POWER IN FICTION

Objectives
Power is a crucial aspect of politics. Indeed, many political scientists define their discipline as the study of power. Many individuals seek power, and power can be pursued, used, and abused in various ways. This course will explore four prominent works of fiction, set in very different societies and times. The objective of the course is through reading and discussion of these books to develop a better understanding of the pursuit, uses, and abuses of power.

Approach
This is a freshman seminar, and there are no prerequisites. There will be five seminar meetings. Class attendance is required, and except for the first day of class you should come to class prepared to discuss the literature assigned for that day. During the initial meeting we shall explore the nature of power and its uses and abuses. The remaining four seminar meetings will be devoted to four works of fiction. You will have to write a brief discussion paper (1000 words or more) on one of these readings. The generic paper topic is: “How this book/play helps me understand the pursuit, use, and abuse of power.” Papers are due no later than 5 pm the day before we discuss the book in class, or preferably earlier. They should be handed in or left in an envelope or box outside my office (SSB 384). All dates and class schedules are subject to change through announcement in class.

Books and Materials
The following books have been ordered by the bookstore:
   Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People
   Henrik Ibsen, An Enemy of the People
   C. P. Snow, The Masters
   Alexander Solzhenitsyn, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
Paperback editions are available through the bookstore, but you should feel free to use any edition you can find. All readings will also be placed on library reserve.

Calendar
September 30: INTRODUCTION: POWER, POLITICS, AND FICTION
Readings:

October 7: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER
Reading: Ibsen

October 14: CHALLENGING POWER
Reading: Achebe

October 21: ABUSE AND POWERLESSNESS
Reading: Solzhenitsyn
October 28: SEEKING POWER THROUGH BARGAINING AND PERSUASION
Reading: Snow