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 and groups seek power, and power can be pursued, used, and abused in various ways. This course will explore four prominent works of fiction, set in different societies and times. The course objective is through reading and discussion of these books to develop a better understanding of the pursuit, uses, and abuses of political power.

Approach
This is a freshman seminar, with no prerequisites. There will be five weekly seminar meetings, from September 28 through October 26. Class attendance is required, and except for the first day you should come to class prepared to discuss the literature assigned for that day. During our initial meeting we shall explore the nature of power and its uses and abuses. The remaining seminar meetings will explore four works of fiction. In order to get credit for this seminar, you will have to attend all seminar meetings and write a brief discussion paper (800 words or more) on one of these readings. (If you miss one seminar meeting, you may compensate by writing a longer discussion paper.) The generic paper topic is: “How this book/play helps me understand the pursuit, use, and abuse of power.” A hard copy of your paper is due by 4pm the Friday before we discuss the book in class. It can be left in an envelope outside my office (SSB 384). You may wish to revise your paper after the seminar discussion, and final papers are due by noon on Tuesday, November 3. All dates and class schedules are subject to change.

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 will be available through the bookstore, but feel free to use any edition you can find. All readings will also be placed on library reserve. The seminar will be supported by a Ted (Blackboard) account, which you can access at ted.ucsd.edu.

Calendar
September 28: INTRODUCTION: POWER, POLITICS, AND FICTION
Readings:

October 5: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER
Reading: Ibsen

October 12: CHALLENGING POWER
Reading: Achebe

October 19: ABUSE AND POWERLESSNESS
Reading: Solzhenitsyn

October 26: POWER THROUGH BARGAINING AND PERSUASION
Reading: Snow