

CFP: A Political Companion to John Updike

Edited by Scott Dill, Yoav Fromer, and Matthew Shipe

Recent scholarship on John Updike—especially since his death in 2009 and the subsequent opening up of his personal papers at Houghton Library—has begun to shed light on his still overlooked, albeit extremely fecund, political mindset. *A Political Companion to John Updike* will seek to establish a new scholarly foundation for this exciting and burgeoning field in Updike studies by inviting scholars to submit essays that employ multiple perspectives and fresh interdisciplinary approaches to better understanding the kinds of political questions Updike’s writing addresses. Like Updike himself, this volume aims to be extremely inclusive and eclectic; conceiving of politics in the broadest manner, we seek works that deal with a variety of issues; from the traditional aspects of power, rights, equality, justice or violence, to more subversive elements that Updike may have preferred to avoid dealing with directly—and that therefore might be of even greater interest—like race, gender, queerness, imperialism, hegemony and technology.

From the inter-generational debates between Connor and Hook in his debut novel *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959) to the religious violence of *Terrorist* (2008), Updike in his fiction explicitly and implicitly addressed the pressing political concerns of its era and has much to teach us about American political culture and its problems since WWII. In its attention to the interlocking circles of global, national, local, and domestic power, his fiction consistently affirms Aristotle’s characterization of humans as first and foremost *political* animals while also highlighting the perennial challenge of reconciling this with the strong individualist ethos entrenched in American culture. A writer rather than a philosopher, Updike in his novels and short fiction deployed uniquely literary ways of framing a variety of political questions. If *The Coup* (1978) describes the contradictions of American foreign policy, it does so through the stylized sentences of an African dictator’s bemused memories. Likewise, *Memories of the Ford Administration* (1992) and *Buchanan Dying* (1974) fill the halls of American power with the comic foibles of intimately rendered private failures that help us understand the intimate relationship between the political and the personal. The list could go on—of scenes of domestic power plays and gender politics, from Cold War fears to cultural tourism, racial tensions and class conflicts, the changing flows of capital and shifts in mass production, evolving religious demographics and the evisceration of urban decay. More than any of his literary peers, Updike found a way to champion the politics of the US’s liberal individualism while laying bare its internal contradictions.

We are particularly interested in engaging Updike’s later (or less explored) works, though welcome proposals about all of his writings (both fiction and non-fiction). Please send 300-400 word abstracts and a 1 page CV to politicalupdike@gmail.com. The deadline for proposals is Monday, January 30th, 2017. Chapters should be 6,000-9,000 words (including endnotes and works cited) and follow the guidelines established by *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition. For inquiries about the volume, please contact the coeditors: Scott Dill (sdd46@case.edu), Yoav Fromer (fromy857@newschool.edu), and Matthew Shipe (mashipe@wustl.edu).