POSC 4191 - Logic of Social Inquiry:
The Kennedy Assassination

Fall 2012

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417 Physics
Phone: 288-3425
Office Hours: T, Th 10:30-noon, MWF 3-4 (and by appointment)

Course Objectives:

The course will examine the question of who killed John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas. Both the Warren Commission conclusion that a single gunman killed Kennedy, and a variety of conspiracy theories will be critically evaluated.

The single most important objective of the course will be to sharpen students’ analytical skills in the context of evaluating competing theories, with particular emphasis on critical evaluation of evidence, and theorizing in the face of conflicting data.

Texts:

Jim Marrs, Crossfire (Carrol & Graf)
Robert Groden, The Killing of a President (Viking) – No reading assignments, bring to class. This is very difficult to find, but well worth getting if you can find it.

Requirements:

Attendance is optional, although it will be extremely difficult to achieve a good grade without regular attendance. All readings are required. All are available on library reserve. Most will be made available in a xeroxed packet supplied to students at cost. Students will be required to view the movie “JFK.” This can be done in an optional evening session, or the student may do it at his or her convenience and submit a three-page reaction paper by Monday, September 3rd. All papers are to be submitted in 12 point Times Roman type, double spaced, with one-inch margins all around.

Grading:
Exams (two): 20% each
Final 25%
Critical Book Report 15%
Research Project 20%

Exams will consist of essays, some of which will be one-half to one page in length, and some which will be longer. A study guide will be distributed in advance of each exam and the final. The research project will examine a particular, fairly narrow issue concerning the assassination (example: “Was Frank Sturgis on the Grassy Knoll”) in light of the evidence. All research papers should be discussed with the instructor during office hours by mid-term. Papers are due at 4:00 p.m. Friday, December 1st. (Some extensions will be given for students who have difficulty getting sources.) Length will typically be five to seven pages, but longer with some kinds of projects. Research projects should use primary sources. There is an option to count this as a “writing development” course. If interested, see the instructor. The book report should be seven to nine pages, should critically evaluate the book, and is due September 28th. A list of suggested books for reports will be distributed. All books for reports must be cleared by the instructor by September 21st. There will be a penalty for late book reports and research projects, or for failure to discuss research projects or clear a book for a book report with the instructor by the assigned date.

Course Outline:

Video Assignment: Oliver Stone’s JFK

I. Shooting in Dealey Plaza – Witnesses Testimony.

WCR, Chapter II (“The Assassination”) and Chapter III (“The Shots from the Texas School Book Depository”).
Marrs, Pages 1-89, 313-333, 361-378, 435-458
HSCA Report, pp. 41-58.
David Perry, “Rambler Man” (reserve)
HSCA - XII, pp. 1-32

Classroom Videos: “Two Men in Dallas”
“Four Days in November”

Testimony / Affidavits of:

Howard Brennan  Lee Bowers  Emmett Hudson
Roger Craig  Jean Hill
Julia Ann Mercer  Phil Willis
II. Medical & Scientific Evidence

HSCA Report, pp. 65-93.

Classroom Videos: “Nova - Who Shot President Kennedy”

**Mid-Term Exam: Friday, October 12.**

III. Tippit Shooting & Arrest

WCR, portion of Chapter IV, “The Killing of Patrolman J.D. Tippit”
Marrs, pp. 340-360

Documents and Testimony:

Helen Markham  Julia Postal
Johnny Calvin Brewer  William Scoggins

IV. Oswald

WCR, Chapters IV, VII, Appendix XIII, Appendix XIV.
Marrs, pp. 539-554
HSCA IX, pp. 103-115
“Another Oswald Sighting Allegations of Lee Harvey Oswald in Alice, Texas,” online at: [http://www.jfk-online.com/alicedho.html](http://www.jfk-online.com/alicedho.html)

V. Alleged Conspirators – “The Usual Suspects”

CIA / FBI / Military / KGB / Anti-Castro Cubans / Mafia

Marrs, pp. 90-312, 333-340
HSCA Report, pp. 95-225
WCR, Chapter VI.

Exam Two: Monday, Nov. 19.

VI. Ruby: Coconspirator?

WCR, Appendix XVI.
Marrs, pp. 380-434

VII. People with “Inside Knowledge”

Joseph Milteer Rose Cheramie
Fletcher Prouty Marita Lorenz
Richard Case Nagell Judyth Baker

L. Fletcher Prouty, JFK, Chap. 19.
David Perry, “Much Ado About Nothing” (reserve)
HSCA - X, pp. 197-205
HSCA VI, pp. 242-273.

VIII. Confessed Coconspirators – “But we don’t know which one”

The Corsican Connection Robert Morrow James Files
Chauncey Holt Roscoe White

Ray & Mary La Fontaine, “Evidence on Oswald Photo, Arrested ‘Bums’,” The Houston Post, February 9, 1992

IX. Suspicious Deaths

David Perry, “Now it Can Be Told” (reserve)
Gerald Posner, Case Closed, pp. 483-499
Marrs, pp. 555-566