tells his audience that he has allowed his people to be bizarre in the selection of tobacco substitutes for the Americans who are smoking on stage. Relishing a bit of scatological humor, Yen Lo asks one of the soldiers if he likes his cigarette. “Yes,” the soldier replies. “Yak dung,” reports Yen Lo, “tastes good, like a cigarette should (he laughs),” reminding viewers of the grammatically incorrect Winston commercial. Later, he kids his Russian counterpart Zilkov: “Profit? Fiscal year? (Tsk, tsk, tsk.) Beware, my dear Zilkov, the fires of capitalism are highly infectious. Soon you’ll be lending money out at interest. (He chuckles)” And later he adds: “His brain has not only been washed, as they say, it’s been dry-cleaned. (He chuckles)” Even their perfect weapon is shown to be flawed. Raymond is triggered by a bartender who is telling a story to his customers when he overhears the bartender say “why don’t you go play some solitaire.” Shaw does just that until he turns up the Queen of Diamonds. Shaw, now awaiting orders, hears the bartender say he told the guy to go take a cab to Central Park and jump in the lake. Shaw does just that. He is pulled out of the freezing water by Marco, who has been following him. Or the scene where Shaw is confessing to Ben that he hates his mother. “My mother, Ben,” Shaw says, “is a terrible woman. A terrible, terrible woman...You know, Ben, it’s a terrible thing to hate your mother. But I didn’t always hate her. When I was a child, I only kind of disliked her.”

Shaw’s brainwashing mirrors a more subtle form of conditioning, that of American citizens who are easily misled by the media and those ambitious advertisers and politicians who know how to manipulate the medium. The film exposes the growing role of television in influencing not only our choice of consumer products, but molding our ideas, and shaping national politics. Television pounces on Iselin’s accusations, much as it reacted during the McCarthy hearings, and later, it is poised to play a major role after the assassination of the presidential candidate.

In an extreme, harshly lit, close-up of her face, Shaw's deliciously wicked mother reveals the communist's diabolical scheme. Eleanor Iselin describes how after the presidential candidate is killed, vice-presidential candidate Iselin is to lift the bleeding body of the slain president before the television cameras and give a spontaneous-thoroughly-rehearsed Mark Anthony-like speech as follows:

The speech is short, but it's the most rousing speech I've ever read. It's been worked on, here and in Russia, on and off, for over eight years (like a well-tested television commercial)... rallying a nation of television viewers into hysteria to sweep us up into the White House with powers that will make martial law seem like anarchy.

And after her husband is in the White House she vows to wreak vengeance upon those who made her son the instrument of the assassination plot.

The film's climax occurs in the middle of the political madness of choosing a presidential candidate during a convention held in the old Madison Square Garden (Frankenheimer borrows much of the tension building technique from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*). Shaw has failed to call Marco back to reveal the missing final chapter in the plot. Marco finally locates Shaw and races to prevent the assassination of the presidential candidate who, standing at the podium, utters the fatal words that trigger the assassination. Shots ring out and Senator Iselin and Shaw's mother fall headfirst on the stage.

"You couldn't have stopped them;" Shaw says calmly, "the Army couldn't have stopped them. So I had to. That's why I didn't call. Oh God, Ben!" He quickly turns the rifle on himself and blows his brains out.

In the end, we have Marco's soliloquy about his friend Shaw, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism that never took place; his final act, however, was that of a hero.

The Day of the Jackal (1973)

Despite being based on John Forsyth's bestselling novel, being heavily promoted, and receiving positive reviews, the film adaptation failed at the box-office. The plot is straight and simple. Determined to take revenge against French President Charles de Gaulle for having declared the independence of Algeria, the French right-wing terrorist Secret Army Organization (OAS) hires a professional killer codenamed the "Jackal" to assassinate him. Although Michael Caine lobbied for the principal role, director Fred Zimmermann felt that Caine was too much of a celebrity. Searching for an unknown actor to play the role, he chose British actor Edward Fox. In the role of Deputy Commissioner Claude Lebel, the best detective in France, he chose the unglamorous Michael Lonsdale.

