

The Hollywood President  
Society's Conception of the Presidency as Portrayed in Movies and Television

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## Introduction

England and France have their kings and queens, Austria and China their emperors and empresses, Russia its tsars and tsarinas, and the Vatican its popes. In the history of the countries around the world, it is the political leaders who get the attention and history is often measured by their reigns. Chinese history is measured by the dynasty in control at the time; England has eras dedicated to rulers and families; and the “Louis” at the time measures French history. In America, we have the presidency, our highest political office. Since the Founding Fathers, particularly George Washington, rejected the idea of a king, we have presidents to mark the passage of our history. The ceremony and protocol that has built up around the office, in order to compete with foreign leaders and legitimize the power of the country, has made the office more constant than the person holding the title, meaning the person in the job has to fit the office, not the other way around.

Each election, we the people are faced with a choice of who we feel will best fit the office and be able to do the job that comes with it. How we do this depends very much on our preconceptions of what the job entails and who would best fill the position. But how do we get these preconceptions? How do we decide who is and who is not presidential? How do we know what to look for? How do we know when something’s missing? A knee-jerk reaction? It has to be more than that because as an individual we aren’t the only ones deciding; there are millions of us who think the same. It then follows that it is part of our socialization. But how are we socialized? One of the main ways is through the usual media, what we see on both the little and silver screens, because film and TV are among the most powerful forces that tie us together as a culture, both reflecting what our culture is and showing what it could be. Of all the genres or

topics that can be identified in film and television, the presidency is one of the more popular ones. Why are we, as a society, so fascinated with the presidency? Perhaps it is because of our political system and the lack of a king or queen to concentrate on like England and parts of Europe, the president being the next best thing to royalty. But it is more than that. If film and television show us views of the world and our reality that are meant to highlight particular elements, and reflect them back to us, to get a message across, movie and television portrayals of the president and the presidency ought to reflect our idealization, or inverse idealization, of the office and the person with the title, as well as our expectations of the president.

Why do we tend to accept these portrayals as legitimate? Is it because they display characteristics that have come to be identified as presidential such as charisma, leadership, strength, and intelligence? Or do we identify those characteristics we see as presidential because the character has the title of president or presidential candidate? Do we sometimes accept the character as real, but find the situations there merely for dramatic effect and thus reactions are also for dramatic or plot purposes? Or perhaps do we have those situations in the films or shows because they may happen, or have happened, and this is how the president should, or would, or did, react? More than likely, it is a mixture of all of this. Each portrayal is a picture of what the filmmakers see as presidential and offer up for our inspection. We recognize when a president or candidate is not acting as he/she should and classify him/her as “the bad guy” or are offered with a contrast to see that the character isn’t acting like a president or candidate should.

I would argue that these portrayals could be mixed together to get archetypes out of the individual characteristics that are either idealizations or inverse idealizations, in that they portray positive or negative characterizations. At the same time these archetypes are being created as people, the office and administration are swirled in to reflect the reality that the office is more

than the person. Situations shape the characterization as much as personal presence and personality do and in these situations we define how the president should act. The portrayals then are not just limited to the person in the office, but to the office, the administration, the staff, and to the person next in line, the vice-president.

Each film or television series comes with keywords or tags that summarize the plot in a few words. These keywords, or themes, help to develop the idealization and give it a chance to shine. In films and series with elections, portrayals reflect how we feel the candidates should act. In films with a crisis, we want to see the commander in chief. When the family is involved, we want to see the person able to balance the job and the family and see the support the family can give to the president. When Congress is involved, we sometimes want the president to work with Congress, to be accountable but we also want to see the president stand up to the petty political fighting that Congress often brings, or is shown to bring. When we see the staff, we want them to support the president, but also represent the people and tell the president when he/she is doing something wrong. We want presidents and vice-presidents to work together and not be at odds. We want the president to protect us both on the domestic and foreign fronts, to put forth an agenda that will really help Americans. Sometimes we want a political outsider, one who doesn't want or know how to play the power games that are so ingrained in Washington political life. Whether or not any of these expectations have basis in reality doesn't particularly matter all the time; often events would never happen in the way they do in movies or on a television episode, but we accept that it could happen that way, and that is all that matters.

This capstone will explore the diverse visions of the presidency, both the idealizations and the inverse idealizations, as portrayed by movies and television shows. These portrayals reflect what we expect from a president, a candidate, or the presidency as a whole while also

showing the audience what a president could be like, thus giving us expectations in return. The themes discussed reflect basic elements of the presidency and our political system and tell us how our leaders should act when faced with them.

## Idealizations

How do we learn the truth about the world around us? Is it through instinct, or do others tell us what is the truth? If it is others, why do we accept this truth and if we don't, what truth do we substitute in its place? What makes these truths plausible? Everything fictional in our world contains some truth to it, if the theory that film reflects our world to highlight certain elements is accepted then every movie or television show reflects these truths. These truths can range from the banal, explosions are cool and heroes emerge in times of crisis, to the lofty, sometimes the greatest peace and beauty can be found just sitting with someone in silence. When it comes to governing, these truths range from the assertion that independent thinkers can carry the day and change a nation to the idea that American freedom is a constantly evolving thing and has to be respected while being allowed to grow. But film dramatizes things and it's fiction, so "how do we learn truth from a work of fiction, something typically full of falsehoods" (Gettings)? Like any work of fiction, movies may be full of falsehood or dramatizations, but I would argue that while the events may not occur in the same fashion in real life each is a possibility and the reactions that are given to each event and situation offer a portrait of the president and presidency that the writers and director stand behind as a kind of ideal.

Most of the following sections are archetypes of a leader, such as the Common Man or the Intellectual/Educated, but some are a character trait, such as Principled or Independent. Each, however, represents part of our ideal leader and each is something we should demand from our

presidents or candidates, because if we don't, we aren't getting everything we can out of them and they aren't doing the best for us that they can.

## Statesman

A statesman doesn't always have to be a man, though history has only really provided that opportunity to men, by and large. Statesmen are more people of and in the world. They can be diplomats, or those who see the larger picture and work for the betterment of all, rather than benefiting one group now and another one later on. This idealization serves to show us that America is more than an isolated ship on the sea, it is a ship in a fleet and acting alone hurts both the fleet and the ship. They take a moment to think things through before acting, looking before they leap.

Most of these portrayals that involve "looking before you leap" involve a conflict or a potential conflict that is lessened in severity by the president weighing all the options available. On the historical side, in *Thirteen Days*, President Kennedy struggles against a military command structure that is geared up and eager for a fight with Russia. There is a clear danger in Cuba having Russian made missiles and he does not ignore that, but also is unwilling to start a third world war with missiles so close to the US. He closely follows the advice of his brother, Robert, who he has lead a brainstorming group on how to solve the conflict. He decides to follow their advice for a quarantine, a blockade, of Cuba to stop more ships from coming in from Russia. He keeps his faith in secret negotiations with a close friend of Khrushchev's despite the odds against him and the quirks inherent in Russia's political structure.

On the fictional side, in *Fail-Safe*, due to a technical glitch in an automated computer system, six bomber planes are not recalled from their routine patrol, instead sent into Russian

space to bomb Moscow. The president never fails to try to work out a solution to the problem, from going against some military generals by ordering them to help Russia shoot down the US planes to explaining the situation in full to the Soviet president. When it becomes clear that the Russians will not be able to shoot down all the planes, he orders a longtime friend of his, now a general, to bomb New York City in the same manner Moscow was bombed. He does this in order to prevent retaliation by Russia, which would have been far worse and not as cautious about where to hit, as well as to prevent a war with Russia that retaliation would guarantee. By both countries losing equal enough portions of their population, there would be no reason to fight a war that would destroy the world. In *The West Wing*, though no fighting or bombing takes place, President Bartlet also has to convince a Russian president to work with the US over a downed spy plane in "Evidence of Things Not Seen" because there were people trying to smuggle nuclear materials out of Russia:

We were taking pictures of Kaliningrad. We take pictures of black market nuclear materials being moved out the back doors of suppositories and into trucks. The materials are being sold to non-governmental elements and, well, that's what we were doing. Rogue engineers, military scientists, and ex-KGB. It's just as big of a problem for you as it is for us, but you're not dealing with it, so we were taking pictures of Kaliningrad. We're going to have to trust each other a little Peter. So we're going to share the pictures we got. Not the technology we used to get them. Otherwise I'm detonating it and neither of us see the pictures. We're going to have to trust each other. Our two countries have stopped the world from annihilating itself for 60 years because of conversations like this one. Why don't you talk it over?

Though his advisors, both civilian and military, don't want him to explain to the Russian president exactly what the US was doing spying on a part of Russia, Bartlet decides to trust the Russian president and honestly explain why they were there.

In *Murder at 1600*, President Neil refuses to take actions that would lead to a war with North Korea, which is what an overt attack to retrieve downed AWAC soldiers would bring. Military generals, the vice-president, and the National Security Advisor all argue in favor of action, but the president refuses, unwilling to do something that would harm the delicate balance between the US and North Korea. He instead relies on diplomatic channels to retrieve the soldiers. In Season 2 of *24*, President Palmer refuses to move forward on an attack against three Middle East countries unless he gets undeniable proof they were involved in a threat against the US. A tape he receives implicates officials of the countries, which is good enough for the military and intelligence communities, but he is still unsure and willing to wait for further proof. He maintains that presidents must have infinite patience, beyond normal limits, and demand strict standards of proof before acting on any information (“7:00 AM-8:00 AM”).

Statesmen can also be mediators of disputes, welcome as third party negotiators due to their unbiased status and belief in doing the best for everyone. This is seen in “Lord John Marbury:” President Bartlet’s involvement in mediating a dispute between India and Pakistan takes the form of working out the situation with each country’s ambassadors and promising US involvement if the countries don’t calm down. In “Shibboleth,” Bartlet arranges for refugees from China to be allowed to “escape” from their holding area. This way China can say their people were able to overpower the US National Guard and the refugees were able to stay and get the aid they needed from the Red Cross. In “War Crimes,” Bartlet emphasizes that people should help each other and that we can’t live life on our own:

Saint Paul begins the passage: "Be subject to one another out of reverence to Christ." "Be subject to one another." In this day and age of 24-hour cable crap, devoted to feeding the voyeuristic gluttony of the American public, hooked on a bad soap opera that's passing itself off as important, don't you think you might be able to find some relevance in verse

21? How to end the cycle? Be subject to one another!

This same idea translates to his decisions to help other countries through troubling times, particularly in “Inauguration: Over There” and his decision to promote the use of force for humanitarian concerns. Bartlet’s ability to think through situations and decide the best outcome for all involved, even when it may be balancing China and Taiwan to prevent a war between them (“Hartsfield’s Landing”), is often on display and he is able to explain it to others as well, which not everyone can do. Bartlet is also able to look past actions done by a foreign country in order to help its citizens, as in “Swiss Diplomacy,” when he allows for the Ayatollah’s son to come to the US to undergo a delicate heart operation and won’t allow politics or international balance of power to get in the way, “That’s a fifteen-year-old non-combatant on his way to a hospital. I want you to pretend that plane’s got a big red cross on it.” In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen, in “First Dance,” decides to be more accommodating towards Russia in terms of civil rights, realizing that Russia hasn’t had democracy as long as the US and they are still trying to feel their way through it. Instead of sticking to her pro-civil liberties stance she becomes more willing to work with the Russians. She could have held fast to a position that would have lost her any feeling of goodwill from the Russians and disintegrated relations, but instead promised to help them, offering the experience America has with democracy. She proves to be willing to change her opinions when faced with the evidence that not all Russian presidents are the same, some do want things to change in their country and the US can help with that.

Statesmen are described as those with experience in national or international affairs, particularly governmental. When it comes to presidents, this often takes the form of diplomacy, concern for those outside of the US, and an insistence on rational consideration of all the facts before taking action that could cost lives. For the latter, these presidents often have to struggle against those who would rather shoot first and ask questions later, if necessary. When the

president stands up to these forces and decides to wait, he/she is fulfilling our expectations of a calm, rational leader who is protective of America and American interests while also being protective of the world and the hope for peace.

### Common Man

To be in politics, one has to understand politics and understand people. The common man idealization approaches both with a kind of simple, conventional wisdom. These presidents and candidates seek to be more in touch with the people by being one of them, rough spots and all. By being part of the people, they can then truly represent the people's interests in government. As Steinhorn says, "perhaps the most common and emotionally satisfying narrative links the candidate to the American Dream—as an individual who either triumphed over adversity or rose above modest means to become a national leader. It's Horatio Alger, rags to riches..." (117).

Though his privileged upbringing and great personal wealth don't exactly make for a common man, President Franklin D. Roosevelt nevertheless fulfills the triumph over adversity qualification through his affliction with polio, explored in the historical fiction film *Warm Springs*. By going to the Warm Springs resort and interacting both with the local people and the other polio patients, who come to the resort after news gets out that he is there as well, he relearns how to have confidence in his own abilities and make an effort not to be defined by his illness. He relearns how to walk and even how to drive a car and he learns about the poverty and hard times that the lower classes face. He is able to shine a spotlight on the disease and encourage scientists to research ways to help polio patients. His journey back into politics is capped with his appearance at the 1928 Democratic Convention and his nomination of Al Smith to be the Democratic candidate.

On the same historical side, *Truman* chronicles President Truman's rise from modest means to become the president. He brings common sense to the office and has a staff with the same principles, he even recruits an old friend to his staff by saying he "needs some more Missouri around me." Truman's famous desk plate, "The Buck Stops Here," also points to his common sense approach to politics. His commitment to working for the people is shown when he was a county judge in Missouri in that he didn't let Boss Pendergast, who had helped get him elected, push him around. Truman made Pendergast's company put in a bid for a road project just like everyone else because that was best for the people. As president he recognized Israel because it was the right thing to do, no matter what the Russians or the military might think of it.

On the fictional side, *Primary Colors* displays the sort of folksy, "down home" charm that common man politicians normally have: he's honest about problems, he's faced adversity and gotten through it, and he cares about the disadvantaged, wanting them to have the same access to opportunities that he was able to have. He wants to help bring about change, he wants to make history, and he wants to tell the truth to those to whom he speaks. He's willing, as he says in the candidate debate, to use whatever idea will work and not ignore something just because it isn't his idea, but they have to do something because people are suffering. *Dave* portrays a common man thrown into the job of president who is able to use the position to help those in need. Dave wants to help people, which is why he runs a temp agency, not to gain power through the people he places. He is genuinely upset when the Chief of Staff Bob Alexander vetoes the works bill that includes the homeless shelter he visited with the First Lady, Ellen Mitchell. He visited the shelter as the president and to veto the bill that would provide the funding for the project would be wrong, as he argues to the Chief of Staff.

In *Head of State*, Mays Gilliam shrugs off the advice of staffers, namely that politics is not a place to express yourself and to get in you have to fit in, by being himself both in terms of deportment and ideas. He doesn't wear suits, his ads look more like rap videos, and he recruits his brother, a bail bondsman, to be his running mate. He wants to talk about issues that are relevant to the people instead of simply telling every group that he meets with that they are the "backbone of America." He wants to talk about relevant issues but doesn't quite know what his campaign is for. He horrifies his campaign staff by going off speech at a rally in Chicago to talk about how the people there can't afford to live, shop, or eat where they work and "that ain't right," which becomes a campaign slogan. His ideas certainly represent simple solutions: for Social Security, to "give it to old people;" for prisons, educate the inmates so they won't end up back in prison once released; and for gay rights, to just treat them like normal people, which they already are.

These common men rise above adversity to triumph in politics. They seek to bring the same opportunities they had to others, which would allow them to rise as well. They can have a common sense approach to issues and bring a willingness to do what it takes to get things done, whether it is policies or change in attitudes. They are principled in that they do things because they are the right things to do, not for political gain.

#### Intellectual/Educated

There are times when we don't want a common man, we want someone who is educated, one who knows a lot about the world and how things work and we don't want them to apologize for it. These presidents are like statesmen in that they are rational actors that think situations through before acting but there is an added element of reliance on their education and their

intellect, rather than the common man's conventional wisdom. Often the intellectual president struggles against those who would champion the popular position over the educated position, claiming that education makes leaders feel superior to the people and thus less able to serve and represent them. These presidents often face those who would equate their image as smart with an image of them as elitist. These presidents then have to emphasize that they are smart but not elitist, as smart is acceptable but elitist is not.

In *The West Wing*, President Bartlet, along with being a statesman as outlined above, is an excellent example of this intellectual/educated president idealization. His character is a Nobel Laureate in Economics, he went to Notre Dame, and is full of inane trivia ranging from Peanuts to National Parks ("Enemies"). At times he does hide his book smarts, but his Communications Director, Toby Ziegler, frequently pushes him back into place, challenging him to be better and do better:

You're a good father, you don't have to act like it. You're the President, you don't have to act like it. You're a good man, you don't have to act like it. You're not just folks, you're not plain-spoken... Do not – do not – do not act like it!

