PAPER #2

Film Paper

You are the (erudite) critics! Write a critical review essay analyzing how politics, campaigns, and
or the news media are depicted in a feature film. A good essay will arrive at an answer to this
question: What sort of argument is the filmmaker making (explicitly or implicitly) about politics
and or the press? Do you find that argument to be valid and convincing?

The point here is not to act as a “reviewer” who comments on the experience of seeing a film
and its aesthetic or cinematic qualities. Instead, your role is that of a cultural critic who tries to
understand the social, political, social, or literary meanings that are created and/or critiqued in
the film. What kind of reality or competing realities (regarding politics and media) are being
depicted? What is the nature of the criticism going on in this film? Is it powerful or effective?
What makes it so? What does it miss? Where does it fall flat?

The attached page lists eligible films to watch and write about. You can focus on one film, or
you can use more than one and include some comparison/contrast analysis. If you would like to
analyze a film not on our list, you need to obtain professor approval at least a week before the
assignment deadline.

This essay requires no outside research beyond the film itself, although it may be helpful to do a
bit of looking into what its creators had in mind or had to say about it – for instance, by seeking
out archival interviews with the writer or director. It is certainly appropriate and desirable to
draw upon concepts developed in class readings and discussions. Cite sources appropriately (as
discussed on page 4 of the HUM 161 syllabus).

Don’t hesitate to ask us questions of clarification about any aspect of the assignment.

PARTICULARS FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT:

- This is a group assignment – self-formed groups of 2 or 3 students
- Grade weight: 15%
- Length: ~1000 words
- Due: Friday, September 26 at 4:00 pm

PARTICULARS FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS:

- Double spaced, margins ≥1” all around, font size ≥ 11 pt., pages numbered.
- Printed out as hardcopy only! No electronic submissions, please.
- Your name on a separate cover sheet, and nowhere else.
- Stapled upper left corner; no other fancy or frilly (or non-frilly) binding methods.
- Appropriate sourcing (see page 4 of the course syllabus).
- Prose styling so elegant and articulate it brings us to tears.
- Turned in to BB’s faculty mailbox, third floor of the OGSM building.
- Consult the criteria for written deliverables on pp. 4-5 of the HUM 161 syllabus.
ELIGIBLE FILMS FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT

Here is our list of films you can write about. Choose one or two for your group’s essay.

You may also propose a film not on our list. To write about a film not on our list you must obtain professor approval at least a week before the assignment deadline. (Please convey requests to both professors by email.)

Films shown in bold are especially recommended.

- All the King’s Men (1949)
- The Last Hurrah (1958)
- The Best Man (1964)
- The Candidate (1972)
- All the President’s Men (1976)
- Bob Roberts (1992)
- The American President (1995)
- Wag the Dog (1997)
- Primary Colors (1998)
- Bulworth (1998)
- The Contender (2000)
- Head of State (2003)
- Silver City (2004)
- Man of the Year (2006)
- Swing Vote (2008)

Find information on any film at the Internet Movie Database: http://www.imdb.com.
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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>trivial</th>
<th>light</th>
<th>okay</th>
<th>solid</th>
<th>exceptional</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall thesis is clear, compelling, and well-supported</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insights from and about the film are sophisticated rather than superficial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Analytical depth: insightful, non-obvious</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Structure of paper: clear, logical, effective</td>
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<td>Quality of writing/grammar/syntax: eloquent, free of errors</td>
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<td>Paper format: clean, appropriate?</td>
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<td>mostly</td>
<td>insufficient</td>
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<td>Sources: used and cited properly?</td>
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**SCORE (25 maximum): __________**