The Jackal accepts the job for half a millions dollars, one half of the sum to be paid up front. He meets with the three conspirators for the first and final time. He asks for a Paris telephone number to keep in contact with the OAS.

To pay the Jackal, OAS members commit a number of bank robberies. French Security knows the OAS is responsible for the bank robberies, but it does not know their purpose. Security kidnaps OAS chief clerk Viktor Wolenski, who, before being tortured to death, reveals the Jackal's codename and a brief physical description. French Security is able to piece together the plot to assassinate De Gaulle. During a top level cabinet meeting, the French Interior Minister gives full power to Deputy Commissioner Claude Lebel to head the investigation to identify the Jackal and prevent the assassination. The questions Lebel must answer are who? how? and when?

We watch the Jackal's professional preparations for the assassination, which takes us through various European countries and capitals, and the dogged efforts of a master detective to uncover

the Jackal's identity and whereabouts. Lebel makes use of the "old boy's network" of foreign police and intelligence contacts to inquire about the assassin. Scotland Yard's Special Branch turns up a name, Charles Harold Calthrop, whom they believe was involved in Dominican Republic Dictator Rafael Trujillo's assassination in 1960. His name could be an acronym for jackal in French (*Charles Calthrop*).

Meanwhile, the OAS has infiltrated a female informer (Denise) into the minister's inner circle. Despite Lebel's extraordinary detective efforts, the Jackal manages to stay one step ahead of him. Lebel deduces that someone within the Minister's circle must be the source of the leak. "The Jackal was tipped off all along. He is challenging us all," Lebel reports during his daily briefing to the Interior Minister's Cabinet. "Are you suggesting there is an informant here?" asks the Interior Minister. In a later meeting, Lebel plays a recording to Denise reporting to her OAS contact. "How did you know which phone to tap?" asks the Interior Minister. "I didn't," Lebel replies, "so I tapped all of them." During the meeting, it dawns on Lebel that President De Gaulle will insist on a public appearance on the anniversary of the liberation of Paris in World War II.

The film's thrilling climax occurs amidst massive military parades and solemn State ceremonies commemorating the heroes of World War II. Disguised as a one-legged war veteran, the Jackal has managed to slip through the police cordon. He has set up in a flat across the street from the platform where President De Gaulle is to honor several war veterans. Meanwhile, Lebel is patrolling the streets near the platform. Talking with policemen positioned at different barriers, he speaks to one who points him towards the room where the Jackal is waiting for De Gaulle's arrival. As Lebel and the policeman run up the stairs, the Jackal has French President De Gaulle in his cross-hairs. The Jackal's only miscalculation saves De Gaulle's life. He fires the moment De Gaulle, as customary, bends over to kiss a short war veteran on the cheeks, and the bullet misses its target. Lebel and the armed policeman break down the door and enter. The Jackal turns and shoots the policeman with his custom-made rifle. He hurries to reload his rifle. Lebel reaches to pick up the dead policeman's submachine gun and kills the Jackal.

Back in London, Scotland Yard inspectors are searching Calthrop's apartment when Calthrop appears. They soon realize Calthrop was not the Jackal. "If the Jackal wasn't Calthrop," Scotland Yard Inspector Thomas asks, "then, who the hell was he?" The Jackal's true identity remains a mystery.

Comparison of *The Manchurian Candidate* and *The Day of the Jackal*

These are two excellent films whose main theme is a plot to assassinate the Head of State. *The Manchurian Candidate* taps into the psyche of the American public. If we accept the premise that an American soldier has been conditioned to assassinate a fictitious presidential candidate as part of a plot to take over the U.S Government, the rest of the story develops readily. In contrast revenge and greed motivate the villains in *The Day of the Jackal*. The OAS wants to assassinate President Charles De Gaulle for having betrayed the French colonists in Algiers. Its members hire the "Jackal," who is motivated by a half-million dollar contract to do the job.

