**IDH 2930: (Un)Common Read: Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ‘72**

Thursdays, period 4 (10:40-11:30) in 119 Little Hall

Kevin M. Baron, PhD

Office Hours: By Appointment and When Necessary (meaning drop-ins welcome)  
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**1. Course Description**

Hunter Thompson made a name for himself as a political writer for Rolling Stone magazine, in part due to his self-created style of “gonzo journalism.” This style of journalism places the journalist at the center of the story, as opposed to an outside observer merely retelling facts. Thompson’s gonzo style made him a character known to many, particularly on the political beat, with politicians and journalists alike.

Contracted by Rolling Stone to spend a year reporting on the presidential campaign in 1972, Thompson brings his style and take of the politics of the time to his reporting. *Fear and Loathing ’72,* according to Matt Taibbi maintains a place as the “bible of political reporting.” Thompson’s ability to weave political news, discourse, analysis and himself into the campaign makes for a fascinating take on a unique presidential election.

Over 40 years later, this book continues to provide a foundation for ongoing political discourse and understanding of the ins-and-outs of presidential campaign politics. Spring semester 2017 comes at the end of one of the most contentious and unique presidential election cycles in our nation’s history. However, in American politics the more things change the more they stay the same. While many may feel the current presidential election season is exceptional or distinctive, or even an aberration, history tells us that that may not be the case. There are many parallels that can be drawn from the 1972 cycle to 2016. Thompson provides the necessary dive into the frenzy and outrageous natures of presidential campaigns and elections. Many of the themes we have witnessed in 2016 played out during 1972, providing context for discussion on how the 72 campaign paved the way to issues of party politics, Super Delegates, and contested or brokered conventions. The book’s in-depth nuance and context illuminates presidential politics in a way that spans the generational gap between then and now, thus placing discussion into a contemporary context demonstrating the importance of understanding political history.

The course will utilize the 40th Anniversary edition of the book (<http://amzn.to/2cUqu2g>), published in 2012, as it has an introduction written by Matt Taibbi that is useful in providing value and context, as well as drawing connections to contemporary politics. The reading will be broken down to approximately a chapter per week, with class discussion focused on the themes presented in the book, detailing and recreating the politics of 1972 but placing them into a contemporary context of the 2016 election. There is 44 years and 11 presidential elections between 1972 and 2016, and the book allows for discussion to trace similarities and differences in how presidential election politics has evolved.

The goal of the course is to provide students with an interesting look into the political past, allowing them to critically think about the political present, in drawing comparisons and contrasts over a 44 year period of time. The class meetings will be discussion-based, delving into the specifics of 1972 as brought to life by Thompson and how we make sense of it in a modern context. The main assignment for the course will be a short essay due at the end of the semester. The essay can focus on any of the themes or aspects as raised in book, while also tying in how it compares with other elections as brought out through the course discussions. The essay will serve as the main graded assignment, outside of attendance and participation.

**2. Course Objective**

The goal of the course is to provide a perspective on American politics, in particular, presidential campaigns by focusing on one from 1972 and to relate it to the 2016 campaign season:

* Thompson’s first hand perspective offers an understanding of the functionality of the press within political and presidential campaigns
* The interesting nature of long campaign seasons and the impacts on politics
* Compare the 1972 campaign to 2016, where historical context offers new understanding of similarities and differences
* Critically think about the interplay between the press and politics

**3. Required Text**

Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ’72,* 40th Anniversary Edition. ISBN 978-1-4516-9157-3 (You should be able to pick this up on Amazon or your preferred online book retailer for minimal cost). This is the only required text. Hard copy or digital copy (ebook) is fine.