I don't want to be killed.

Then make this election about smart, and not... Make it about engaged, and not. Qualified, and not. Make it about a heavyweight. You're a heavyweight. And you've been holding me up for too many rounds. ("Hartsfield's Landing")

In this discussion with Governor Ritchie, his re-election opponent, Bartlet tries to give advice to the 'common man' candidate and ends up with more reassurance about the direction of his own campaign ("Posse Comitatus"):

[Gov. Ritchie] And it's a baseball game. It's how ordinary Americans...

[Pres. Bartlet] Yeah. No, I don't understand that. The center fielder for the Yankees is an accomplished classical guitarist. People who like baseball can't like

books?

[Gov. Ritchie] Are you taking this personally?

[Pres. Bartlet] No. Something horrible happened about an hour ago.

C.J. Cregg was getting threats so we put an agent on her. He's a good guy.

He was on my detail for a while, and he was in Rosslyn. He walked in the middle of an armed robbery, and was shot and killed after detaining one of the suspects.

[Gov. Ritchie] Oh. Crime. Boy, I don't know.

[Pres. Bartlet] We should have a great debate, Rob. We owe it to everyone. When I was running as a governor, I didn't know anything. I made them start Bartlet College in my dining room. Two hours every morning on foreign affairs and the military. You can do that.

[Gov. Ritchie] How many different ways you think you're gonna find to call me dumb?

[Pres. Bartlet] I wasn't, Rob. But you've turned being un-engaged into a Zen-like thing, and you shouldn't enjoy it so much is all, and if it appears at times as if I don't like you, that's the reason why.

[Gov. Ritchie] You're what my friends call a superior sumbitch. You're an academic elitist and a snob. You're, uh, Hollywood, you're weak, you're liberal, and you can't be trusted. And if it appears from time to time as if I don't like you, well, those are just a few of the many reasons why.

[Pres. Bartlet] They're playing my song. In the future, if you're wondering, "Crime. Boy, I don't know" is when I decided to kick your ass.

To even have a song in a play is something not every candidate or guy on the street would have and Bartlet's olive branch, his words of experience, was waved away by the guy supposedly more "in touch" with the people, thus scoffing at experience. Members of Bartlet's staff also speak of their confidence in his intelligence:

'I believe in hope, not fear.' 'I'm a leader, not a politician.' 'It's time for an American leader.' 'America's earned a change.' 'I before E except after C!' It's the fortune-cookie candidacy! These are important thinkers, and understanding them can be very useful and it's not ever going to happen at a four-hour seminar. When the President's got an embassy surrounded in Haiti, or a keyhole photograph of a heavy water reactor, or any of the fifty

life-and-death matters that walk across his desk every day... I don't know if he's thinking about Immanuel Kant or not. I doubt it, but if he does, I am comforted in my certainty that he is doing his best to reach for all of it and not just the McNuggets. Is it *possible* we would be willing to require any less of the person sitting in that chair? The *low* road? I don't think it is. ("The Red Mass")

In this way, they speak for those in society who want an informed, engaged president, one who can draw on their own experience and knowledge without having to get it colored by an advisor that may have another agenda. Chief of Staff Leo McGarry even advises that "there's no such thing as too smart" ("Game On") before the presidential debate and consistently puts his faith in Bartlet's public speaking skills and education background. The episode "Game On" also consistently points out that no problem has a simple solution, nor should it. Trade relations with China can't just be justified with "Trade is essential for human rights. Instead of isolating them we make them live by the same global trading rules as everyone else and gain 1.2 billion consumers for our products and strengthen the forces of reform." Bartlet shows this in the debate and instead of having experts spin the debate by sticking to the simple answers, the press secretary has them point out the difficulties and delicate balance that must be struck with policies, particularly those that may just be the best thing for now, and not in the long run.

President Bartlet also finds enjoyment in learning and in ancient things. He often references Latin words or phrases and even knows the Latin word for yam, "dioscorea" ("Shibboleth"). In the episode "In Excelsis Deo," he visits a rare bookstore to find presents for his family and books for himself, "Oooh! 'The Fables of Phaedrus,' 1886, first edition, red leather label, gilt lettering, engraved frontice. Phaedrus, you know, who was a slave, but later granted his freedom by Augustus, wrote his animal fables in iambic verse." He also expects his family to share in this enjoyment, prompting his staff to have to agree:

All right. You know Zoey is starting Georgetown in two weeks, I was thinking about

getting this for her. "The Nature of Things. A Viviscalic Poem Translated from the Latin of Titus Lucretius Carus."

[deadpan] Well, I think she would like that better than a new stereo, sir.

Yeah. Because it's got brown Moroccan spine labels.

Bartlet's knowledge extends beyond Latin and is put on display in "Galileo" when he rhapsodizes about the name of the probe and wants to answer more questions than the press secretary is comfortable with, wanting to be a moderator more than another expert panelist:

Katie, sixth grade, Green Oaks Junior High School, Austin, Texas, asks, "How old is the planet Mars?" That's a great question, Katie. The planet Mars is 4.6 billion years old.

What did I just say?

I knew that one.

Nobody likes a know-it-all!

Yes, God forbid, that while talking to 60,000 public school students, the President should appear smart!

That's fine. Just don't show off.

I don't show off. [reads again] Stevie, fourth grader, PS 31, Manhattan, asks, "What is the temperature on Mars?" Well, Stevie, if one of our expert panelists were here, they would tell you the average temperature ranges from 15 degrees to minus 140.

[looking through her papers] That happens to be wrong. It ranges from 60 to minus 225.

I converted it to Celsius in my head.

In the same episode, the press secretary comes around and advises Bartlet to go ahead with the almost cancelled classroom discussion because:

We have, at our disposal, a captive audience of schoolchildren. Some of them don't go to the black board and raise their hand 'cause they think they're gonna be wrong. I think you should say to these kids you think you get it wrong sometimes, you should come down here and see how the big boys do it. I think you should tell them you haven't given up hope, and that it may turn up, but in the meantime, you want NASA to put its best people in the room, and you want them to start building Galileo VI. Some of them will

laugh, and most of them won't care, but for some, they might honestly see that it's about going to the blackboard and raising your hand. And that's the broader theme. This way the president can still be educated but also more human, teaching the children that even with education and experience mistakes can be made, but as long as everyone keeps trying, things will work out in the end. Bartlet also continues to study areas where he doesn't have as much experience, so he knows what he's talking about when asked about the issues:

Yeah, well, agriculture is responsible for one in five American jobs, so it is a little bit my field...15 percent of the world's cotton, 25 percent of the world's beef, and 50 percent of the world's soybeans are grown in my field; farmers and ranchers pay taxes in my field, their kids go to school in my field, they go to jail in my field. From time to time they go to war in my field...So when I say 'it's not my field,' I'm not saying something, I'm trying to learn so I can. ("Manchester Part II")

In *The American President*, President Shepherd emphasizes the importance of history to his daughter, giving her a history textbook and promising that it will be the subject of a conversation during dinner. He finds enjoyment in things like the Constitution, "See? Grabs you right off the first page. It's a page turner." When trying to give flowers to a woman he's interested in he actually has a staffer look up the state flower of her home state, instead of sending a traditional type of flower, like roses or tulips. Akin to Bartlet's Nobel in Economics, Shepherd studied under a Nobel-winning economist, applying that knowledge to policies. He too has to contend with opponents who degrade his education and his intellect, as Bob Rumson does in a television interview:

Last night, the cost of those liberal programs was raised to include the blood of 22 American soldiers. Now, Mr. Shepherd's read a lot of books, but it doesn't take a Harvard degree to see this one coming a mile down the road.

[yelled at the television] I went to Stanford, you blowhole!

Shepherd later denounces Rumson's tactics of fear with regards to campaigning and Rumson's reliance on non-confrontational policies, except when the confrontation is with the president. *Commander in Chief* also features an intellectual president. Before joining Bridges' ticket as his running mate, Mackenzie Allen was the Chancellor of the University of Richmond, very well respected in that position, and had been a lawyer ("Pilot").

The intellectual/educated idealization features presidents who delight in knowledge and showing that knowledge to the country. They don't apologize for knowing things and we don't want them to. We want them to ask the best of the public, just as we ask the best of them. Appealing to the highest denominator, as opposed to the lowest, is something to be expected from our presidents. They often have to contend with opponents who would degrade their education and their reliance on it, those who prefer to be folksy and appeal to the non-confrontational aspects of life and society. These presidents are smart and use their intelligence to make good decisions; they are not elitist like their opponents consistently paint them.

### Principled

We also want our presidents to stand for something, to be principled. This can be in terms of their political philosophy, for honor, or in refusing to give in just because it would be easy. These presidents usually face those who want things to be easy, to take the low road, or the road well traveled. Instead, these presidents fight for what is right, what is best for the public, and what is best for America, refusing to surrender or give in when threatened. These presidents have the courage of their convictions and stand out because of that confidence.

In *The American President*, President Shepherd takes a stand against his opponent who attacks him for standing for the same things President Bartlet does in *The West Wing*, serious engagement in the issues, intellectualism, and liberalism,

For the last couple of months, Senator Rumson has suggested that being president of this country was, to a certain extent, about character, and although I have not been willing to engage in his attacks on me, I've been here three years and three days, and I can tell you without hesitation: Being President of this country is entirely about character. For the record: yes, I am a card-carrying member of the ACLU. But the more important question is why aren't you, Bob? Now, this is an organization whose sole purpose is to defend the Bill of Rights, so it naturally begs the question: Why would a senator, his party's most powerful spokesman and a candidate for President, choose to reject upholding the Constitution? If you can answer that question, folks, then you're smarter than I am, because I didn't understand it until a few hours ago. America isn't easy. America is advanced citizenship. You gotta want it bad, 'cause it's gonna put up a fight. It's gonna say "You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating at the top of his lungs that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours. You want to claim this land as the land of the free? Then the symbol of your country can't just be a flag; the symbol also has to be one of its citizens exercising his right to burn that flag in protest. Show me that, defend that, celebrate that in your classrooms. Then, you can stand up and sing about the "land of the free".

In *Dave*, Dave Kovic works to undo the maneuverings of the Chief of Staff and the president by exposing the fraud perpetrated by the two of them. When told about the plan to blame the fraud on Vice-President Nance, he protests because it is wrong and works to correct it.

In *The Contender*, President Evans stands up to Congressman Runyon who tries to bring down his vice-president choice. Runyon seeks out dirty information on Senator Hanson because he wants his friend, Governor Hathaway, to be the vice-president. Evans refuses to back down because he knows Hanson is more aligned with his view of politics than Hathaway is. It turns out

that Evans' resistance is a good thing when an investigation turns up evidence that Hathaway engineered the "saving" of a woman who drove off a bridge, paying her to do so. However, the woman died, which didn't help Hathaway's bid for vice-president and made him culpable for her death. For a historical view of a principled president, in *Path to War*, President Johnson is firm in his efforts to help the disadvantaged, especially with passing various parts of his Great Society legislation program. He convinces Governor Wallace to get blacks registered in his state and ask for National Guard troops to calm the people so that Wallace looks like he can't control his own state. He convinces Congress to pass a voting rights bill because the US is a united country and they need to overcome racism, as it only divides them.

In *The West Wing*, "Take This Sabbath Day," staffers express President Bartlet's feelings on pardoning a death sentence, he is against it morally of course, being a devout Roman Catholic, but also is firm on the separation of powers. The judicial branch spoke and Bartlet doesn't like to mess with that. In "Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics," instead of bargaining with a congressman for his support on campaign finance reform, Bartlet merely offers his thanks instead of a deal, which earns him the congressman's support more than his logic on the merits of reform. Though the two men disagree on everything, the congressman considering Bartlet a "lily-livered, bleeding-heart, liberal, egg head, communist" and Bartlet considering the congressman a "gun-totin', redneck son-of-a-bitch," they do agree on campaign finance reform, using it as common ground despite other differences. In "The Midterms", President Bartlet insists on following the Pendleton Act, which prohibits soliciting campaign funds on government property. So, instead of making campaign calls from the Oval Office, he does so from the Residence:

Because, however an empty gesture it may seem, I would like to take some executive notice of the notion that it's probably not a good idea for the most powerful and

influential person in the world to be calling up the people whose laws he signs and asking them for money! I'm going to do it, but not behind this desk and not in this room.

In “The Drop In”, Bartlet agrees to admonish an environmental group for not trying to stop environmental terrorists because admonishment is the right thing to do and doesn't admonish them for political gain. In “H. Con-172,” Bartlet accepts a Congressional censure for his non-disclosure of his MS diagnosis because it is the right thing to do, though his Chief of Staff disagrees:

I was wrong. I was. I was just...I was wrong. Come on, you know that. Lots of times we don't know what right or wrong is but lots of times we do and come on, this is one. I may not have had sinister intent at the outset but there were plenty of opportunities for me to make it right. No one in government takes responsibility for anything anymore. We foster, we obfuscate, we rationalize. "Everybody does it." That's what we say. So we come to occupy a moral safe house where everyone's to blame so no one's guilty. I'm to blame. I was wrong.

You're ready for a Joint Resolution.

As a matter of fact, it's not a Joint Resolution. The President still has to sign a Joint Resolution so, technically, it's a Concurrent Resolution. House Concurrent Resolution 172. The lawyers will haggle over the wording in the next few days. So, at least I'll make history, huh?

Though it won't help him politically and the censure won't stop his wife from being scrutinized by the AMA for her involvement, Bartlet still wants to go ahead and do it, because he was wrong. Not every president would see that.

In “Guns Not Butter,” Bartlet refuses to agree to fund a study of remote prayer, for \$115,000, in exchange for a ‘yes’ vote on a foreign operations bill. As a staffer says, “threats to civil liberties only ever come a few dollars at a time,” and Bartlet is not willing to compromise on the separation between church and state just to get a legislative victory. In “Separation of Powers” and “Shutdown,” Bartlet refuses to accept a change the Speaker wants in a deal made

regarding the budget, from a 1% cut they'd agreed on to a 3% cut the Speaker now demands. The cut would affect countless government programs and cut money for education, health care, and other policy areas, and as Bartlet says "we had a deal!" and he is unwilling to make all the cuts while Congress makes none. In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen refuses to give in on the changes to her homeless bill ("State of the Unions"). A congressman had tacked on an amendment regarding building prisons and Allen refused to allow it to stand. When she couldn't convince the congressman to remove the amendment, due to the Speaker of the House's interference, she announced she'd veto the bill because it was no longer able to do what it was supposed to do, help the homeless. Though it was her bill to begin with, she wasn't willing to compromise on her principles to get it passed. In "Unfinished Business," though it is a politically tricky situation, President Allen feels that the Equal Rights Amendment is important enough to warrant trying to get it passed, now that it might be possible. She believes in the ideas behind it and wants to at least try to pass it. In *Prison Break*, President Mills refuses to endorse his vice-president, Caroline Reynolds, in her presidential campaign because he feels she embodies everything that is wrong with politics and doesn't approve of her connections to The Company ("Tonight").

Principled involves more than standing up for what is right but also not surrendering to pressure of a threatening nature from other countries or terrorist groups. In *Wild Wild West*, President Grant refuses to sign a treaty that would cede US territory to a man trying to create his own country, and give back land to countries the US got territory from, even when his life is threatened. In *Air Force One*, President Marshall makes a stand against all terrorists, vowing never to give in to their demands. He consistently stands up to the terrorists who hijack his plane and only cooperates when his family is directly threatened, calling the Russian president and

asking for the release of a dictator the terrorists follow. When Marshall is able to overpower the terrorists Marshall immediately has the dictator recaptured inside the prison, before he can reach his people.

Principled presidents often stand up to someone or some group who would have them compromise those principles for political gain or for safety's sake. They fight for what is right and often are willing to sacrifice themselves, or the office in order to protect it. Principled presidents seek to stop those who would try to trip them up politically, often succeeding at the high point of the film or episode. These presidents also stand up to terrorists, even when their lives are threatened. These presidents have the courage of their convictions and stand by them, not to be stubborn but because they are the right convictions to have and not standing by them would be a failure of character and of principle.

#### Independent

Independent presidents are just that, independent. They think for themselves and don't allow themselves to be controlled by others, whether inside the administration, part of the government, or by outside forces. Sometimes this independence translates to political party independence but mostly to these presidents "being their own man/woman."