In *The Manchurian Candidate*, the assassin's identity is discovered by Major Marco. Once he discovers the mechanism that triggers Shaw, the assassin, he tries to deprogram him. In contrast, the Jackal's identity is a complete mystery to the end. His pursuit is a coordinated effort by all the European police forces. Still, the professional killer is always a step ahead of them. Even after the Jackal is killed, the authorities remain baffled regarding his true identity.

Filmed in black and white, *The Manchurian Candidate* skillfully uses lighting and unusual camera angles to heighten the drama. The camera focuses frequently on characters in the forefront while action is occurring in the background, i.e., Ms. Lansbury looking at a television monitor in the foreground while in the background her husband rails at the government officials

during a Defense Department press meeting. The sets are charged with patriotic symbols. The press is placed under close scrutiny. The film exposes the fact that Americans are constantly barraged by advertisers, newsmen, and politicians who increasingly learn to use the power of television and the use of powerful propaganda symbols.

In contrast, *The Day of the Jackal* is filmed in color on location in several important cities as we follow the Jackal's steps to acquire the necessary tools for a successful assassination attempt. (Forsyth was so successful in describing the Jackal's preparations that it has become a primer for terrorist organizations.)

The Day of the Jackal's circular structure begins with a re-staging of a real OAS failed assassination attempt led by Jean Bastien-Thiry on the life of French President Charles De Gaulle and ends with the Jackal's failed effort. Good and evil are clearly defined in both films. While Senator Iselin cries wolf, the real wolf in sheep's clothing, Shaw's mother wrapped in the flag and other patriotic symbols, sets in motion a plan to overthrow the U.S. Government. America's glorification of the individual as hero contrasts sharply with its European counterpart, which stresses the group's effort to track down the elusive Jackal. The individual, personified by Major Marcos, becomes the only obstacle to the conspiracy's success. In *The Day of the Jackal*, the group becomes involved in the search of the killer who leaves a trail of innocent victims as he approaches his prey.

From Russia with Love (1964)

Based on Ian Fleming's bestselling novel *From Russia with Love* (Hugh Sidey published an article in *Life* magazine on March 17, 1961, that reported *Russia* was ninth among President John Kennedy's top ten favorite novels), the film, featuring our favorite super-spy James Bond, Agent 007, is arguably the best Bond film in the series. Directed by Terence Young, *Russia* has a tightly-knit plot and some of the best action sequences which include two of the series' most memorable villains.

Russia's plot is revealed early in the film. SPECTER plans to steal a Russian Lector Decoding Machine using a Russian female who works in the typographic section in the Russian Embassy in Istanbul and Secret Agent James Bond as pawns. Chess master and SPECTER's Number Five Agent, Krosteen, has "anticipated every possible variation of countermove" and guarantees the plan's success, providing SPECTER an opportunity to avenge the loss of Dr. No, whom Bond dispatched in an earlier film.

The cast includes the most beautiful of the Bond girls, Daniela Bianchi (Miss Universe 1960) as Tatiana Romanova, Robert Shaw as SPECTER hit man, Red Grant, famous German actress Lotte Lenya as the former head of SMERSH operations arch villain Operative Number Three, Rosa Klebb, chess master Operative Number Five, Krosteen (Vladeck Sheyball), Pedro Armendariz as Bond's Istanbul Station contact, Ali Kerin Bey, and the inimitable Sean Connery as 007.

This was the second in the Bond film series and it introduces new elements that would become staples in all the subsequent ones. It contains a pre-title sequence in which Bond is killed; it introduces "Q" (Desmond Llewelyn), although in this film he is referred to only as an equipment officer; and John Barry's fabulous musical score including the famous "007 theme." In *Russia* we first witness the cool, suave, sophisticated ladies' man that only Sean Connery has been able to portray convincingly.

The world in which James Bond thrives is one of beautiful women, danger, world-wide criminal organizations (SMERSH, SPECTER), and clearly defined good and evil. Bond is a modern Casanova whose external charm and wit conceal a deadly, cold-blooded killer. Women in Bond's macho world are reduced to commodities, and love to a string of fantasized seductions.