**4. Course Requirements**

1. This course will be run seminar style, which means it will focus mainly on discussion. **That means that participation and attendance in class is mandatory**, and will be appropriately reflected in your final grade. You are required to do the weekly readings and view any of the material required for that week’s discussion. This is only a 1-credit course, so the assignments will be moderate, but the discussion element is important. The following assignments are required for the course:

- **Final Paper:** The final assignment will be a brief paper 4-5 pages (approx. 1500 words) due by Friday, April 28 – No late papers will be accepted after this day. The focus of the paper is up to the student, as long as it is related to the book in some way. The paper should demonstrate the student’s understanding of the material within the book and as it relates to the chosen topic. Standard formatting is expected – 12pt Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1 to 1.5 inch margins.

- **Attendance:** Come to class and participate in the discussion.

**Grading Distribution**

Class participation and attendance: 40%

Paper: 60%

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

100 – 93% = A

92 – 90% = A-

89 – 88% = B+

87 – 83% = B

82 – 80% = B-

79 -78% = C+

77 – 73% = C

72 – 70% = C-

69 – 68% = D+

67 – 63% = D

62 – 60% = D-

59% and Below = F

**5. Course Policies**

1. Attendance and participation in discussion is mandatory and expected. Attendance will be taken each class meeting. Excused absences are allowed, as life often happens and can interfere. However, after 2 excused absences your participation grade may be lowered. Unexcused absences are not tolerated and will impact your final grade in the course. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to communicate with the instructor about missed classes. Information on attendance policy can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
2. Late assignments will not be accepted. Students are expected to turn assignments in on the dates they are due as listed in the syllabus. Late work may be accepted on a case-by-case basis as deemed necessary through communication with the instructor. Additionally, special arrangements can be accommodated for exams and/or assignments as required by the student, if noted ahead of time per university policy.
3. **All electronic devices are prohibited in the classroom, without the express consent of the instructor.** The use of mobile electronic devices (cellphones/smartphones/tablets/laptops) is strictly prohibited – any student using a mobile device will be asked to leave and that day will be marked as an unexcused absence. Students are expected to utilize the old-fashioned methods of note taking – paper and pen/pencil. Special circumstances per university policy can be made. Students who wish to utilize presentation software (PowerPoint, etc.) for presentations must ask permission and make arrangements beforehand.

**\*\*\*DISCLAIMER:** This syllabus represents my current thinking and plan for this course. However, circumstances arise that may necessitate changes to this syllabus. Communication will be given in advance of any changes to this syllabus and course plan so that you are prepared and knowledgeable of requirements and expectations.

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

University Policy on Academic Misconduct: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>.

etiquette: Communication Courtesy: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all classroom discussions, email messages, threaded discussions and chats. The classroom is a safe environment to explore new ideas and perspectives – all of which are welcome. Ideas are open for debate and discussion, but not people – there is a zero tolerance policy on personal attacks. <http://teach.ufl.edu/docs/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

**6. COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**1.** January 5: Introduction

* Introduction and Syllabus
* Discuss course goals and book
* READ - Intro by Matt Taibbi so we can talk about it

**2.** January 12: **NO CLASS** – I will be attending a conference

* Read – Authors Note, Chapter 1: December 1971

**3.** January 19: Read – Chapter 2: January

**4.** January 26: Read – Chapter 3: February

**5.** February 2: Read – Chapter 4: March and Chapter 5: Later in March

**6.** February 9: Read – Chapter 6: April

**7.** February 16: Read – Chapter 7: May

**8.** February 23: Read – Chapter 8: June and Chapter 9: Later in June

**9.** March 2: Read – Chapter 10: July

**10.** March 9: Spring Break

**11.** March 16: Read – Chapter 11: Dark Interlude and Chapter 12: August

**12.** March 23: Read – Chapter 13: September

**13.** March 30: Read – Chapter 14: October and Chapter 15: November

**14.** April 6: Read – Chapter 16: Be Angry at the Sun and Chapter 17: December

**15.** April 13: Chapter 18: Epitaph and final discussion

**16.** April 28: Final Papers are DUE! – it is preferred that you turn the paper in prior to this day if you can. **No late papers will be accepted, no work can turned in after Friday, April 28.**