In *Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, President Muffley overrides the concerns of his generals to bring the Russian ambassador into the war room. Though General Turgidson protests, "Sir, you can't let him in here. He'll see everything. He'll see the big board!", which is exactly what the president wants him to see in order to try to solve the crisis facing the US and Russia. In *Running Mates* (2000), Governor Pryce is independent in his choice of a running mate, after rejecting money and a running mate from a

group of business leaders. Instead of taking the money, he chooses a running mate with no deep pockets, only firm convictions about politics that Pryce admires. In *24*, David Palmer similarly rejects the control of business leaders who were his financial backers. They were willing to cover up the involvement of Palmer's son Keith in another boy's death, going so far as to kill Keith's therapist, in order to see Palmer elected so they could control his presidency. Once Palmer found out ("6:00 PM-7:00 PM) he defied the backers by denouncing their involvement and exposing the family "dirty laundry" himself, subsequently lauded by the public and the media for his honesty. In "Separation of Powers" and "Shutdown," President Bartlet demonstrates his independent thinking by allowing the government to shut down, without any input from staff or counsel, in order to make sure that the budget is what he wants, and not what his opponents in Congress want. He'd rather programs get shut down for the short term than forever and he's willing to fight against the tide in favor of forever. On the historical side, in *Truman*, while a senator, Truman is angered when the White House goes to a financial backer, Boss Pendergast, about his vote on a bill rather than talk to him about it as he has tried to distance himself from Pendergast. While president, Truman continued to chart his own course and began the civil rights reforms that would pick up years later through an executive order. As he says, "I don't give 'em hell, I just tell the truth and they think it's hell."

Sometimes independence occurs as true political party independence, though not often. In *Man of the Year*, Tom Dobbs is a fervent Independent, displaying the disaffected side of independence in that he doesn't see any difference between the two major political parties. In his campaign rallies he even does a kind of rap/chant about how the two parties are essentially the same. To display his frustrations with politics as usual, he chooses to personify the "other" and let the parties have their candidates; he'll sweep up everyone else. In *Commander in Chief*,

President Allen's political independence is also displayed as a political party independence though she joins the Republican ticket. Once she assumes the presidency, she chooses to govern as if she doesn't have to worry about reelection, or election in the first place, that way she can really take chances and focus on the possibly politically risky ventures because she has nothing to lose. She doesn't have to cater to the whims of party leadership and thus can balance the parties against each other ("First Choice"). When she does decide to run for president on her own, she chooses to reject common campaign practices and campaign by doing her job ("Unfinished Business") and if the people don't think she's doing a good job, they can vote for someone else.

Independent presidents thus rely on their own judgment in situations. They do what makes sense, even when that is working with an enemy to prevent a tragedy. They reject control from outside forces and come out victorious from the fight. Though it is a rare occurrence, akin to the reality of politics, independence can also occur as political party independence, a rejection of the two-party system the US has fallen into. These candidates and presidents reject control from party leadership and politics as usual by charting a new course, hoping to reach the disaffected and be an example of how politics can be better.

### Self-Reflective

When it comes to our presidents we want them to appreciate the office that they hold. We don't want them to expect the power and revel in it, but be mindful of the duties they have and the burden that the office puts on the person in the job. Self-reflective indicates that the presidents consider their actions and are mindful of the job and the legacy of the office. They also indicate this consideration to the public by honestly talking about how they feel the weight

of the office. If a president is self-reflective, they are less likely to abuse the office and the power of it. This self-reflection does not lead to ambivalence or self-indulgence but has a foundation of confidence. These presidents know they can do the job and do it well, but this confidence comes with an element of being aware of the scope of what they are doing, which is the self-reflection at work.

In *The American President*, Andrew Shepherd seems comfortable in the office but also is mindful of his duties. When forced to retaliate against the Libyans, who shot down an American helicopter, he makes sure to try to limit the civilian casualties and doesn't treat it as just another day in the office:

What I did tonight was not about political gain.

Yes sir. But it can be, sir. What you did tonight was very presidential.

Leon, somewhere in Libya right now, a janitor's working the night shift at Libyan Intelligence headquarters. He's going about doing his job... because he has no idea, in about an hour he's going to die in a massive explosion. He's just going about his job, because he has no idea that about an hour ago I gave an order to have him killed. You've just seen me do the least presidential thing I do.

In *Independence Day*, President Whitmore feels the weight of his office when his decision to tell people to stay in their homes when the alien ships arrive causes more people to die than would have if he'd ordered an evacuation. He rallies in order to fire the Secretary of Defense, who continues to be a barrier in trying to understand the alien threat, and work with the military to destroy the other alien ships. In *Deep Impact*, President Beck feels a similar weight when the measures taken to try to destroy the coming comet fail and millions of people might die if nothing else works.

In *American Dreamz*, President Staton goes through a kind of crisis of confidence and takes to reading practically everything he can get his hands on, getting informed on current

events. As First Lady Staton suggests, “You're wondering, what was the point of it all? Why you? Why now? Why did the Lord pick you out of all people? What are your special qualifications? And did the Lord even pick you, or was it just having really, really powerful friends?” This questioning of events leads to Staton becoming a better president and a better leader. In *The Sentinel*, President Ballentine classifies the investigation concerning the Secret Service agent who is trying to kill him because he can't have the public thinking that the president isn't safe from his own security team. He says it took 200 years to create the symbol of the presidency and he won't be the one to undermine it. In *Truman*, President Truman refuses to use information from the FBI to bring down Senator McCarthy because it would hurt the presidency, “What the hell kind of word is "deniability"? I'm just the man holding this office. If I dirty it, the dirt doesn't leave with me when I go, it stays here to rub off on whoever comes after me from now on.”

In “Take This Sabbath Day,” President Bartlet explains to the priest of his home parish why it's important to stick to the ceremony of the office:

I don't know how to address you. Would you prefer Jed or Mr. President?

To be honest, I prefer Mr. President.

That's fine.

You understand why, right?

Do I need to know why?

It's not ego.

I didn't think it was.

There are certain decisions I have to make while I'm in this room. Do I send troops into harm's way? Which fatal disease gets the most research money?

Sure.

It's helpful in those situations not to think of yourself as the man but as the office.

Then Mr. President it is.

Throughout *The West Wing*, President Bartlet is portrayed as a caring, conscientious man who feels deeply for those in need and those in trouble. As Toby Ziegler says in “Inauguration: Over There,” “this one haunts him,” referring to the troubles in Equatorial Kundo and the US’s inability to interfere. Bartlet takes responsibility for things in the Oval Office, as Sam Seaborn and Josh Lyman discuss in “20 Hours in America Part II”:

He was saying that Commerce didn't have enough input on the stump speech and I started to say that it was my fault and the President kind of ran me over.

Yeah, he doesn't like the appearance that his staff is covering for him.

It genuinely wasn't his fault.

Nothing's not his fault in the Oval Office.

As seen in “Red Haven’s On Fire,” President Bartlet feels deeply when US soldiers are in trouble and is as open and honest with families as he can be. He takes meetings with the families very seriously as well as phone calls to the family when a soldier has died. As much as he takes the job seriously, he also has fun with it. He enjoys meeting and joking around with children in “In Excelsis Deo” and enjoys giving the Thanksgiving address in “Shibboleth.” In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen addresses Congress and the public after taking the oath of office and communicates how she feels about the office she’s just taken, “So I say to the people of this nation: I am humbled by your greatness. I am humbled by the history being made here today, humbled by the notion that I am the first woman to hold this office. I'm humbled by the responsibilities that rest with me” (“Pilot”).

Self-reflective presidents feel the weight of the office they are entrusted with. They work to protect the office, knowing that it is bigger than just the person in the job and they are the guardians of those who came before and those who will come after. These presidents are humble and tend to take their duties seriously. They also enjoy the job and genuinely appreciate what it gives them.

To play devil's advocate, perhaps these idealizations are just that: fantasies we create on film to bemoan their lack in real life. But these idealizations equate to a president who is a leader who cares about his people, and to say that this type of leader is unrealistic sells both America and our politicians short. These men and women portrayed in these films and television shows touch on characteristics that are present in our politicians, in whatever time one is willing to reference: the past, the present, or the future. Films show us what leaders can be, how they can act, while also showing us how they should be and should act. Nothing happens in a vacuum, and without society's ideas about presidents and the presidency, the writers would have no frame of reference, no tools to be able to explain the characters to us. Our films and television series reinforce our hopes about our political leaders. We expect these characteristics to be present in our politicians and their lack leads to our denunciations of politics as usual and to inverse idealizations.

### Inverse Idealizations

Whereas most movies and television shows portray the president as a positive force for good and social change, often the reverse is true as the president is seen grasping for power or maintaining the status quo. These films and shows play into fears about politics and the power that comes with the office of the presidency. Ever since Watergate and Richard Nixon's subsequent resignation, politics has seemed a lot darker, particularly the presidency. The fears about power and its delegation to those who we elect came to the surface and became fodder for the imagination. Presidents can now be an enemy of the American people where they once were only a force of good and the only representative for the country at large in government.

Additionally, through the president, others can exert influence that would hurt the public through the presidency and damage the image of the office through the ease of manipulation by outside actors. An inverse idealization, a negative portrayal, can take many forms. Presidents can be puppets or incompetents, the dupes of others who control them from the outside or from within the administration who are the real power holders in the presidency where it should be the president. Presidents can be power-hungry and self-absorbed, without regard for common decency or the law in their quest for power or the protection of the power that they have. Presidents can also be dishonest, echoing Nixon by lying to the American people or hiding information about himself or herself or issues that would help the people make informed choices.

#### Puppets/Incompetents

Presidents are supposed to be independent leaders who make their own decisions, usually with the advice of others, but without regard for special interests or the benefit of someone other than the people. Incompetence is a driving factor of puppet presidents in that due to their inability to control their own presidency they become a mere placeholder while the power void is filled by someone else. When presidents are controlled by outside forces then the electing of that president didn't mean what it was supposed to and thus threatens our entire political system. Even the staff of a president can be a danger to the president's independence, though usually seen as a support system, there are fears about the influence or control that a staff member or the staff as a whole can have. In contemporary history, these fears have risen to the surface with regards to President George W. Bush and the power exerted by Vice-President Cheney and Karl Rove. Presidents aren't always controlled from within the administration, however, but sometimes from outside the government, by a corporation or by an interest group.

Often, incompetence plays into the ability of others to control the president. In *Mars Attacks*, President Dale's incompetence when it comes to assessing the danger of threats leads to the destruction of the government by aliens. He is swayed by the arguments of Professor Kessler, that the aliens are peaceful because they have advanced technology, but does not consider the ramifications of not preparing for the worst-case scenario. He describes what he wants for a speech as "Lincoln meets Leave It to Beaver" and waves off the murder of Congress by the aliens with, "I want the people to know that they still have 2 out of 3 branches of the government working for them, and that ain't bad." Press Secretary Jerry Ross argues for a policy of openness towards the aliens for public relations purposes, ignoring any dangers they might pose. In *American Dreamz*, President Staton's lack of wherewithal leads to his Chief of Staff's control of him. As Staton says later on, "I've had speechwriters write for me all of my career and advisors telling me what positions to take. I can't even remember why I wanted to get into politics to begin with. I think it's because my mom wanted me to, to show my dad any idiot could do it." The Chief of Staff keeps him away from newspapers, restricting information to briefings done by the Chief of Staff, and gives him anti-depressants that the First Lady was on for a while. When Staton expresses worry about what he should say to visitors, the Chief of Staff gives him an earwig so that the Chief of Staff can tell him what to say.

Outside forces can also control a president. In *The Manchurian Candidate*, Eleanor Shaw arranges for her son, Raymond, to be made into a hero during the Gulf War after he enlists without her permission. Part of his process involves indoctrination, the instillation of hypnotic cues, and a probe inserted into his brain. Manchurian Global funded the indoctrination and continued to monitor him, with Eleanor's help. Eleanor served as another control mechanism, pushing him into politics and arranging for him to be placed on the ticket with Governor Arthur.

The plan that had been arranged was for a member of Shaw's old unit to try to kill him, aiming for Shaw but hit Governor Allen, who'd just been elected president, thus allowing Shaw to become president. The corporation had banked on Shaw's becoming president, to have a sleeper agent in the White House that they could control. Eleanor would be able to keep a close eye on him, guiding his choices as she always had.

In *Prison Break*, a shadowy multinational corporation called The Company controls Caroline Reynolds' vice-presidency. When a tie in the Senate on an energy bill occurs, The Company has Reynolds vote for the bill and order her to get President Mills to veto the bill so the company can keep its oil interests and Reynolds is more attractive to the voters. The Company agreed to protect Reynolds' brother, Terrance Steadman who was about to be indicted for fraud, if she operated under their orders. She agreed and used the money Steadman had skimmed from federal grants to buy a house for him to stay in and to fund her presidential run. An innocent man was set up for Steadman's murder and his imprisonment went up to the death penalty phase until he escaped. The case was rushed through the courts, persons of influence who could have gotten the sentence delayed or stopped were killed, innocent people just trying to find the truth were killed, and pressure was put on the governor of Illinois, where the innocent man was imprisoned, via his addition to the short list for Reynolds' running mate, all in the name of covering up fraud and installing a Company agent in the presidency.

These presidents and candidates did not live up to our expectation of independence. They allowed outside actors to cheat their way into political power and sought to deprive the public of a free and unbiased leader. Incompetence, in the form of an uninformed or narrowly focused president can lead to this control by others. With incompetent presidents, forces within the administration, often the staff members, usually exert control. These presidents lack the ability to

control their own decisions and thus others step in to fill the vacuum, whether out of some sense of duty or just for power's sake.

### Power-Hungry

Lord Acton said, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." For presidents, this can be all too true and they tend to take John Lehman's view to heart: "Power corrupts. Absolute power is kind of neat." (De Guillaume) only replacing the "kind of neat," with "really awesome." Power is pretty seductive; countless comic book villains are evidence enough for that and history has plenty of examples as well. Politics and power, it's a story almost as old as time itself. In America, we've taken strides to curb this ability to control everything in the country through the checks and balances built into the branches of government. The Constitution built in safeguards against the president taking too large a role in legislation or the judiciary and we've built respect for the separation of powers into our democratic socialization. The self-absorption that some politicians have feeds into the hunger they have for power that is best achieved through political leadership.

In *Prison Break*, the character of Caroline Reynolds is an interesting one. She begins as a puppet, controlled by The Company to keep her brother alive and out of sight, but she didn't walk into the arrangement ignorant; she knew what she was getting into and in a sense, used The Company as they were using her. She isn't the best view of a female president, one of the few in film, as she has an unusually/illicitly close relationship with her brother, later used against her ("Sweet Caroline"), and she willingly orders her Secret Service agent to do whatever is necessary to keep her in office, via the cover up of her brother's fraud. Once The Company no longer thinks she has influence in the administration, thus pulling out of her campaign, she takes

over and gets rid of the president via poisoned water, stepping into his office without The Company's help ("Flight"). Judicial process, federal funding laws, and the moral and legal prohibitions against false testimony are nothing to her, at least not compared to the power she will have as president. Instead of making amends for her actions leading to the arrest and subsequent death sentence of an innocent man, she claims to have cancer and steps down from office ("Sweet Caroline").

When it comes to power, it tends to cause problems for presidents and they stray from our expectations of a principled, morally upstanding leader. Power figures in all inverse idealizations but the self-absorption that comes with power is uniquely featured in a few movies and series. Presidents are expected to follow the rules, all of the rules, just as any other citizen is, because they are not above the law. A president who does not follow the rules should not be in office because their refusal to be held accountable to the law lends credence to the concern that they then cannot uphold the laws as they are charged to in the Constitution.

### Unfaithful

This self-absorption can also manifest itself as a disregard for moral rules; considering that some presidents on film, and in real life, consider themselves above the average person and thus the rules of marriage don't apply to them, leading to affairs. Instead of focusing on the country, they focus on what they can get out of the office. Their vanity and narcissism embrace the other side of getting whatever they can out of the office, in this case a good time, so to speak. Historically, many presidents have had affairs while in office but none have been in the spotlight as much as President Clinton's with Monica Lewinsky. Though not widely known at the time, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, President Kennedy and President Johnson also had affairs

during their time in office and other presidents have been accused as well.

Self-absorption is more than bending, or breaking, the rules according to the legal system; it includes bending and breaking other moral rules as well. In *Absolute Power*, President Alan Richmond breaks both legal and moral rules when he has an affair with the wife of a longtime supporter, a man who made it possible for him to go into politics. Christy Sullivan is killed when Richmond starts to get rough with her and she tries to fight back, Richmond cries for help and one of his agents shoots Christy. Richmond is subsequently unable to handle what happened, which according to him wasn't his fault. His Chief of Staff, Gloria Russell, takes charge and covers up the death, making it seem like a break in. Richmond perpetuates the cover up by acting the concerned friend with Walter Sullivan, bemoaning how all of his presidential power is unable to help his friend in his time of need. Thanks to the efforts of the witness, Walter Sullivan finds out the truth about the death of his wife and Russell is arrested for his involvement, while Sullivan avenges Christy's death with Richmond. Richmond is not only a philanderer, and man who doesn't understand "no," but fanatic about retaining control of his office in a way that Caroline Reynolds would approve of. Similarly, in *Executive Power*, President Fields has an affair with a girl who has a seizure while they are together. He panics and calls for his agents and a staffer but the girl dies before they make a decision. A cover up ensues, her death is made to look accidental in her home, and the president doesn't look back, either on the cover up or on having affairs. His lack of self-control and respect for his oaths leads to his wife being able to blackmail him for more control over policy decisions.