What would a Bond movie be if it did not include exotic locations? Russia is filmed in gorgeous Technicolor in locations in Istanbul, Turkey, which include the Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, the Bosphorus Bridge, the Grand Bazaar, and others; in Venice locations include the canals, the Bridge of Sighs, the Grand Canal; and locations in Scotland and England. The film opens in Venice, where chess master Kronsteen defeats his opponent using a historically accurate game-ending chess move actually used by Russian grand chess master Boris Spassky to defeat David Bronstein in a match played in Leningrad in 1960. The film's elliptical structure ends in Venice, where the final fight with Rosa Klebb is staged (Short).

The action sequences are large and exaggerated and include an attack against a gypsy camp, a struggle between Bond and Grant aboard the fabled *Orient Express*, a boat chase in the Bosphorus, and a helicopter chase scene inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*.

The Spy Who Came in From the Cold (1965)

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold is a brilliantly directed film by Martin Ritt that includes a great cast (in particular, Richard Burton as anti-hero Alec Leamas). Perhaps no greater contrast in films exists than the portrayal of the dangerous, glamorous, sexy, simplistic milieu of spies portrayed by Ian Fleming in his James Bond novels and the tawdry, seedy, monotonous world of Leamas in John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*. The film shocked its readers, who had been raised on the popular Cold War 1953-1956 spy television series *I Led Three Lives*, by stripping away the glamour and portraying the East and the West using the same ruthless measures in the name of national security.

The plot is lean: a disillusioned agent pretends he has been removed from the British Secret Service in order to enter East Germany intelligence as a fake defector where he is to plant misinformation. In East Germany, however, his side turns out to be more lethal to him and to his lover (Claire Bloom) than his enemies.

The film begins with a camera pan of the Berlin Wall adjacent to a border crossing at Checkpoint Charlie where agent Leamas is waiting for a British agent who is killed in an attempt to cross the border between East and West Germany.

Leamas is recalled to London. In a meeting, "Control" (Cyril Cusack) tells Leamas: "We have to live without sympathy, don't we? We can't do that forever. One can't stay out of doors all the time. One needs to come in from the Cold." Then he adds:

Our work, as I understand it, is based on the assumption that the West is never going to be the aggressor. Thus, we do disagreeable things, but we are defensive. Our policies are peaceful, but our methods can't afford to be less ruthless than those of the opposition, can they? You know, I say, that since the war our own methods, our techniques, that is, and those of the communists have been very much the same. Yes, I mean, occasionally we have to do wicked things, very wicked things indeed, but ...uhh ... you can't be less wicked than your enemy simply because your government policy is benevolent, can you?

He then asks Leamas to stay out in the Cold a little longer. Leamas-Carré's world is duplicitous, double-crossing, and expedient, where spies sacrifice all sense of morality so that the "moronic masses ... can sleep in their crummy flea-bitten beds."

What follows is a quagmire of deceit, double-crossing, and total disregard for human life on both sides. During Mundt's trial, when an unsuspecting Nan is brought in to verify that Leamas is a friend of Smiley (Rupert Davies), another British agent, Leamas finally realizes that they have all been pawns in Control's game to protect the British Secret Service's double agent, the mercenary killer Hans-Dieter Mundt (Peter van Eyck), by discrediting Fiedler (Oscar Werner).

Towards the end of the film, in the car, Leamus explains to Nan Perry (Claire Bloom) how they have been cleverly used by Control. “Clever? They were foul,” she says, “How can you turn the bloody world upside-down. What rules are you playing?” “There’s only one rule,” Leamas answers, “expediency.”

Then he proceeds to destroy any illusion of glamour in the Spy Game:

What the hell do you think spies are? Moral philosophers measuring everything they do against the word of God or Karl Marx? They’re not! They’re just a bunch of seedy squalid bastards like me: drunkards, queers, hen-pecked husbands, civil servants, playing cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten little lives. Do you think they sit like monks in a cell balancing right against wrong?