In *Dave*, President Mitchell arranges for a body double to impersonate him and leave a hotel for him, so the president could stay behind with his mistress undetected. Before this he had appeared to be the loving husband to the press, a façade immediately dropped inside the White

House, and pressured his cabinet to kill a homeless shelter project so the president didn't look bad doing it, which they were set to do until Dave saved the project. Not only does Mitchell cheat on his wife, but also he doesn't even seem to care about her at all anymore and doesn't care about helping the public, which the shelter would do. Ellen Mitchell is stuck in a loveless relationship for the sake of politics; her only consolation is that she can help people by the being First Lady. In *Primary Colors*, Governor Stanton's affairs cause problems for his campaign: the rumors of involvements during his time as governor, a woman coming forward with "evidence" of an affair, and the pregnancy of his son's former babysitter, the daughter of a family friend. Though he claims not to be the father of the girl's child, he still fakes a blood test, proving he slept with her at the least. Stanton claims to be sorry, to his wife and staff, but he still has a tryst with a schoolteacher on a campaign stop. In *Love Actually*, the president makes advances towards a Downing Street staffer, taking advantage of making the trip without his wife. When the Prime Minister catches the tail end of his advances, the president doesn't even look guilty, just smug and self-important.

Whether they are reflecting our disappointments with real life presidents who had affairs or are showing us possible affairs from the president's point of view is hard to determine. What is sure is that presidents who have affairs are not our ideal or anywhere close, as movies portray them as the antagonist of the piece, with those who seek to find out the truth about the affairs or any scandal cover up as the protagonists or heroes. The president is really just an ordinary citizen who happened to win the support of the populace to gain a particular political office. Presidents therefore are as subject to the laws as the rest of the country so the concern we have about presidents feeling they are above the law shouldn't be seen as unfounded. Presidents are supposed to have a solid family structure to support them and a philandering president destroys

this ideal American family image that the populace expects.

## Dishonest

Dishonesty is an old story when it comes to politics. Any new scandal or hidden agenda that comes to light just reinforces basic distrust of the system and those within it. In a perfect world, politicians tell us the truth all the time, they always work for our benefit above their own and they are moral, upstanding role models. However, this is not a perfect world, as Hollywood loves to show us, and we love to see. President Nixon, yet again, helped open the floodgate of dishonest politician portrayals, though now elevated to the level of the presidency. Hiding some truths from the public is acceptable, for national security purposes or for privacy's sake. Larger truths, however, that would affect our ability to make informed decisions about our candidates or regarding actions by the president that violate ethics or laws is unacceptable.

Though comedic in tone, *Dick* nevertheless covers the salient details of Richard Nixon's actions during the Watergate scandal. The taped conversations, the break in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters and the subsequent cover up all figure into the film. We have heard the story in history classes, those above the age of 40 likely remember it, but to see it played out on film gives the scandal an added punch. In *Wag the Dog*, the president authorizes his staff to cover up/distract from the news of a possible sex scandal involving him. Instead of addressing it, as he should, he stays abroad for an extra few days and his staff scrambles for a distraction. Since there is an election within two weeks, a conflict is determined to be the best course of action. They pick a small country, Albania, and use "news reports" to create a civil war in the country. Since it's so small, and Americans aren't that great with geography anyway, any denials from the region will look like a cover up and the administration can insinuate something

is happening while denying that anything is happening. If there's a war, the president's approval ratings go up because he's showing us his abilities as Commander in Chief and wartime presidents rarely are voted out of office. Events snowball and if faking a war weren't bad enough, now the staff has to keep the conflict going by claiming some soldiers got left behind, one in particular, to tug at the heartstrings of the people and indicate the conflict isn't quite over. The president gets reelected and the producer responsible for all of the coordination regarding the conflict is killed, though that gets covered up as well.

In *The West Wing*, though he is usually an idealization, President Bartlet hid details about his medical condition, namely his diagnosis of multiple sclerosis that might have affected the opinions of those who voted for him. Chief of Staff Leo McGarry finds out early on in the first season ("He Shall From Time to Time...") and with the rest of the staff following in the second season ("17 People", "Bad Moon Rising") and the rest of the country around the same time ("18<sup>th</sup> and Potomac"). Bartlet wanted to be president, however, and thus made sure those who knew of his condition did not share it with anyone. Though Leo McGarry assured him that he still could have gotten Bartlet elected, Bartlet wasn't sure at the time so he didn't share his diagnosis. He paid for that mistake through congressional hearings and valuable campaign time spent on educating the public about MS so they did not think it was fatal.

Though few films address dishonesty directly, all scandals and inverse idealizations have dishonesty as an element. These may not be outright lies like those above, but they are lies nonetheless. Watergate will forever be a model of how a president should not act, from the break in itself to the cover up afterwards. Manufacturing a war to get elected is not only dangerous for foreign relations with the country used but, as it allows the process to be hijacked by anyone, dangerous for our political process. Such an event also has dangerous consequences for the trust

in the news media, for it is our only source of information about the world and events. If we can't trust it and if it is manipulated by those with an agenda other than the dissemination of information, then we have a serious problem in our society.

## Irresponsible

Irresponsibility is not always about the failure to do something or act a certain way but can be the failure to take responsibility for an action in the first place. We often wave away culpability for something by blaming someone else, denying involvement, or minimizing our own involvement to make others more involved than we were. Presidents, unfortunately, can be sometimes be no different and deny involvement without missing a beat. Presidents are sometimes portrayed as not taking responsibility for their actions, placing the blame for an event or series of actions on everyone but themselves.

For historical examples, in *Path to War*, President Johnson blames everyone from the Kennedys to the military for the problems in Vietnam. He blames the Kennedys for getting into Vietnam in the first place and for being elitist and shutting him out of the administration. He blames the military for misrepresenting their abilities to win battles and keep the Viet Cong back. He blames his advisors for giving advice that turned out to be too optimistic and hasty. Instead of acknowledging that he signed off on all the attacks, per his insistence, and authorized the troop increases without getting second opinions from within the command on the ground, he paints himself as the victim and denounces the conflict in Vietnam for ruining his legacy and his Great Society program. In *Dick*, when told that war is bad and something should be done about the conflict in Vietnam, Richard Nixon and his staff immediately protest that Johnson started Vietnam and they had nothing to do with it. Instead of explaining the reasons for being in

Vietnam or considering the question itself, they just wave it off as not being their fault.

Irresponsibility thus constitutes a president shirking a duty, mostly to be held accountable for actions during an administration. When something goes wrong, we expect a president to say so, not wave it away as someone else's fault. If it happened on their watch, so to speak, then the president should address why it happened and if they don't understand why, perhaps that's okay, they can say so and work to understand it with the rest of the country.

## Bigotry

Irresponsibility can also be carelessness or actions that a normal person would balk at, such as targeting one group over another. The president has a duty to enforce the laws of the country so that everyone can live a life free from constraints based on class or accidents of birth, to determine for themselves what they want to be in their lives. A bigoted president, one who is more concerned with the position one group over another, necessarily does not represent the country as a whole.

Bigotry involves actions that a normal person would balk at, such as targeting one group over another for population control. In *Heroes*, President Petrelli orders Dr. Suresh to implement a kind of final solution to the danger posed by persons with special abilities ("Five Years Gone"). This is based on an explosion five years before of a man named Sylar who destroyed half of New York City, with an ability to "go nuclear," so to speak. Instead of trying to contain and help those with more dangerous abilities, Petrelli wants to just get rid of all of them, through an injection that would remove their abilities and perhaps even their life. It is one thing to want to contain dangerous individuals but to target a group because they have special abilities and are thus different is wrong, just as wrong as targeting one race over another because they're

different. It is even worse because Petrelli also has special powers, though his aren't as dangerous as being able to suck oxygen out of a room. In *X-Men: The Last Stand*, the president authorizes the use of weapons loaded with injections of the mutant gene cure, effectively taking away the abilities of anyone shot with the weapons. Instead of working with the mutants who are fighting against Magneto, he just agrees to give Magneto the war he wants. Instead of acknowledging the special role mutants can play in society, more than just creating a department in the government for them, and treating the abilities like gifts, not curses or something to be feared, he perpetuates the feeling of "otherness" the mutants have, making them feel like second-class citizens and sub-human. Both presidents in these examples try to eradicate a section of the population when presidents are supposed to represent every person in society, no matter who or what they are.

Bigotry thus constitutes a president shirking a duty, to represent the whole population, not just the ones who follow the rules or are normal. When the president authorizes the targeting of one segment of the population over another, it eerily harkens back to the days of segregation and rampant racism or even the Holocaust. One of the duties of the president is to see to it that every citizen be given the chance to live a free life and the kind of targeting sometimes depicted infringes on that free life. Presidents should not target a section of population as dangerous just because they are different, they should embrace the difference and work to allow each group to co-exist peacefully.

Inverse idealizations center around the idea that the presidents portrayed are acting outside of our expectations, and not in a good way. They are representing the worst side of politics, being a stereotypical "rat" politician, or simply aren't fulfilling their oaths. These

presidents think they are above the rules, because they were voted into office and therefore everything they do is okay by the people, even if the people didn't know their true character. The power of the office can amplify natural tendencies towards cruelty and manipulation so that the presidents are more like villains than the heroes they are supposed to be.

## Situations

Along with idealizations of the president and the office, we also see situations, or recurring themes and topics, in the movies and TV series involving the president and the office. These situations help to flesh out the idealization of the president and the office while highlighting certain aspects of the idealization that are particularly sought in connection with the situation. These situations show the idealization at work and reflect how the idealization plays out on the larger political stage. Several of these situations can be grouped under broader ideas, such as different from or rejection of the status quo, leadership opportunities, and challenges of the job.

### Different From/Rejection Of the Status Quo

#### Political Outsider as More Favorable than the Political Insider

A common view of politics is that theories happen in cycles, as they do in history. Every so often, isolationism is pushed as the right choice for the country; sometimes it is openness and working together to improve the world as a whole, not just our little corner. Along these lines, sometimes we want someone who doesn't know the inner workings of the Washington, DC political culture. We want someone outside the games, the power plays, the back room deal making; we want a political outsider. Several real-world presidents have labeled themselves as

just this sort of outsider: Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, have all capitalized on being different from the current president or the current climate in DC. Richard Nixon always thought of himself as an outsider, excluded from the Eastern establishment in DC, even though he had been part of an administration. Jimmy Carter was a welcome change after Watergate, which the then president, the unelected Gerald Ford was wrapped up in. Ronald Reagan labeled himself as bringing Western common sense ideas to Washington and saving the country from Carter's missteps and big government, thus boosting the nation's morale. Bill Clinton capitalized on George H. W. Bush's unpopularity and his policy switching by charting a middle course and citing Bush's unfulfilled promises and the economic problems the country faces. George W. Bush capitalized on the scandals and impeachment that marked Clinton's presidency by promising to be different and rebuild the reputation of the office. Except for Richard Nixon, none of these men had held federal office, each had been governors of a Southern or Western state and thus might well be politically adept in their own state, but not necessarily in DC itself. We have to look to the early presidents to find someone with no history of ever being elected to a political office, much less a federal one.

However, movies and television provide us with outsiders who sometimes "truly" are outsiders. They are all unused to the Washington political culture and often are there to help people. Some display a kind of political naiveté, sometimes displayed as true honesty that would never get them into office in the real world. Perhaps, then, we aren't supposed to take them seriously in one sense, but use them as a common man's view of politics, related to the common man idealization. In a perfect world, perhaps, such people could be elected, but as we aren't in a perfect world, so we should just use them as a counter to the experienced politicians, and a way to get some of that true honesty out of them.

## *Dave*

Dave Kovic in *Dave* is a perfect example of a true outsider: he's a presidential impersonator and runs a temp agency in Washington, DC. He's a normal guy: he rides his bike everywhere, sings, finds people jobs, and impersonates President William 'Bill' Harrison Mitchell on the side at gigs such as a car dealership. He's honest and ignorant about the political system so the comatose president's staff can guide him in every step as he continues his impersonation beyond merely leaving a hotel banquet to actually doing the job, at least the public face of it. He genuinely likes doing all of the public relations photo ops: playing with the president's dog; meeting children; joking around at a factory; and throwing the first pitch at an Orioles game.

Dave does learn quickly, though, and when Alexander challenges him to find the money in the budget to save the homeless project, Dave gets his friend Murray Bloom, an accountant whom Dave places temps with, to help him trim the budget. Dave then uses his image as the president in a cabinet meeting, and the presence of the press covering the 100<sup>th</sup> cabinet meeting, to cajole cabinet secretaries into cutting back on unnecessary programs. These programs include paying defense contractors on time when they are behind on the work and an advertising campaign to make car owners feel more confident in their vehicles. Dave manages to shave enough off the budget to save the program, in the process earning him points with the media, the First Lady, and the cabinet. A political insider also wouldn't have proposed his jobs plan to the press without doing any research on how to go about doing it, whether it be regarding funding, logistics, etc. However, the idea itself wouldn't have been proposed at all by an insider either, and is eventually passed by Congress. Dave's outsider honesty serves him well when Alexander brings charges against the president, all of which are actually true. Dave is able to take

responsibility for the actions taken by President Mitchell before letting his presidency end, saying he forgot he should care more about the people than about himself. In the end, Dave's stint as president inspires him to enter real political life and we see him running for city council at the close of the film. Dave shows us that we can be idealistic about politics and the presidency and both can be used as a tool with which to do good.

### *Head of State*

Mays Gilliam is not as removed from politics as Dave Kovic was in that he is an alderman for the Ninth Ward of Washington, DC and works to help his constituents in one of the worst parts of DC. He is chosen to be the scapegoat, the seat warmer, for the almost defunct campaign of Gaines and James who recently died in plane crashes. He's chosen because he is a minority and that will gain the party points for the next election when a real candidate will run. However, Mays doesn't know he's just a seat warmer and runs for real. He doesn't dress for the part, though as his brother says, "You gotta dress for the job you want, not the job you got;" he's a man of the people and utilizes this by speaking directly to their issues and dressing as hip-hop stars do. He begins to really reject the status quo image of a candidate and be himself. He stands by his principles in refusing to take a contribution from a businessman who owns a bottling company that targets kids for malt liquor sales, even when the campaign could use the funds.

One of the subjects raised is the presence of a black man in the previously white man's world of the presidency, something that helps Mays for a while then turns against him with black publications charging that he's half-white, losing him the connection with his race. He wants to just apologize for an off the cuff remark that gains him a surge in bad press but advisors deride him for being naïve. He feels the weight of representing his race, making him not just a political outsider, but also a presidential image outsider. His brother helps him by bringing in policy ideas

based on real world experience - such as keeping convicts out of jail for a second time by educating them while they are in prison, something an insider wouldn't mention, instead falling back on the ever popular 'tough on crime' rhetoric. Mays partly loses his 'common man' image for the debate, dressing professionally, and admits he's an amateur, but so were the early presidents and the country's founders and look what they were able to accomplish. He sticks to his common man experiences by emphasizing he's a real American and knows how to deal with crime, drugs, and helping the poor because he's been around them, differentiating himself from Vice President Lewis.

Mays' message is that candidates can act like themselves while on the campaign trail and gain support by being genuine with the people. Honestly acknowledging there are real problems in society and using experience to propose solutions is not something to be ignored for the sake of polling numbers. Once he hits his stride, he doesn't pretend to be anything he's not, indicating to the people that he's a real American, not a cookie cutter version of one and that what they see is what they get. However, with all of the honesty and discussion of how to help ordinary Americans, we aren't really supposed to take Mays as a viable real world candidate, much less a successful one who becomes president, as the movie is a comedy and exaggerates for effect. Though Mays may not be a reflection of reality, he is an outsider who presents an opposing view of the current climate of politics. Talking around issues rather than facing them head-on doesn't solve anything, and yes, Mays faces them head-on in an exaggerated, satiric way, but there's always some grain of truth in every satire that shouldn't be rejected out of hand.

### *Man of the Year*

While Mays Gilliam has his Alderman experience, Tom Dobbs merely has his commentary on political events on his political comedy cable show. However, he tries to fit the

mold of a presidential candidate by seriously talking about issues. He does refuse to run TV ads on principle, finding the money involved reprehensible and doesn't think candidates should be sold like products. His staff, all from his show, beg him to be himself, to be funny as that is how he reached the people in the first place and that is how he will reach them again. During the debate, however, Tom gets mad enough that he slips back to his comfort zone: satire. He says he's in the race because he's tired of party politics and thinks Americans are too, which is why he's running as an independent. Tom blasts special interests, saying candidates should be accountable to the people and those they represent, "If you're representing special interest groups, maybe we should be like NASCAR with the little patches on the back: 'Enron: We take your money and run!'"

Tom is lauded for being straightforward and honest while being funny. He continues this gambit by deciding he has to be different to make an impression and 'presidential' may well just be a "stiff in a suit." He freely gives the press all his murky history including drug usage and his sexual past. He plays to the disaffected by having his rallies look more like rock concerts with lights and other effects and speaks about how the major parties are really just the same and don't serve the people. Once he wins the election, he promises a diverse cabinet and goes to meet with Congress dressed like George Washington, in full wig and suit regalia. He advocates for an end to ties to lobbyists, wanting a government free from those burdens. Once he finds out that his election was caused by a computer glitch he continues to be honest and announces on Saturday Night Live that he wasn't really elected, over his producer's objections. He says that he's supposed to be the jester, not the king, and he's there to shake things up, to force candidates to talk about issues, and that America can do better than him. He steps back to his show, letting the reelection occur without his participation. So, again we see a theme of honesty from the political

outsiders and a wish to change things for the better, with Tom adding the element of a change from the status quo of party politics.

### *Primary Colors*

Of all the political outsiders thus far, Governor Jack Stanton is the one who mirrors real life presidents the most. He is a governor from a Southern state, which one is never mentioned, but as the movie is supposed to be close fictionalization of President Clinton's 1992 campaign, linking the state to Arkansas would not be a stretch. Stanton has 'good old boy', man-of-the-people charm and honestly enjoys meeting the disadvantaged and hearing their stories, being moved to genuine tears in the first meeting we see him have with the disadvantaged. He uses the political experience gained as governor in his campaign strategies. He pushes the idea that workers from a closed factory need to get further education to get another job, honestly admitting that the factory likely won't reopen and they are the best ones to raise their fortunes. He promises to help them get the education that they need and advises they vote with their interests. His honesty doesn't extend to his own extramarital missteps, however, and his handling of those reveals his political experience and the skills of his staff. He wants to work for the people, his slogan is "People First!", and he knows that he can make history. His strategies pan out and he wins the party nomination, as well as the election. Again, a common man's political honesty is shown to be a good quality.

### *State of the Union*

Of all the outsiders, Grant Matthews is most like the American ideal of a self-made man. He built a successful airplane business from the ground up and has factories all over the country. He agrees to begin campaigning by giving speeches in each of the towns that has one of his plants. In these speeches, he advocates for factions to work together because politics is tearing

the country apart just to get votes. He is honest in his speeches, berating unions for not working for their members and only working to solidify their power. He is ready to do the same to business, but has his mind changed by a supporter who wants to see him in the White House more than she wants to see him be himself. He allows himself to be swayed by arguments geared towards his winning instead of his being right. He turns over the running of the campaign to the experienced politicians and starts to snipe at his employees and his wife, Mary.

Instead of sticking to his set values and opinions, he turns into a guy who is for everything and doesn't seem to be against anything. Mary is increasingly upset with him and his campaign, though she goes along with the way things are going to support him. When he is about to announce his candidacy for president, she at first loudly refuses to give a speech of support, because she doesn't believe in him anymore. However, she changes her mind and begins to give the speech when Grant interrupts her, unwilling to have her lie. He explains that he sold out to a gang of corrupt politicians in order to become president, forgetting that he should have played to the highest levels instead of the lowest common denominator. He appealed to the worst in people, instead of the best, and apologizes to those who put their faith in him. He says he won't run but promises to continue to break down doors and go after those who compromise and get people to vote. Grant began well by being honest and speaking his mind, but lost his way due to the influence of political insiders.

Dave, Mays, Tom, Stanton, and Grant all have goals to help the average American. Dave wants to help people get jobs; Mays wants to help the poor; Tom wants to have the issues be heard; Stanton wants to emphasize adult education; and Grant wants factions to work together instead of against each other. They all seek to "tell it like it is", Mays going farther than the other

four, and all acknowledge that things are not well in America and saying so ignores real issues that affect real people. In this way, they are set up as a contrast to those who pander or play politics.

Chief of Staff Alexander wants to keep his power and thus vetoes a bill in the comatose president's name just to keep the administration's priorities on track instead of trying to help people, as Dave wants to do. Vice-President Lewis stresses his war record and always emphasizes the greatness of America, "God Bless America, and no one else" and doesn't offer new solutions to old problems, just reiterating old, temporary, fixes or doesn't think new solutions are necessary. President Kellogg and Senator Mills stress their records, their solid family ties, and wave the environmental banner, while Tom points out oil companies are top contributors to their campaigns. Mays and Tom aren't viable real-world candidates, based on their approach to campaigning and their engagement style, but Dave could be a viable candidate, based on his approach of working with the system to help people. Grant could also be a viable candidate, based on his advocating that factions work together. Stanton certainly could be a viable candidate, given his close mirroring of President Clinton's style.

### Congress as the Enemy

Along with political insiders, Congress is often seen or portrayed as an enemy of the American people. The DC 'culture' of backroom deals, infighting, petty squabbles, power games, and pork barrel legislation has its root in Congress. As C.J. Cregg says in an episode of *The West Wing* ("Ways and Means"), Congress is "perceived by the American people to be irresponsible, untrustworthy, partisan, ambitious, and thirsty for the limelight." As such petty, power-hungry people, Congress is often portrayed as an enemy of the president. The president

wants to do something to help Americans, but Congress is holding the administration back. The president is fighting for what is right but all Congress wants to know is what they will get out of it. Congress is shown to want to hold onto their power, to maintain the status quo, keep business as usual, while the president and the administration are fighting for what is just or what is right, often both at the same time. When Congress is involved the president is often the hero, so Congress acts as a dramatic foil for the president and becomes a device in the drama.

### Policies

There are instances where Congress is against the president based on a policy decision or initiative. Sometimes this conflict is due to partisanship and sometimes it is due to a power game or an honest disagreement with the policy.

Congress is often portrayed as negotiating for their support on a particular bill in exchange for support on a different proposal, funding for a project, or favors. *The West Wing*, in particular shows this kind of exchange system. In “Five Votes Down,” when the White House staff is trying to pass a gun control bill, congressmen are encountered who are willing to change their vote simply on the promise of a photo with the president, to make it seem like they are close. Some change their votes in exchange for the promise of something in return later. In “Take Out the Trash Day,” Congress agrees to support funding for 100,000 new teachers if the administration puts an important study done on sex education away for a while, thus not reporting important information that the current teaching method, abstinence-only, does not work. In “On the Day Before,” a congressman comes with a shopping list of items he wants in exchange for his vote against a veto override; however the White House staff gets around him by offering the deal to those Republicans who would be in favor of the same items he wanted. In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen promises to consider supporting Speaker Templeton’s

highway bill in order to solve a potential natural disaster (“First Disaster”). In *The American President*, the president has to deal with negotiating support for a crime bill while an outside lobbying firm is drumming up support for environmental bill. The environmental bill is sacrificed for the crime bill for a while but the president changes his mind and fully backs the environmental bill as well, while rewriting the crime bill to make it better:

Tomorrow morning, the White House is sending a bill to Congress for its consideration. It's White House Resolution 455, an energy bill requiring a 20 percent reduction of the emission of fossil fuels over the next ten years. It is by far the most aggressive stride ever taken in the fight to reverse the effects of global warming. The other piece of legislation is the crime bill. As of today, it no longer exists. I'm throwing it out. I'm throwing it out writing a law that makes sense. You cannot address crime prevention without getting rid of assault weapons and handguns. I consider them a threat to national security, and I will go door to door if I have to, but I'm gonna convince Americans that I'm right, and I'm gonna get the guns.

Congress is portrayed also as not above tacking extraneous amendments on to bills that have nothing to do with the bill in question. In *The West Wing*, “Mr. Willis of Ohio” confronts a census amendment added to an appropriations bill that the staff manages to get removed from the bill after convincing a stand-in congressman, the widower Mr. Willis, that the amendment has no place on the bill, Mr. Willis being the only one who came into the room without an agenda. “The White House Pro-Am” deals with a congresswoman who tacks an amendment regarding child labor onto a trade bill. This controversial amendment would kill the bill due to the loss of bipartisan support on it. She tacks it on just because she feels like the First Lady called attention to the issue and she has to jump on it to have any political clout. “Privateers” highlights the problem of the global gag rule attached to a foreign ops bill, forcing countries that receive the aid to prevent their clinics from discussing abortion with their pregnant patients. In *Commander in Chief*, a two-term representative tacks on a rider regarding prison building to a homeless

initiative the president put forth (“State of the Unions”). The bill passes and President Allen vetoes it, telling the public that she wants them to seize their rights and change the system and that her bill was hijacked so she can no longer support it.

Of course, there are also cases where Congress, or a few of its members, is portrayed as simply being wrong on an issue, though this ‘wrongness’ often depends on political philosophy and is influenced by the political philosophy of the film or show in question. In *The West Wing*, President Bartlet and his staff are all firm Democrats, so there is a liberal bent to the issues. This comes through in disagreements with Republican members of Congress who are often the ones in opposition. In “Enemies,” there is an issue with land use and the staff trying to save a portion of it from mining, doing so through the Antiquities Act and turning the land into a national park. “Let Bartlet Be Bartlet” showcases the importance of the status quo to Congress by their refusal to entertain the idea of the president nominating campaign finance reformers to the Federal Election Commission, instead of the usual practice of each party’s leadership picking someone and the president merely signing off on it. The president defies their wrath, however, and names reformers to the FEC and even finding one of each party so the partisan balance will be maintained. Republican leadership staffers promise retribution, however, in the form of bills designed to shift the focus of the administration bills such as a bill establishing English as the national language, which would distract the administration from larger policy goals. Historically, Congress has also been portrayed as doing nothing, particularly in *Truman*. Truman calls them “The Do Nothing Congress” at the Democratic convention as doing nothing, especially with regards to his civil rights reforms, desegregating the military, and he challenges the members to do something to prove him wrong, blasting them for being greedy.

The president is also portrayed as having to submit to Congress even when they are clearly wrong because the president isn't in a position to make them see reason or has a lack of political room to maneuver, particularly addressed in *The West Wing*. Congress forces the president to suppress a report on sex education in order to fund new teachers ("Take Out the Trash Day") and Bartlet is forced to prioritize and address the report later, putting it in a drawer for the time being so no one will have access to it. In "The Lame Duck Congress," the president is unable to get a test-ban treaty passed by a special session of Congress because a key congressman has pulled his support, due to his interpretation of the wishes of his constituents, which were supposedly revealed by their lack of support for his re-election. "The Portland Trip" touches on the president's inability to avoid a bill passed by Congress regarding marriage as between a man and a woman, despite his support of gay rights.

"Swiss Diplomacy" involves the recurring problem of Congress blocking nominations to positions in the executive branch such as Director of the National Park Service. Though Congress does not come out and block the nomination, the specter of its willingness to do so causes a retraction of the potential nomination. The administration can't nominate the person it wants because she would not be confirmed solely because she proposed an unpopular bill. It is not her qualifications that would cause problems but the fact that she proposed a bill as a favor for the administration. This same problem occurs in "Jefferson Lives," when the president is forced to change his nominee for Vice-President from his Secretary of State to a congressman, because the party leadership on both sides agrees the congressman can be confirmed and the Speaker of the House is unwilling to try to confirm the Secretary. The president is forced to concede because the administration can't go through a lengthy confirmation battle at the moment and it has to appear in control. A bill to clean up the Chesapeake Bay has to be shelved in "Angel

Maintenance” due to issues members of Congress have with a Republican congressman working on the bill with the White House staff, angering Democrats because the congressman has a vulnerable seat, and also upsetting the Republicans because he was working against his party. Cleaning up the bay doesn’t seem to matter, only who proposes it and what is included in the bill, which had been hijacked with a tax on local business in the area.

Historical presidents have also faced this tension with Congress over policy as seen in *Path to War*. President Johnson is forced to scale back on his Great Society programs to fund the war in Vietnam because Congress won’t fund both. Therefore, funding is another recurring sticking point for fictional presidents. In *The West Wing*, the White House staff tries to track down one senator so she will vote for a foreign aid bill, but the senator decides to make herself scarce and waste staff resources and time so that the bill can’t be passed (“Guns Not Butter”). The administration has to scale it back and wait for it to come up again after a continuing resolution lapses. When the bill comes up again, in “Privateers,” the president is forced to accept the global gag rule being attached to the bill in order to pass it, feeling that the rule is hard to enforce and the aid is more important. The federal budget becomes an issue in “Disaster Relief,” “Separation of Powers,” and “Shutdown,” when Congress, via the Speaker of the House, becomes intractable and refuses to make any concessions while trying to force the administration to continually cut the budget. The president gets the upper hand through a shutdown and in a series of maneuvers manages to get the original budget, agreed to by the Speaker, without the additional cuts the Speaker had demanded.

#### Personal

While policy initiatives are common enough instances of Congress/president conflict, often the conflict is of a personal nature. Sometimes, this manifests itself as open animosity

based on personalities or political views, or it can be different views of what is best for the country, slipping back into the partisan realm. Personal conflicts delve into the petty power games that are linked so intricately to Washington culture in the minds of the public and in the media. A president either rises above these power games to push for his/her agenda or works within the system to get the same outcome. Sometimes these attacks are targeted against the presidency as a whole or the staff as an arm of the president, finding it easier to attack an unelected staffer than the president himself or herself.

Personal conflicts often take the form of power games, struggles between the power of Congress and the power of the presidency. In *The West Wing*, “The Leadership Breakfast” shows the negotiations that have to be conducted just to have a breakfast with the Congressional leadership: where the post-breakfast press conference takes place; who sits where; what issues are to be discussed; and even what language is used to discuss the breakfast in the press conference. The press secretary has to move things around quickly when the majority leader pulls out of the conference, so that no power is lost by the president due to the inequality of power levels, with the absence of the majority leader.

Personal conflicts often erode into simple personal attacks. In *The West Wing*, “The Short List” includes an accusation of White House staff drug use by a congressman that takes attention away from the president’s nomination of a Supreme Court justice, which should be more important than revelations of past history, only exposed to harm the administration. The hearings about Bartlet’s failure to disclose his multiple sclerosis diagnosis also serve as a forum for personal attacks against the president, particularly pointed out in “Gone Quiet”: “It’s about the criminalization of politics, an attempt to do in a hearing room what they couldn’t do at the ballot box.” The hearings also serve to weaken the administration by tarnishing the image of its staff

members, much like the drug accusations in “The Short List,” and the Chief of Staff faces questions about his alcoholism, turning the hearings into an airing of past problems and a smear campaign. In *The Contender*, a congressman digs up dirt, in a very low-blow nasty manner, on a Vice-Presidential nominee, a woman, just because he wants his friend to have the job and because

Greatness is the orphan of urgency, Laine. Greatness only emerges when we need it most... in time of war or calamity. I can't ask somebody to be a Kennedy or a Lincoln. They were MEN created by their times. What I... What I can ask for... is the promise of greatness. And that, Madam Senator... you don't have.

At least, according to him, she doesn't have this “greatness,” though the president thinks otherwise and is able to use the power he has with Congress to force a vote on her confirmation. He calls out the representative who led the hearings and the attacks, “I should have come down here and pointed my finger your way...pointed my finger YOUR way, and asked ‘Have you no decency, sir?’” shaming him out of the room and getting his nominee confirmed.

*Commander in Chief* especially highlights the power struggles and personal attacks that can happen between the president and Congress. President Allen refuses to resign, when then-President Bridges was doing badly after a stroke, because she felt she had a duty to her oath and to the people who voted for her as part of the ticket, thus preventing the Speaker of the House, Nathan Templeton, from becoming president (“Pilot”). He causes problems for her on policy proposals, on Vice-President and cabinet nominees, and by undercutting her with the public through his political and media machinations. He works to weaken Allen's chances at election in her own right by shoring up his support with cabinet members whom he talks into resigning, working to “save America” from her (“First Dance”). He's even willing to use her aide's condition of being HIV positive to harm her, maybe because he might be a security risk, but

mostly because the aide is now a liability. Through this TV series, we see that it is one thing to honestly have a different opinion from the president on matters of politics and policy but it is quite another to believe so fervently that you are right, that you are then blind to other possibilities which may be better. Conviction is one thing, but blind stubbornness to possibility is quite another. Speaker Templeton still carries the resentment of his not having a chance at being president after Bridges, a man he greatly admired, and can't let go of that to see that Allen's way of doing things is the reasonable, practical way.

Not all of the personal conflicts come from Congress itself; often the administration or staff speaks for society in their derision of Congress. In *The West Wing*, education support by Congress takes a hit in "Six Meetings Before Lunch", as explained by a senior staff member:

Public education has been a public policy disaster for 40 years. Having spent around four trillion dollars on public schools since 1965, the result has been a steady and inexorable decline in every measurable standard of student performance, to say nothing of health and safety. But don't worry about it, because the U.S. House of Representatives is on the case. I feel better already.