The film was shot in black and white to heighten its sense of gloom, despair, vulnerability, and isolation. Its cinematic style echoes *cinéma vérité*, film noire, and Orson Welles’ docudrama style. Its scenes take place in cramped, claustrophobic rooms, a cell, a small library, and the outdoor shots are gloomy, overcast, rainy gray days in London, with slick cobblestones reflecting harsh lights at night (used so effectively in *The Third Man*), and the ruined, empty buildings that border the Berlin Wall. It is a dark film that portrays a brutal, dehumanized environment in which all of the characters are pawns in a game that destroys both players (Leamas, Feidler) and bystanders (Nan) in the name of national security; a world that blurs the difference between the good guys and the bad guys.

Z (1969)

Lies, deception, and hypocrisy are at the root of Costa-Gravas’ *Z*, a political thriller set in an unspecified Mediterranean country ruled by a neo-fascist regime (i.e. Greece). The film is based upon Vassily Vassilikos novel *Z*, a thinly veiled account of the assassination of Greek pacifist Gregoris Lambrakis in Thessalonica on May 22, 1963. To erase any doubts the opening credits add: “**Toute ressemblance avec des évènements réels, des personnes mort ou vivantes n’est pas le fait du hasard. Elle est VOLONTAIRE.**” (The letters are in bold in the original film.)

An investigation is launched by the government to dispute the claim that the police and the government were party to a conspiracy to assassinate a pacifist Deputy (Yves Montand) after he finished making a speech. The Examining Magistrate (Jean-Louis Trintignant) is put in charge of the case and the more he investigates, the more evidence he discovers that there is a government cover up.

Following a pacifist speech, a leftist Deputy is clubbed by a man standing in the back of a truck bed. The injury proves fatal, but by this time viewers know the police have manipulated witnesses to say he was struck by a drunken driver. An autopsy of the Deputy, however, contradicts the traffic accident story. The doctor reports that a fall could not cause this kind of skull fracture. Only an iron bar or a gun butt could cause such lesions.

A thorough investigation conducted by an impartial Examining Magistrate and a photojournalist (Jacques Perrin) peels off the layers of deceit, false alibis, and hypocrisy spread by the government to cover up their involvement in the assassination.

The government officials begin their misinformation campaign, blaming the Deputy’s supporters for provoking the incident. The official version is that it was a traffic accident. They quickly gather the dossiers of the Deputy and his closest supporters to try to find something salacious they can use to “break his halo.”

As the Examining Magistrate gets nearer to the truth of the cover up, his superiors try to intimidate him. The Attorney General reminds him, “The future lies before you. This case can either make or break your career.”

The case is important enough to warrant a visit from the National Attorney General, who, accompanied by the Attorney General, tells him the eyes of the world and the nation are on this case and to think of the reputation of the country.

The denouement comes quickly as each defendant is brought before the Examining Magistrate who has gathered sufficient evidence to prosecute the two fascists militants, Yago and Vago, of murder and the General, the Colonel, the Chief of Police, and the Attorney General for collusion to obstruct justice. The film concludes with Lawyer running to tell the Deputy's widow news of the indictments.

The photojournalist returns to report on the unexpected outcome. The Examining Magistrate was removed from his position, the witnesses were mysteriously dying, the two assassins received short sentences, and the officers received only administrative reprimands. The Deputy's close associates died mysteriously or were deported, and the photojournalist was imprisoned for disclosing official documents.

Before the closing credits, and the list of cast and crew, the film lists things banned by the military junta: peace movements, strikes, labor unions, long-haired men, The Beatles, and other popular music, Sophocles, Tolstoy, Aeschylus, Socrates, Ionesco, Sartre, Chekhov, Mark Twain, Beckett, the bar association, sociology, international encyclopedias, free press, and new math. They also banned the letter Z, which in ancient Greek means "he is alive," a symbolic reminder that "he (Lambrakis) lives."

The film is structured in three parts. The first part of the film focuses on the events leading up to the assassination of the Deputy; the second part focuses on Irene Papas's masterful performance as the Deputy's wife Helene who, in a script that contains almost no dialogue, convincingly communicates her grief following the assassination; and the third part that focuses on the Examining Magistrate's investigation that leads from an indictment of several persons to an indictment of the whole political system. Costa-Gravas makes us feel the thrill of the chase, a chase that cuts through the lies, hypocrisy, and corruption that enshroud this assassination. Driven by a desire to do justice, the Examining Magistrate must bring down the government.