In "Ways and Means," the press secretary decides that the best thing for the administration is to have the hearings regarding the president's non-disclosure of his multiple sclerosis diagnosis done by Congress because:

...we need to be investigated by someone who wants to kill us just to watch us die. We need someone perceived by the American people to be irresponsible, untrustworthy, partisan, ambitious and thirsty for the limelight. Am I crazy or is this not a job for the U.S. House of Representatives?

In "Gone Quiet," Congress is seen as a source of disapproval by the public, "I don't know from where you get the idea that taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for anything of which they disapprove. Lots of 'em don't like tanks... even more don't like Congress." Through this, the viewers watch their own frustrations with politics and Congress played out on screen, and in a

sense feel vindicated for feeling that way.

Through these examples, we see that Congress is portrayed as an enemy of the president and presidency that represents the people. Congress doesn't seem to care about what a bill is supposed to be about and its vote is up for sale, often to the highest bidder or to the one who comes with the best benefits. Congressmen are willing to take the administration hostage, in a way, on a bill because they think they can get something out of it. They don't like their feeling of having no power so they attack those who are trying to work for the good of the country, because it is easy to spin the administration into an enemy or find evidence of a scandal, however thin. The president is a bulwark against such power games because he/she has the power of the presidency, when able to use it, which is not always the case due to Congress' interference, and the president has the truth on his/her side. The president, through the staff, sometimes has to give in to demands because the policy is more important than being petty and not willing to give up anything. At least, in an idealized presidency, this is the reason for giving in, not the ability to get something in return for caving now. However, we also cheer when the president stands up to Congress or a member of Congress in particular. When the president takes the high road and calls Congress on its machinations, the president becomes the hero, more so than he was before, because the president is then representing the people more than Congress is, which supposedly accountable to its constituents.

#### Elections: How Presidents and Candidates Behave

In terms of civic duty, one of the most important ways Americans can contribute to the political process is through voting in elections. For the presidency, this takes on an added

dimension due to the importance of the office. Presidential candidates have to engage the country at large, rather than just a state or a district for senators or congressmen. This means that they have to have a wider base of appeal and have ideas for solutions that will work in the national arena. Presidential candidates also get more attention from the press, elevated to celebrity level in an instant with every facet of their lives up for grabs by the press, because the public has a right to know in order to make an informed decision about who they want to lead the country. Elections are a way to test the candidate's ability to survive the media hurricane and respond to stress. We want candidates to be honest, to be calm under pressure, to give straight answers, and to provide sensible solutions to problems that can actually be implemented and aren't just suggested to look good to the public. Elections in film are a good way to either boost up the president or candidate that the audience is supposed to favor by presenting an alternative that does not display characteristics that would make for a good president. They can also show how the office would not be right for one candidate as opposed to another or how the power that comes with the office has taken the president off course and into a realm that is undesirable in a proper leader.

### Campaigning

During the campaign itself, we want candidates to be honest with us. We don't want a political line just so we can like them because they say something we agree with. We equate slickness with being a bad person and being honest and authentic with being a good person, same with presidential candidates. We also want them to deport themselves with dignity; we don't want cheap shots at the other candidates, we don't want mudslinging. However, when the other candidate is wrong, we do want that pointed out. We want the candidate to stand on his/her own and decide the direction of the campaign himself or herself, without anyone pulling the strings in

the background or manipulating events to gain power. We also want the candidate to stand for something.

How a candidate behaves during a campaign can be a good indicator of how he/she will act in office, although, granted, there is more thought put into actions in a campaign as a wrong step could cause serious problems for his/her chances. Yes, there should be thought put into actions once in office but if the candidate doesn't watch what they do during the campaign they'll never get to the office in the first place. We don't want them to go negative or to attack the other candidates' character: policies are one thing, character is quite another. In *Primary Colors*, a longtime staffer of Jack Stanton criticizes him and his wife for considering using negative information about the rival candidate, saying "we don't do that" because they should be better than someone who is willing to air someone's dirty laundry from decades in the past. He does follow her advice and gives the information about the rival candidate to the candidate, to warn the rival it's not hard to find and the media may do so as well. While we don't want them to go negative, we do want them to stand up for themselves. In *The American President*, President Shepherd, after months of character attacks from his opponent, Senator Runyon, finally defends himself in a press conference, chastising Runyon for not believing in the same things he does because Shepherd believes in things like free speech and hope.

During a campaign, we want candidates to stand up to those who would put them down or put down their political philosophy. In a sense, we want them to take a stand for something, often the American people. By taking a stand, these candidates are able to inspire those who work for them, and inspire the audience. In "Gone Quiet," a campaign strategist works to counter negative leaflets against the president, irate at what they say:

Because I'm tired of working for candidates who make me think that I should be embarrassed to believe what I believe, Sam! I'm tired of getting them elected! We all

need some therapy, because somebody came along and said, "'Liberal' means soft on crime, soft on drugs, soft on Communism, soft on defense, and we're gonna tax you back to the Stone Age because people shouldn't have to go to work if they don't want to!" And instead of saying, "Well, excuse me, you right-wing, reactionary, xenophobic, homophobic, anti-education, anti-choice, pro-gun, Leave It To Beaver trip back to the Fifties...!", we cowered in the corner, and said, "Please. Don't. Hurt. Me." No more. I really don't care who's right, who's wrong. We're both right. We're both wrong. Let's have two parties, huh? What do you say?

In “Manchester, Part II,” President Bartlet decides to run a campaign that embraces his character and doesn’t back down from who he is:

Then they can look it up. We do not appeal to the lowest common denominator; we try to raise it - especially if you're going to be the Education President, you shouldn't hide that you've had an education... There's a new book and we're gonna write it. You can win if you run a smart disciplined campaign. If you studiously say nothing; nothing that causes you trouble; nothing that's a gaff; nothing that shows you might think the wrong thing; nothing that shows you think. But it just isn't worthy of us is it Toby?

In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen decides to run a different kind of campaign, no matter the consequences (“Unfinished Business”),

Next year I plan to limit any contributions to my re-election fund to \$100 per person and any stumping I'm going to do from the Rose Garden. I am going to campaign by doing my job Dickie and if that isn't enough to get me a second term, so be it.

It's a nice thought ma'am. That's not how things work, not in this town.

Your services are no longer required.

In *The American President*, President Shepherd attacks Rumson’s campaign style of fear:

I've known Bob Rumson for years, and I've been operating under the assumption that the reason Bob devotes so much time and energy to shouting at the rain was that he simply didn't get it. Well, I was wrong. Bob's problem isn't that he doesn't get it. Bob's

problem is that he can't sell it! We have serious problems to solve, and we need serious people to solve them. And whatever your particular problem is, I promise you, Bob Rumson is not the least bit interested in solving it. He is interested in two things and two things only: making you afraid of it and telling you who's to blame for it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections. You gather a group of middle-aged, middle-class, middle-income voters who remember with longing an easier time, and you talk to them about family and American values and character. And wave an old photo of the President's girlfriend and you scream about patriotism and you tell them, she's to blame for their lot in life, and you go on television and you call her a whore.

In *Man of the Year*, Tom Dobbs starts out like every other candidate, ignoring the advice of his staffers to be himself, but is spurred into action when his frustrations with the other candidates come to a head. He re-embraces his comic image and uses it to make pointed political arguments, winning acceptance by critics and viewers alike. In *Truman*, President Truman embraces his plainspoken, man-of-the-people ways and uses them in his stump speech, promising to work for the people and against special interests, securing government against the special interests. In *Head of State*, Mays Gilliam connects with the people because he knows what they go through, from working two jobs just to make ends meet to not getting a response from the government, “You ask for a pension, they give you a pen. Now what the hell am I supposed to do with a damn pen? I should just stab you in the neck with this pen.” He embraces his roots as an average, low income American and thus is more genuine to the people than his opponent who was a Vice-President and just happens to be related to Sharon Stone.

We also want a candidate to be honest, even when what is said may be unpopular or cause problems for the candidacy, because we want the truth from our leaders. In “In the Shadow of Two Gunmen, Part 1,” then-candidate Bartlet honestly told a dairy farmer why he voted against a bill that would have benefited the farmer:

One in five children live in the most abject, dangerous, hopeless, backbreaking, gut

wrenching, poverty, one in five, and they're children. If fidelity to freedom and democracy is the code of our civic religion then surely, the code of our humanity is faithful service to that unwritten commandment that says "We shall give our children better than we ourselves had." I voted against the bill 'cause I didn't want it to be hard for people to buy milk. I stopped some money from flowing into your pocket. If that angers you, if you resent me, I completely respect that, but if you expect anything different from the President of the United States, I suggest you vote for somebody else.

In *24*, David Palmer shares information with the public in a press conference about his family and his son's involvement in the death of the boy who raped his daughter, even though his son may be charged with a crime thus tainting Palmer's candidacy (Season 1, "6:00 PM-7:00 PM").

Additionally, we don't want candidates to be used as puppets by behind-the-scenes masters. In *Man of the Year*, Tom Dobbs blasts the other candidates for being backed by special interests and publicly denounces the practice, vowing to run on his own two feet. In *State of the Union*, Grant Matthews slips from his honest, tell-people-the-truth-about-the-issues character to one who lets the political professionals handle everything, from promising positions to people if they support Matthews to using a newspaper company to lock up a convention, paving the way for Matthews as a dark horse candidate. His wife serves to bring him back to himself and he apologizes for being taken over by a "gang of corrupt politicians" and promises to go after those who would compromise in the future. In *The Manchurian Candidate*, Raymond Shaw is maneuvered into position as the running mate on the ticket by his mother, Eleanor Prentice Shaw, and a multinational corporation, Manchurian Global. The idea is for an assassin to aim for Shaw, but hit the new president at the victory party, thus moving Shaw into the presidency. Shaw counteracts this, however, by blocking the shot himself, saving the new president and getting rid

of the threat of his conditioning and his mother's ambition. He sacrifices himself for the good of the country, proving himself a hero in the end.

In *Running Mates*, Governor James Pryce rejects the deal business leaders offer in favor of Senator Terrence Randall, as the second man on the ticket, who has publicly rejected special interests and denounced their ways of giving money to everyone. He, too, loses his way for a while, alienating his campaign manager, who had started him on the path to running for office, but came back to himself during his speech at the convention. In 24, David Palmer fights against his financial backers who threaten to charge him with the death of his son, Keith's, psychiatrist who was blackmailing Palmer with Keith's involvement in the death of the boy who raped Nicole Palmer, Keith's sister and Palmer's daughter. He denounces them in a press conference and reports the events surrounding Nicole's rape the public himself, winning the public's support for his honesty and throwing off those who would try to blackmail him. However, in *Wag the Dog*, we never see the president, only those who are working to cover up the report of a possible sex scandal with a minor, creating a fake war in the process. This kind of election manipulation is something out of an American political nightmare, because with the state of art technology and media reliance that our society has today, *Wag the Dog* is all too possible and the fact that the president goes along with it, and gets away with it, does not make him the hero of the hour.

#### Debates

During debates, we want more than simple answers to problems, more than just a sound bite. We want answers that make sense, that honestly address situations at hand. In *Primary Colors*, the other candidates in the debate criticize Jack Stanton for not seeming to be for or against anything, given that he doesn't disagree with anyone. He replies that he's against doing nothing when something is wrong; he's against not listening to a plan or a good idea just because

he didn't think it up. In "Game On," President Bartlet argues in favor of federalism and a national lens on events:

There are times when we're fifty states and there are times when we're one country, and have national needs. And the way I know this is that Florida didn't fight Germany in World War II or establish civil rights. You think states should do the governing wall-to-wall. That's a perfectly valid opinion. But your state of Florida got twelve point six billion in federal money last year from Nebraskans, and Virginians, and New Yorkers, and Alaskans, with their Eskimo poetry - twelve point six out of a state budget of fifty billion. I'm supposed to be using this time for a question, so here it is: Can we have it back, please?

In the same episode, President Bartlet embraces his so-called "elitist" image in response to his Republican opponent, Governor Ritchie:

Now, I want people to work together in this great country, and that's what I did in Florida - I brought people together - and that's what I'll do as your President. End the logjam, end the gridlock, and bring Republicans together with Democrats, 'cause Americans are tired of partisan politics.

Actually, what you've done in Florida is bring the right together with the far right. And I don't think Americans are tired of partisan politics; I think they're tired of hearing career politicians dis partisan politics to get a gig. I've tried it before. They ain't buying it. That's okay, though; that's okay, though, 'cause partisan politics is good. Partisan politics is what the founders had in mind. It guarantees that the minority opinion is heard, and as a lifelong possessor of minority opinions, I appreciate it. But if you're troubled by it, Governor, you should know, in this campaign, you've used the word 'liberal' seventy-four times. In one day. It was yesterday.

In this he doesn't put down the goal of bringing people together, just how it was done, as well as standing up for his political beliefs. Additionally, he argues in favor of accepting that no problem can be solved by a simple answer:

That's the ten-word answer my staff's been looking for for two weeks. There it is. Ten-word answers can kill you in political campaigns. They're the tip of the sword. Here's my question: what are the next ten words of your answer? Your taxes are too high? So are mine. Give me the next ten words. How are we going to do it? Give me ten after that, I'll drop out of the race right now. Every once in a while, every once in a while, there's a day with an absolute right and an absolute wrong, but those days almost always include body counts. Other than that, there aren't very many un-nuanced moments in leading a country that's way too big for ten words. I'm the President of the United States, not the President of the people who agree with me. And by the way, if the left has a problem with that, they should vote for somebody else.

In *Man of the Year*, Tom Dobbs, blasts the other candidates for not addressing the issues, for being essentially the same when they are supposed to be from different parties, and for not acknowledging that they are backed by special interests. He essentially takes over the debate, which isn't exactly a mark in his favor due to its unprofessional and over the top nature, and honestly addresses the issues. In *Head of State*, Mays Gilliam does somewhat the same thing in his debate, blasting Brian Lewis for his "God Bless America. And no place else" standard line and tells Lewis that unless he's been poor, a victim of crime, and been around drugs, he doesn't properly know how to handle those problems. On the historical side, in *The Reagans*, Ronald Reagan tells the people that if they think their lives are better now than they were four years ago, then they should vote for President Carter, but if not, they shouldn't. He points out all the problems that going with the status quo, President Carter, would bring and offers the people his common man, Western mentality towards issues.

In movies and television episodes with elections, candidates promise to work for the people, for America, and often against special interests. The America described isn't precisely defined all of the time. Often it is some nebulous, patriotic, American narrative version of America, but sometimes we catch glimpses of the America a candidate means, when he/she talks about free speech or education. We connect with a candidate, or a president, when he/she stands up for who he/she is, his/her characterization, whether it be educated or liberal or independent or plainspoken. We connect with a person because he/she accepts who he/she is and offers it to us on a plate, letting us "take it or leave it". By doing so, the candidate or president is honest with us as a society: he/she is vulnerable to us when the conventional wisdom says to be a brick wall or a fortress, unable to be hurt. We want candidates or presidents to stand on their own and throw off those who would try to control them, whether it be those who would make them less than who they are in order to get votes or those who try to completely change their stances on issues or control them, via money or blackmail. In elections, the status quo is again an enemy, often presented as the opponent who seeks to win, or retain the office, through the idea that nothing is wrong with the country. At the same time, elections give candidates and presidents a chance to showcase their leadership abilities. The idealizations of a common man, an intellectual/educated president, and a principled president all are emphasized in elections as the candidates portrayed fit into those idealizations.

### Leadership Opportunities

#### Crisis: How to Respond

One of the most important parts of the president's job is how he/she handles a crisis, if only because crises are more pressing than any other part of the job and they get the most media

attention. Under the category of “crisis,” military actions, in terms of conflicts and wars, and military responses that do not escalate into long conflicts can be grouped. In a crisis, we want the president to be calm and collected; rash decisions benefit no one after all. Measured, reasonable responses to attacks or threats should rule the day, which sometimes has to be explained to the president, when he/she expresses outrage and want to go farther than he/she should, speaking for the public in his/her anger. However, some kind of indignation on the country’s behalf is not unwarranted - we want the president to feel protective of the country and its people, both civilians and troops alike. In this way the president is speaking for the public, expressing their anger over the situation, but the president is usually calm when facing large disasters, in a way saving anger for the smaller crises. In film, wars and military actions are naturally a popular topic choice. They provide a forum for the president to be the Commander in Chief, a leader who fiercely protects American interests and personnel. They also allow for really cool explosions and special effects, which are instant crowd pleasers.