In the tradition of *The Battle of Algiers*, Costa-Gravas's *Z* lets the meaning communicated by the visual images undercut the dialogue. As the Examining Magistrate peels back each layer of government misinformation coming closer to the truth, the chase for the truth gains greater impetus. The Examining Magistrate's indictments of the guilty government officials are resolute and swift.

Mikis Theodorakis enhanced the film with one of the most memorable film scores ever composed.

In 1967, while Costa-Gravas was filming *Z* in Algiers, a military junta that seized power in Greece cleared the officers of all charges and rehabilitated them. Christos Sartzetakis, the real life Examining Magistrate, was twice arrested by the junta, imprisoned for one year, during which time he was tortured by the Greek police. When democracy was restored in 1974, Sartzetakis was honored and later appointed to the Greek Supreme Court in 1982. As proposed to parliament by the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) he was elected President of the Hellenic Republic (1985-1990)

As a consequence of their participation in filming *Z*, Costa-Gravas, Vasilis Vasilikos, Mikis Theodorakis, and Irene Papas were banned from Greece.

All the President's Men (1976)

Based on Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's best seller, *All the President's Men*, the film follows the two reporters investigating the Watergate scandal that led to Richard M. Nixon's resignation from the office of the Presidency of the United States of America.

It is also the best portrayal of investigative journalism ever put on screen. Because the *Washington Post* would not allow the film crew to shoot in the news room, a facsimile, "over 150 square feet with rows of brightly colored desks set on an acre of sound-absorbing carpet," was reproduced in exact detail in a sound stage. Waste paper was taken from the Post's news-room to be spread throughout the set to give it greater authenticity.

The movie opens with a close up of a typewriter tapping out a date, June 17, 1972; the day the Watergate burglars broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office-apartment-hotel complex. Five burglars are caught and Bob Woodward (Robert Redford) is called to cover the preliminary hearing. Woodward's suspicion is aroused when he discovers that one of the men arrested was a former CIA operative and that the men have retained legal counsel even though none of them had an opportunity to make a telephone call. Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) soon joins Woodward in the investigation. What follows is investigative reporting at its best. This riveting film is driven by an investigation conducted by two unknown, often bumbling, reporters who are not initially aware of the enormous scope of the story they are covering. It is made up of numerous telephone conversations and personal interviews with government officials and witnesses most of whom are unwilling to talk to reporters and almost none willing to go on the record. One person known only as Deep Throat (Hal Holbrook) keeps Woodward on the right track. In 2005, the identity of Deep Throat was finally revealed to be former FBI Associate Director W. Mark Felt.

The film has a documentary feel, portraying real events accurately, filming in Washington, D.C. locations, and using actual newsreel footage of President Richard M. Nixon, Presidential Spokesman Ronald Zeigler, and other government officials vehemently denying any connection to Watergate and attacking the *Washington Post*. Bernstein and Woodward are the film's two heroes who practice a journalism that is far removed from the current trend toward entertainment-journalism.

Lighting plays an important role in the movie. The scenes in the *Washington Post*'s offices are in bright light, while most scenes that occur outside where the reporters are pursuing their investigation are filmed in dimly lighted streets or dark, underground parking garages.

The movie does not credit other contributors to the unfolding of Watergate, such as *New York Times* reporter Seymour Hersh, who wrote a number of important articles on Watergate, the Senate's Select Committee to Investigate Campaign Practices chaired by North Carolina Senator Sam Erwin and Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski (who replaced fired Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox), and others. It does, however, give an accurate account of the *Post*'s reporters' investigation.

Ben Bradlee (Jason Robards Jr), the *Post*'s managing editor, emphasizes the significance of Watergate when he tells Bernstein and Woodward, "Nothing's riding on this except the First Amendment of the Constitution, the freedom of the press and maybe the future of the country. Not that any of that matters. But if you guys **** up again, I'm going to get mad." The Watergate scandal which initially involved the five Watergate burglars, led the two *Washington Post* reporters to the discovery of the GOPs special fund controlled by high-ranking officials of the White House to finance clandestine operations, espionage, and to sabotage the Democratic Party and to ensure the re-election of President Richard Nixon, which finally involved the whole U.S. intelligence community. The attempt to cover-up this operation led to the resignation of President Nixon.

The investigation of the Watergate scandal and all its ramifications is what captivates the audience and packs an emotional punch. We are like a Greek audience aware of the general plot of a tragedy, but totally engaged by the details. Most Americans are aware of the Watergate scandal that led to the president's resignation, but they are surprised by the enormity of the conspiracy to undermine the electoral process and foundations of American Democracy. As Deep Throat explains, "The truth is, these are not very bright guys, and things got out of hand." The headlines at the end of the film are not in chronological order, poetic license to emphasize the resignation of Richard Nixon in August 1974.

The impact of *All the President's Men* on the 1976 Carter-Ford presidential race was enormous. Ronald Reagan believed it had cost the Republicans the presidency.

Comparison of *Z* and *All the President's Men*

Z and *All the President's Men* are two political thrillers that deal with conspiracies, one to assassinate an antiwar, leftist Deputy, the other to keep a president in power through illegal activities that guarantee his re-election. The two movies are based on real events. In *Z* an Examining Magistrate is appointed by a fascist government to dispute the claim that the government is involved in the assassination of a Deputy. In spite of the government's efforts to cover-up its role through lies, deception, and threats against the investigating magistrate, the plot is revealed. In *All the President's Men*, the two *Washington Post* reporters and the media are the instruments that bring down a president whose administration is engaged in a cover-up of enormous proportions.

The Examining Magistrate in *Z* discovers the guilty parties in the assassination of the Deputy, but justice goes awry in a fascist government. The photojournalist who helped uncover the truth reports that two murderers were given short jail terms and the indicted officers were given a mild administrative reprimand, and the honest magistrate was jailed and tortured. Costa-Gravas depicts a corrupt government that has the power to perpetuate itself in power because the judicial system is not able to impose justice. *All the President's Men* deals with a contemporary issue, the Imperial Presidency, a term applied to the Presidency of Richard Nixon, who believed and acted as if the presidency was above the law.

Another fundamental issue examined in the American film is freedom of the press. The Nixon Administration brought the power of the Presidency to bear against the *Washington Post*, especially against its Managing Editor, Ben Bradlee. In sharp contrast to the reality portrayed in *Z*, this film shows the American political system's checks and balances at work, despite a corrupt administration bent on violating fundamental constitutional principles.

Conclusion

Hollywood has few films that compare with European political films such as *Z*, *The Day of the Jackal*, or *The Battle of Algiers*. These films are less ruled by the box office than their American counterparts. This does not mean that Americans have not produced influential films. D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation's* (1915) idealization of the Old South caused an upsurge of racism and swelled the ranks of the Ku Klux Klan; *To Kill a Mockingbird's* (1962) humane treatment of a racially charged trial found great resonance among viewers and helped shape the new South, and *All the President's Men's* (1976) exposé of the Watergate scandal influenced the presidential elections and increased enrollment in journalism schools across the country.

The influence films have on our perception of political issues is enormous. Vivid images on the screen capture our attention and help shape our ideas. The immediacy of the experience is shared by moviegoers throughout the world. Our students are wired to and respond to these visions of light. With the proper guidance, political films can be used effectively by educators to develop students' ability to examine present and past political issues. The classroom is the perfect

setting for lively student discussions of critical political issues that continue to afflict modern society.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: Colonialism and Neo-colonialism --*The Battle of Algiers* and *Syriana*.

Objective: The student will gain a more profound understanding of current historical events in other cultures. He will contrast the unbiased manner in which the issues in the joint European-Arab film *The Battle of Algiers* are presented and the total condemnation of the U.S. corporatocracy in *Syriana*. How is the issue of terrorism portrayed in each film? How is the issue of the oil crisis described in *Syriana*? Each student will write a three-page essay on terrorism and colonialism or on the current oil crisis in Middle East as portrayed in these two films.