In films based on historical events, the focus is often on crises that don’t have to be embellished, as they were frightening enough at the time. In *Thirteen Days*, President Kennedy and his cabinet and staff faced the Cuban Missile Crisis. They had to weigh the threat of Russian missiles in Cuba against the probability of war with Russia if aggressive action was taken to remove the missiles. Kennedy had to deal with a military that seemed all too eager to take aggressive, potentially very dangerous action against Cuba and seemed frustrated with Kennedy’s wish to wait and consider all the options. The country was in a panic, as Cuba is only 90 miles away from Florida and the missiles could reach practically every part of the US, but Kennedy managed to keep a handle on things and work out a deal, through back channels, with Khrushchev. A measured response was critical and sneak attacks would do no good, as Robert

Kennedy said: “You’re talking about a sneak attack. How will that make us look? A big country blasting a little country to the Stone Age. Yeah, we’ll be everyone’s favorites.” In *Path to War*, we see the fighting in Vietnam just grow and grow, with no end in sight, due to underestimating the will of the North Vietnamese fighters and the misrepresentation of casualties by the general on the ground. President Johnson is shown to be actively involved in every mission planning and often stays up very late, waiting for information to come back about the bombing raids. We want our presidents to be monitoring military missions, but not as obsessively as Johnson seems to have done.

In terms of large-scale disasters, we see presidents giving the public information only when it is absolutely necessary and trying to avoid causing a panic. They often seem very calm under pressure, which is what we’d hope they’d be. Crises are also a chance for eloquence to shine, for rousing speeches to inspire the people. In *Independence Day*, President Whitmore advises the public to stay calm and get out of the major cities if they can, once he has the information that the alien ships may be hostile. He is calm, despite the loss of his wife, feels the weight of the lives that are lost, and participates in the final strike against the aliens, using his fighter pilot training. The president uses the final strike as opportunity to inspire those left:

Good morning. In less than an hour, aircraft from here will join others from around the world. And you will be launching the largest aerial battle in the history of mankind. "Mankind." That word should have new meaning for all of us today. We can't be consumed by our petty differences anymore. We will be united in our common interests. Perhaps it's fate that today is the Fourth of July, and you will once again be fighting for our freedom... Not from tyranny, oppression, or persecution... but from annihilation. We are fighting for our right to live. To exist. And should we win the day, the Fourth of July will no longer be known as an American holiday, but as the day the world declared in one voice: "We will not go quietly into the night! We will not vanish without a fight! We're going to live on! We're going to survive! Today we celebrate our Independence Day!"

In *Deep Impact*, President Beck has delayed sharing information on the comet headed towards Earth to try and see if a space mission to destroy it would work. He is calm every time we see him, whether it be waiting for news of the mission or in press conferences announcing the mission and the back-up plan - giant shelters in caves that have been constructed to hold a million people, the most citizens the US can hope to save. He offers a prayer for survival when it looks like the worst will happen, and promises that life will go on through those saved in the caves. Much like President Whitmore participating in the strike against the alien ship, President Beck stays in the White House, unwilling to run to safety while so many of the citizens can't. In *Air Force One*, President Marshall refuses to leave the plane while his staff and family are still on board, and ends up saving his family and the world from the release of a dangerous dictator.

In *Fail-Safe*, the president, whose name we never learn, is calm throughout the movie and accepts the loss of Americans to prevent a war. He accepts the fate of having to order a US general to bomb New York City, so the Russians won't, calmly and stoically. In Season 2 of *24*, President Palmer only gets angry when he discovers there are those within his own government trying to prevent him from stopping the nuclear bomb from destroying Los Angeles. He later is angry when his cabinet questions his judgment in delaying an attack on three Middle Eastern countries, thought to be in league with a terrorist group, as he knows he did the prudent thing by delaying. He argues that a president must have "patience beyond human limits" and meet "strict standards of proof" (Season 2, "7:00 AM-8:00 AM"), thus resisting attacking until the last possible moment.

This point is also made in *Murder at 1600* when the president has to contend with a National Security Advisor who felt he should have brought soldiers back from a crash in North Korea by any means necessary while the president argues he didn't want to start a war by being

hasty. In *American Dreamz*, President Staton is calm and empathetic while he tries to talk to a man who is going to blow himself up in a crowded theater, trying to talk him down. In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen has to deal with a leaking oil tanker and the environmental hazard it poses, deciding whether to try to contain it to one area, in Florida, where there has just been a hurricane, or take it elsewhere, infecting the entire coastline (“First Disaster”). Allen is calm throughout the process and makes a deal to bring it into a naval base in Florida, giving extra support to the state to offset the problem of the tanker.

Crises can also take the form of military actions, whether they are preventative strikes or responses to attacks. In *The American President*, President Shepherd has to decide how to respond to an attack on US troops, in which some of the soldiers died. His Chief of Staff, A. J. MacInerney counsels an equal attack on the Libyans:

Sir, it's immediate, it's decisive, it's low-risk, and it's a proportional response.

Someday someone's going to have to explain to me the virtue of a proportional response.

The same problem with the proportionality of responses, as opposed to unleashing the fury of the US military on those who would attack us, is brought up in “A Proportional Response” in *The West Wing*. President Bartlet is upset over the death of his new doctor, who died in an attack against the helicopter he was in, and questions the virtue of a proportional response. His Chief of Staff, Leo McGarry points out that proportional responses are measured and logical, not necessarily satisfying, though:

Of course it's not good! There is no good! It's what there is! It's how you behave if you're the most powerful nation in the world! It's proportional. It's reasonable. It's responsible. It's merciful. It's not nothing. Four high-rated military targets--

Which they'll rebuild again in six months!

Then we'll blow 'em up again in six months! We're getting really good at it!! It's what our fathers taught us.

Basically, the US can't go bombing everyone out of existence just for thumbing their noses at us. You can't give out "\$5000 worth of punishment for a fifty buck crime" ("A Proportional Response"). In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen wants to destroy all the coca crops in a country where US DEA agents were killed but is advised to only destroy some, as not all of the coca crop, or the crops in the fields, goes towards drugs and destroying all of the fields would ruin the country's economy and make the plight of the people worse ("First Strike"). In "Sub Enchanted Evening" and "No Nukes is Good Nukes," President Allen has to prevent a war with North Korea over the violation of their sovereign waters with a US spy sub. The sub is dead in the water and the only way to save the sailors aboard is to rescue them via Chinese help. Through an aid package and an apology, Allen manages to both prevent a war and rescue the sailors, though others in the government balked at the apology.

With crises, we see that a level head and calm attitude about the events that are unfolding is best. Presidents should monitor the events, though not obsessively, in order to be on top of everything and in control, as they have to be. In order to prevent a panic, presidents withhold information until it is necessary to reveal it, sometimes in order to protect national security, but usually to quell the population. Crises give the president a chance to speak honestly to the public and eloquently, both to inspire people to action and to reassure them. With small crises, "routine" military actions, proportional, measured responses to attacks are best as they both prevent war and are worthy of a superpower. Presidents also have to be in control of events, because without their patience and reserve, heads hungrier for action may prevail, much to the detriment of the country.

## Domestic Policy

As the most immediate policy role to the public, domestic policy is particularly dicey at times for the president and the presidency. It affects the public the most, after all, and due to the nature of the country, no one agrees on everything and not everyone's needs can be met. In order to govern, compromises must be made and sometimes people lose out. How those compromises are made and who loses out often depends on the political philosophy of the president, whether he/she chooses to help, the poor and underprivileged over the well-off or the middle class, or sometimes the poor and middle class over the wealthy. We want a president to do what is best for all of us, at least as many of us as possible and to do it despite the fact that the public may not understand at the time that it is a good policy. Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson struggled against those who said it wasn't the right time for civil rights reform, but they decided it was, and the country is better for it.

Domestic policy is a chance for the president to take a lead role in the change or development of an initiative. In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen sees an opportunity to finally pass the Equal Rights Amendment, as a longtime opponent of it has just died, the Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives ("Unfinished Business"). Despite the amendment's being 'dead' for some time, Allen strongly feels that it is an important addition to the Constitution and has been left unfinished far too long. In *The West Wing*, Communications Director Toby Ziegler advises a change in the State of the Union address to talk about how government can benefit the people, inspired by a mention of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Great Depression era reforms, such as the WPA ("He Shall From Time to Time..."). It can "be a place where people come together and where no one gets left behind. No one... gets left behind, an

instrument of... good.” The president agrees and much of the rest of the show is dedicated to finding solutions to problems within government. In *Prison Break*, (“Tonight”) President Mills decides to sign an energy bill that promotes the use of alternative fuel sources, as that is the way the country is headed and there should be a law about it. While on *The West Wing*, Toby Ziegler and Josh Lyman, Deputy Chief of Staff, develop a plan to make college tuition partially tax deductible for parents, a plan President Bartlet enthusiastically supports (“College Kids”).

In *The American President*, President Shepherd promotes a sweeping energy/environmental bill, “requiring a 20 percent reduction of the emission of fossil fuels over the next ten years...by far the most aggressive stride ever taken in the fight to reverse the effects of global warming.” In *Dave*, Dave Kovic, acting as the president, proposes a plan to give every American a job who wants one, later passed as a jobs bill under Acting-President Nance. At the end of *X-Men: The Last Stand*, the president embraces the newly united mutant community, instead of excluding them as second-class citizens. On the historical side, in *Truman*, through an executive order giving equality to men of all color in the military, President Truman lays the foundations for the civil rights legislation that follows. In *Path to War*, President Johnson fights to pass his Voting Rights bill as part of his Great Society reforms, practically ordering Congress to pass it, taking advantage of his great personal influence with Congress at the time.

Domestic policy is a chance for the president to work for the good of Americans. This is done through policy initiatives developed by the president or by a staff member. These portrayals focus on how a president seeks to do something unpopular at the time or politically risky, but does it for the good of the country. This taking of risks is a struggle against the status quo, but, more importantly, a chance to showcase why the president would have been elected in the real world, namely for his/her leadership abilities.

## Foreign Policy

One of the biggest problems faced by a president and the presidency is to properly represent America in the world. How the president interacts with other world leaders affects how we are viewed and what kind of support we get during military actions or in policy proposals. Diplomacy is a tricky thing, and some countries tend to be more sensitive than others when it comes to the small things, like the size of flags at a summit (“Han”). Some presidents have more talent for diplomacy than others and some are more willing to try diplomacy than others. Sometimes diplomacy is more than trying to work together for the good of all, but rather an attempt to work together to prevent a conflict from happening or escalating. In foreign policy, both actions against foreign countries as well as the problem of foreign policy serve to distract a president and a presidency from domestic affairs. The president has to explain to the public why it is important to send money and manpower overseas to a place that doesn’t seem to be as important as the home country. Though foreign conflicts don’t always divert attention and money away from domestic issues, they can. The Vietnam War slowed down the Great Society reforms under Lyndon B. Johnson and the Iraq War has served to distract the public from pressing concerns at home, such as the economy and education, under George W. Bush.

Like all things, foreign policy requires compromise. In *Path to War*, President Johnson finds his Great Society programs pushed aside by the growing fighting in Vietnam, and Congress can’t fund both. Johnson’s legacy has been overshadowed by Vietnam and all the troops and money poured into fighting the Viet Cong, especially seen in *Path to War*. The movie portrays the rationale for continuing to funnel troops and money into the region as a mixture of hatred for communism and belief in American superiority. Foreign policy has thus overridden domestic

concerns and the people at home are not happy, as evidenced by the protests outside the Pentagon that plague Secretary of Defense McNamara. On the fictional side, in “Han,” President Bartlet has to turn down a request for political asylum by a North Korean pianist in order to maintain secret talks with North Korea, compromising American beliefs about political freedom in order to serve a higher goal of ending the nuclear threat in North Korea. However, it is when presidents do not compromise or work with allies to get an agreement favorable to all that there is a problem. In *Love Actually*, the president, unnamed, comes off as very smarmy and has a set agenda, one that he does not waver on in the slightest; “I’ll give you anything you ask for - as long as it’s not something I don’t want to give.” In part from his unwillingness to work with his allies, he alienates the prime minister of England,

Mr. President, has it been a good visit?

Very satisfactory indeed. We got what we came for and our special relationship is still very special.

Prime Minister?

I love that word "relationship." Covers all manner of sins, doesn't it? I fear that this has become a bad relationship. A relationship based on the President taking exactly what he wants and casually ignoring all those things that really matter to, erm... Britain. We may be a small country but we're a great one, too. The country of Shakespeare, Churchill, the Beatles, Sean Connery, Harry Potter. David Beckham's right foot. David Beckham's left foot, come to that. And a friend who bullies us is no longer a friend. And since bullies only respond to strength, from now onward, I will be prepared to be much stronger. And the President should be prepared for that.

Sometimes, however, foreign policy is about spreading American values abroad. In *Air Force One*, President Marshall vows to stand up to terrorist groups, taking a hard line foreign policy-wise:

Peace isn't merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice...Never again will I allow our political self-interest to deter us from doing what we know to be morally right. Atrocity and terror are not political weapons. And to those who would use them, your day is over. We will never negotiate. We will no longer tolerate and we will no longer be afraid. It's your turn to be afraid.

In "Inauguration: Over There," President Bartlet announces a new doctrine for the use of force to assist the people of Kundu:

We're for freedom of speech everywhere. We're for freedom to worship everywhere. We're for freedom to learn... for everybody. And because in our time, you can build a bomb in your country and bring it to my country, what goes on in your country is very much my business. And so we are for freedom from tyranny, everywhere, whether in the guise of political oppression, Toby, or economic slavery, Josh, or religious fanaticism, CJ. That most fundamental idea cannot be met with merely our support. It has to be met with our strength. Diplomatically, economically, materially. And if Pharaoh still don't free the slaves, then he gets the plagues or my cavalry, whichever gets there first. The USTR will go crazy and say that we're not considering global trade. Committee members will go crazy and say I haven't consulted enough. And the Arab world will just go indiscriminately crazy. No country has ever had a doctrine of intervention when only humanitarian interests were at stake. That streak's gonna end Sunday at noon.

The American idea of freedom is also employed in a historical context when President Truman recognizes the state of Israel in *Truman*, despite fears over Russia's response. In *The West Wing* the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord John Marbury, acknowledges that the US is in a good position to mediate the tensions in Ireland, particularly in Northern Ireland, as Britain hasn't done a great job with them but the US is a good mediator ("Dead Irish Writers").

Foreign policy often requires working with a country that has been difficult in the past or in the present. In *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, President Muffley has to convince the Russian premier that the US bomber planes are acting without the president's authority. In *Fail-Safe*, the president has to convince the Russian

secretary that the same thing has occurred; a terrible mistake and the secretary shouldn't attack the US because of it. In Season 2 of *24*, President Palmer shares information about a nuclear bomb in Los Angeles with an ambassador from a Middle Eastern nation in order to stop the threat, even though the nation may be harboring the terrorist organization. He trusts that they are sincere in their wish to prevent the explosion, over the objections of staffers. On the historical side, in *Thirteen Days*, Robert F. Kennedy is shown to be meeting with a Russian official to try to work out a deal to stop a possible war over missiles in Cuba. He negotiates the removal of the missiles in exchange for no invasion of Cuba and the removal of US missiles in Turkey a few months later, so it can be seen as unrelated. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara points out to an admiral that the blockade, or quarantine, is a new way of doing things, "This is not a blockade. This is language. A new vocabulary, the likes of which the world has never seen! This is President Kennedy communicating with Secretary Khrushchev!" which is what diplomacy often is, a new way of doing things, a way of talking out problems instead of fighting them.

*The West Wing* often deals with foreign policy issues; some that could easily dissolve into conflicts but most that the president manages to diplomatically finesse into a solution. In "Lord John Marbury" and "He Shall, From Time to Time..." the president has to stand between India and Pakistan, where India has begun to invade Pakistan. Through the British Ambassador's assistance, Bartlet works out a deal where India will pull back its troops, or else the G7 will call in loans and the US military will step in. In exchange for India's restraint, the US will help them to build a computer industry infrastructure. "In This White House" involves the staff acting as a mediator to assist the country of Equatorial Kundo in its effort to ease the suffering of its citizens' AIDS epidemic. They work out a deal where the government will enforce US patent laws in exchange for lowered drug costs and an aid package, but the country is overrun by a coup

before the Kundunese president can return home. In “The War at Home,” the president is forced to ask Colombia to release a drug lord from prison in exchange for the release of captured US agents, having no other way to save the Americans.

In “Evidence of Things Not Seen,” President Bartlet has to convince the Russian president that the US downed spy plane wasn’t spying on Russia itself but looking at missiles being moved. Russia also crops up in “Enemies Foreign and Domestic,” where a hard water reactor being built in the country threatens an upcoming summit with Russia. Through protocol staff, the Russian president sends a message to President Bartlet that indicates openness to talks about an end to nuclear proliferation, so the reactor isn’t what the US fears it is. The Middle East is another recurring area of concern and the country of Qumar is at once an ally and an enemy. An ally, in that the US is leasing an air base from them, but an enemy, in that the Defense Minister, Shareef, was involved in a plot to blow up the Golden Gate bridge. President Bartlet authorizes Shareef’s assassination, leading to issues over responsibility and Qumar erroneously blaming Israel as well as the kidnapping of Zoey Bartlet, the president’s youngest daughter, and the demand for the removal of troops from Qumar in exchange for her release. Through the FBI’s efforts to find Zoey, it does not come to that.