TEKS: (1) Communications 1A, B, C; (2) Cultures 2A, B; (3) Connections 3A, B; (4) Comparisons 4A, B.

Materials: Copy of the two films to be discussed, paper and pen.

Procedure: View the two films. Take notes using your teacher's handout as a guide.

Discuss and contrast the manner in which colonialism and terrorism are depicted in the two films.

Watch *The Battle of Algiers* and *Syriana*. Take notes. Answer the teacher's handout questions.

Assessment – Students will be assessed on their participation in class discussions and their three-page essays.

Lesson Plan 2: Assassination Plots – *The Day of the Jackal* and *The Manchurian Candidate*.

Objective: The student will understand the movie industry's use of the medium to tap into society's hopes and fears, to define good and evil, and to increase their knowledge of their own and other cultures.

TEKS: (1) Communications 1A, B, C; (2) Cultures 2A, B; (3) Connections 3A, B; (4) Comparisons 4A, B.

Materials: Copy of the two films to be discussed, paper and pen, poster paper.

Procedure: After viewing the two films, students will be separated into groups of four students per group. They are to choose the issues common to both films and contrast and compare the treatment given these issues. They are to present their conclusions to the class in a coherent, grammatically correct summary.

Watch *The Day of the Jackal* and *The Manchurian Candidate*. Take notes. Answer the questions provided in your teacher's handout.

Assessment – As a group activity, students will be assessed on the group's presentation to the class.

Lesson Plan 3: The Cold War and Spying-- *From Russia with Love* and *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*.

Objective: Students will gain greater understanding of the American culture crisis during the Cold War highlighting the fears of the American people, McCarthyism, and the cult stature given the "Spy Game" on films.

TEKS: (1) Communications 1A, B, C; (2) Cultures 2A, B; (3) Connections 3A, B; (4) Comparisons 4A, B.

Materials: Copies of the two films. Paper, per and pen.

Procedure: The two films will be opened to discussion. The sharp contrast between the worldview portrayed by Ian Fleming’s hero James Bond and Le Carré’s anti-hero Alec Leamas are grounds for a very fertile class discussion. Teacher-led discussion will be as follows: the class will be divided into two groups. One side will defend the view portrayed by Fleming, the other, the view portrayed by Le Carré.

Watch *From Russia with Love* and *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*. Takes notes based on your teacher’s handout for the films.

Assessment: The class will receive a holistic daily grade based on their participation in the class discussion.

Lesson Plan 4: Political Corruption and Cover-Ups—*All the President’s Men* and *Z*.

Objective: Students will learn about historic political corruption and cover-ups by governments. They will learn about the balance of power in the U.S. government, the constitutional rights of rights of the individual, freedom of the press, and other current issues.

TEKS: (1) Communications 1A, B, C; (2) Cultures 2A, B; (3) Connections 3A, B; (4) Comparisons 4A, B.

Materials: Copies of the two films. Copies of the Bill of Rights. Pen and paper.

Procedure: Students will watch the two films. The class will read the Bill of Rights. They will discuss which (if any) of the rights of an individual were abrogated by the government’s action in *All the President’s Men*. We will discuss the balance of power in as stated in The Constitutions of the United States of America. The student will compare the two systems contrasted in these two films.

Watch *All the President’s Men* and *Z*. Take notes based on the teacher’s handout.

Assessment: Students will be holistically assessed partially on their participation in the discussions of issues raised by the two films and on a four-page essay on discussing the Nixon Administration, The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

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America's deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union prompted Hollywood to capitalize on the heightened fears of the American public. It began producing topical films that seemed right out of the day's newspaper headlines. Many contained a doomsday message—mankind simply couldn't be trusted to control the terrible weapons it had created. In the process it moved the Cold War genre from allegory to realism. Here are some of the best from the period: *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *Seven Days in May* (1964), *Fail-Safe* (1964), *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965), and *The Bedford Incident* (1965). All are in stark black and white with fine production values to create the right mood for suspense.

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