Diplomacy is more than trying to solve crises, however. State dinners and foreign visits figure largely in the picture as well. *Chasing Liberty* features a visit to Prague for a G8 summit by President Foster and his family. *The Sentinel* features a photo op with foreign leaders and the president at Camp David for a summit. *Truman* covers the post-World War II Allies summits while *In the Line of Fire* features a state dinner at the French embassy. *Air Force One* begins with a state visit to Russia, *The American President* features a state dinner for the French President, René Jean D’Astier and his wife, and *Dave* even features a state visit by the Japanese

Prime Minister. In *The West Wing*, “The State Dinner” features a state visit by the President of Indonesia; “The Drop In” involves the protocol associated with greeting new ambassadors to the United States; “Enemies Foreign and Domestic” and “The Black Vera Wang” involve a state visit to Helsinki for a summit with Russia; and “Han” deals with a visit by a prominent North Korean pianist. *Commander in Chief* opens with a state visit to France by then Vice-President Allen (“Pilot”) and includes a state visit by the president of Russia and his wife (“First Dance”).

In terms of foreign policy, we want our presidents to be firm in terms of accurately representing American interests abroad, but we also want them to work with foreign leaders for the good of the world and its citizens. We want them to be diplomats, willing to compromise when it is important or reasonable and not offend our allies. We want them to keep an open mind when working with countries or leaders that may have been difficult in the past or are difficult at present because they may surprise us and be open to a deal. Thus, foreign policy is a chance to showcase leadership abilities and can be a challenge of the job.

### Challenges of the Job

#### Rise of the Staff

During the 1990s, a surge in the number of movies and television shows focusing on the president and the presidency occurred. Most notably, the senior staff of the president became a focus and became major characters, changing from the past focus on cabinet level secretaries. Much of this was due to the attention paid to Bill Clinton’s senior staff by the media, which only continued for some members George W. Bush’s staff. *The West Wing*’s debut in 1999 fed into this interest for the staff, as it originally planned to solely focus on the senior staff with the president being only a recurring character, appearing once in a blue moon, so to speak. Martin

Sheen proved to be too dynamic of an actor to sideline, however, much to the public's gain, as the interaction between his character of President Jed Bartlet and the staff proved to be a very interesting picture of a possible presidency, and a kind of polish/homage to Bill Clinton's presidency, untainted by the sex scandals, and adding New England intellectualism. Perhaps this rise of the staff in media does not completely mirror reality, as the cabinet is then pushed to the side whereas they are still often in the public eye in our world, but through the staff we can get reactions of representations of "average" Americans and we can learn the presidency is not just the person in the office, but the support mechanism as well. The buck may very well stop with the president, but it travels through a few hands in the building beforehand.

Mostly, the staff is a positive influence on the president. They are advisors, friends, even a kind of family. In *The West Wing* ("The Crackpots and These Women") there is a sense close friendship between the staff: they play basketball with the president, they joke with each other, and they participate in the president's chili nights. Josh Lyman even turns down a card that would guarantee him safety in the event of a nuclear disaster to be with his friends, the staff, saying, "I want to be a comfort to my friends in tragedy. And I want to be able to celebrate with them in triumph. And for all the times in between, I just want to be able to look them in the eye." The staff even plays poker together, seen in "Mr. Willis of Ohio" and "Evidence of Things Not Seen". President Bartlet often comes across as a kind of father figure, emphasized in "Shibboleth" with his present of a family carving knife made by Paul Revere to Charlie Young, his personal aide, as it is passed from father to son. This father to children relationship is also seen in "Two Cathedrals" when he calls Josh his son, and in "Enemies Foreign and Domestic," when he orders C.J. Cregg to take Secret Service protection, since she received serious death threats, because she is part of his family. In *Commander in Chief*, President Allen is close to her

press secretary, Kelly Ludlow, and her assistant, Vince Taylor both of whom are very loyal and supportive of her.

As advisors, the staff can exert powerful influence on the president. In *Primary Colors*, staff members convince Governor Stanton to continue to run a clean campaign and avoid leaking very negative information about his rival. In *The West Wing* Chief of Staff Leo McGarry convinces the president to be true to himself and take risks in policies, to go for the long shots, such as nominating his own choices to the Federal Election Commission (“Let Bartlet Be Bartlet”). In “Two Cathedrals,” the president’s executive secretary convinces him that he still has a lot of good he can do for the country and thus convinces him to run for re-election. In “Inauguration Part I” and “Inauguration: Over There,” an idle comment from Will Bailey prompts and in fact inspires a complete shift in foreign policy. In “Shutdown,” Josh Lyman convinces the president to end the shutdown by going to see the Speaker of the House in person and then to leave the Capitol when the Speaker drags his feet and makes the president wait, scoring a victory for the administration and not Congress. In *Commander in Chief* (“Ties That Bind”), Chief of Staff James Gardner’s connection to a troubled region in Maryland inspires President Allen to visit, the first time a sitting president has ever visited the area.

The staff can also be a way for the audience to understand the policies and politics being dramatized. The practice of US Senate filibusters is explained in “The Stackhouse Filibuster,” something that even political scientists don’t always understand. In “Galileo” we learn how a person gets on a stamp and the process by which a stamp design is chosen. The process of presidential pardons is a focus in “Somebody’s Going to Emergency, Somebody’s Going to Jail.” The reasoning behind a U.S. bailout of Mexico’s economy is discussed in “Bad Moon Rising.” The bailout consists of helping them with the loans that are due and the contention is

that the money could be better spent in the US, as it is the taxpayers' money. However, the US has a precedent for helping countries in need (the Marshall Plan, the Lend Lease Act) and this incident with Mexico would be no different, "There are too many things in the world we can't do. Mexico's on fire. Why help them? Because we can." In "100,000 Airplanes" we see how the State of the Union is developed, how the policies are chosen and how the writing is put together. In "The U.S. Poet Laureate" an argument is made regarding the reasons why drilling for oil in Alaska isn't a good idea: a lot of environmental pain for not much oil in the first place. In "Han" the idea of sustaining the economy by using elements of many different economic theories is explained through an analogy of diet plans: pressing a little on all of the levers the president has to control the economy is equated with exercising and maintaining a balanced diet, which all the diet plans suggest in one way or another. In *The American President*, we see behind the scenes of White House efforts to pass a piece of legislation, all the deal making and negotiating that has to be done.

However much we want a staff to support the president, we also expect them to speak up when something is not right. In *Dick*, the staff went along with all of Richard Nixon's criminal actions when they should have protested and objected. In *Wag the Dog*, the staff helps the president get re-elected by creating, running, and ending a fake war. The ability to do so is frightening enough, but that none of them thought twice about it is quite another. In *Dave*, the Chief of Staff, Bob Alexander, and the Communications Director, Alan Reed, actively cover up the fact that President Mitchell has had a crippling stroke and is in a coma, mostly due to Alexander's unwillingness to relinquish the power of the Chief of Staff. However, Alan Reed does redeem his actions by helping Dave to expose Alexander's criminal actions. In *Running Mates* (2000), campaign manager Lauren Hartman protests when Governor Pryce considers

taking a deal from a group of business leaders to fund his campaign, one of the few examples of a staff member calling a candidate on an action that is wrong.

Despite all the positive influence a staff can have, there are also times when the staff serves to hold a president back or outright control him/her. In *Absolute Power*, the Chief of Staff directs the cover up of the president's involvement in the death of a close friend's wife, with whom the president had been having an affair. In *Dave*, Bob Alexander and Alan Reed essentially take over President Mitchell's presidency when he has a stroke, ignoring the Constitution by placing a look-alike in Mitchell's job and sending the vice-president off on a tour of Africa to get him out of the way. Alexander in particular was heavily involved in the fraud and election tampering that Mitchell did, authorizing much of it. In *Mars Attacks*, the staff feeds into the president's incompetence by not considering the possibility that the first encounter with the aliens wasn't a fluke or a mistake and by not considering the alien presence an invasion in the first place. Just because a civilization has some cool gadgets doesn't mean it's peaceful, contrary to the scientist's logic; our society has cool stuff too and we're not on the cutting edge of non-violence. In *American Dreamz*, the Chief of Staff literally put words into President Staton's mouth, telling him what to say via an earwig. In *Running Mates* (1992), the candidate's staff served to hold him back from speaking his mind on issues and to play the campaign politically safe. In *Executive Power*, Christine Rolands plotted with the First Lady against the president and then kept information that could be used as blackmail. *In the Line of Fire* featured a Chief of Staff that ignored the warnings the Secret Service gave him about a planned assassination attempt on the president. Fortunately for the president, an agent disregarded the Chief of Staff's injunction on his involvement in the case and was able to save the president's life at the last minute.

When it comes to the staff, they are often portrayed as a second family for the president and close advisors with the possibility of a great deal of influence over policy initiatives. Through the staff, the audience can learn more about certain government practices or why the US has certain ways of doing things, answering our own questions about why the government does things. The staff is a support system for the president, implementing policies at his or her direction and helping to develop policy. However, when the president does something contrary to our ideas of good politics and good leadership, we should expect the staff to object and work to change the president's mind, but staff members generally don't seem to in these media portrayals. The staff can also serve as a negative influence, either by seeking to control or actually controlling the president's actions, or by working against a president. We want presidents to work with their staff, to have a staff they can trust and inspire but also to have a staff that will be loyal, both to the president and to the good of the country.

#### President/Vice-President Relations

Historically, the vice-president is in the shadows while the president shines. Many of the men who have held the job have disparaged it as a thankless job, from John Adams, "My country has, in its wisdom, contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived" (Encyclopedia Britannica), to Harry Truman who said the job of the vice-president was "to go to weddings and funerals" (*Truman*). It is only in the last 50 years or so that the vice-president's role has begun to grow, and only in the last few presidencies that the vice-president has begun to exert influence in actual policy areas. The president and vice-president weren't even elected together originally in the Constitution: the vice-president job went to the man who came in second, leading to some conflict. The Twelfth

Amendment directed that the president and vice-president be elected on separate ballots, so that the vice-president was no longer the top unsuccessful candidate, but practice changed so that tickets were formed, with the top candidate to be considered for president and the running mate to be vice-president should the ticket win.

So, there isn't very much historical backing for presidents and vice-presidents to work together, something that is carried over in to film and television portrayals. Though we now want and expect them to get together, movies and television rarely portray them as being united or on the same page, either for policy initiatives or politics in general. Often, the vice-president is put on the ticket so it would have broader appeal and get more votes. Sometimes the vice-president is the "bad guy," the one working with outside elements to pull back on policy initiatives and control the president. So the president is working against the vice-president for the good of the people and the vice-president is the defender of the status quo, but sometimes it happens that the president is the one defending the status quo, or politics as usual, and the vice-president is the one we want fighting for the people.

There are instances, though, when the president and vice-president work together as a unit or come together on a ticket for more than political reasons. In *Running Mates* (2000), Governor Pryce chooses Senator Terrance Randall as his running mate for his ideals, not how much money or political gain he can bring to the campaign. In *Commander in Chief*, ("First Choice") President Allen chooses General Keaton to be her vice-president, because she knows he will do what is right and will work for the good of the country. In *Air Force One*, President Marshall and Vice-President Kathryn Bennett seem to trust each other; at least Bennett trusts Marshall enough to follow his plan to deal with the hijackers on the plane and refuses to remove him from power, as the Secretary of Defense wants to do. In *The Contender*, President Evans

fighters for Senator Hanson to be his vice-president, knowing that she will do a good job and be unwilling to give in to Congress. In *The West Wing*, “In the Shadow of Two Gunmen, Part 1,” Vice-President Hoynes takes a firm stance on tracking down the men who shot at the president and his staff, representing the president’s interests while he’s in surgery. In “War Crimes,” though he takes a bit of convincing, Hoynes agrees to go to Texas and represent the administration regarding gun control. In “Stirred,” the president has Sam Seaborn, Deputy Communications Director, work with Hoynes to save the Technology Challenge Fund, which provides money for computers for low-income areas, something Hoynes is quite passionate about. President Bartlet also indicates trust in Hoynes when he refuses to replace him on the ticket, wanting Hoynes to be the one who succeeds him in office. Hoynes is no longer a political asset or one who can bring in more electoral votes, but Bartlet still wants him on the ticket, now trusting him.

When there is contention between the president and vice-president, sometimes the vice-president is the force of good. In *Dave*, Vice-President Nance is uninvolved with President Mitchell’s criminal activity and inspires Dave with his humble political beginnings to go into politics for real. In *Commander in Chief*, then-President Bridges was seen in flashbacks to be working against then-Vice-President Allen, because he feared her popularity would overshadow his work, plotting with the Speaker of the House to move her to the Supreme Court. His cabinet and Chief of Staff did not work well with Allen, keeping her out of the loop and asking for her resignation when Bridges became incapacitated, so that the Speaker could be next in line for the presidency. She refused, however, and upheld her oath to the country.

However, the vice-president can also be source of conflict for the president or work against the president as the antagonist. In *My Fellow Americans*, Vice-President Matthews

arranges for a scandal and its cover up to be blamed on President Haney, thus removing him from office, so Matthews can step in without having to be elected himself. In *Murder at 1600*, the vice-president is maneuvered into taking over from the president by National Security Advisor Alvin Jordan, because the vice-president is like-minded on military matters and Jordan is mad the president didn't retrieve downed soldiers by any means necessary. Blackmail regarding a girl's death, with the insinuation it was the First Son's work, is used against the president to force him to resign. In "Tonight" and "Flight," Vice-President Reynolds works against President Mills in *Prison Break*. First, she tries to get him to balance her support of an energy bill, by vetoing it, in order for the group that funds to meet its goal of the bill's failure. When he refuses to veto the bill, she arranges to remove him from office, through poisoned water ("Flight"). In "Tonight," President Mills tells her that he won't be giving her his endorsement and that she is all that is wrong with politics.

In *The West Wing* ("Five Votes Down") Vice-President Hoynes gets the last votes needed on a bill by telling a congressman that it's better to be owed a favor by Hoynes, because he'll be the next president. Hoynes gets the credit for the passage of the bill instead of the president, whose staff actually did all the work. In "Enemies," President Bartlet and Hoynes have a spat during a cabinet meeting that develops into a larger argument about their partnership. Bartlet tells Hoynes that by making Bartlet beg him to be on his ticket, Hoynes weakened Bartlet's influence and maneuvering capability from the beginning. In "20 Hours in L.A.," Hoynes refuses to break a tie in the Senate on an ethanol tax credit bill, causing the staff to have to scramble to convince senators to vote for the credit. In "What Kind of Day Has It Been," Hoynes meets with opponents of campaign finance reform, which hurts the administration's efforts to institute the reforms it wants to. In "The Stackhouse Filibuster," Hoynes seems to be supporting the

administration when he slaps down oil executives in a press conference over gas prices, but he's really setting up for his future presidential run because he knows about Bartlet's multiple sclerosis and thinks Bartlet will stick to one term. Even more of a problem with Hoynes comes up in "Life on Mars," when Hoynes' affair turns into fodder for a book. He boasted to the woman and she included what he told her in her book, causing problems for the administration in terms of the press and possible confidentiality leaks. The affair and the leaking of its details cause Hoynes to resign, weakening the administration by his lack of control. In *24*, Vice-President Prescott goes so far as to convince the cabinet members to back him in removing the president under the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Season 2, "4:00 AM-5:00 AM"). Prescott believes Palmer's actions during the nuclear bomb threat to be extreme, though Palmer was just being cautious and unwilling to start a war without undeniable evidence. Prescott was an obstacle to Palmer's efforts to find out the truth about who was behind the nuclear bomb in Los Angeles and was conspiring against him the whole time.

When it comes to president/vice-president relations, as a society we would like to think that they would work together as a team. In part, movies and television confirm this, with examples of presidents and vice-presidents working together on policies or the presidential candidate choosing a running mate for not for political gain, but because the candidate trusts him/her and knows he/she will work for the good of the country. When the president is not working for the good of the country, the vice-president can be the hero of the story. More often than not, however, the vice-president is the antagonist of the piece, either causing problems for the president or the staff or being outright hostile towards the president. In these cases, the president is once again the hero of the story. When the vice-president seeks to hamper the

president, we expect the president to “get his/her house in order” and persuade the vice-president to get back in line.

#### Family: How to Interact and Integrate with the Job

Along with the vice-president, family is hard to integrate with the job. A family can serve to humanize the president, to give us a picture of the person in the job when there is no one around to put demands on him/her, because families are supposed to be supportive of the president and be the refuge from the demands of the office. Historically, First Ladies served as the social organizers for the presidency, the national hostesses. Abigail Adams, the first First Lady in the White House, was famous for using the East Room to hang laundry, as the house wasn't exactly finished nor was the city. Jacqueline Kennedy helped to restore the dignity of the White House itself by restoring the house. Of late, First Ladies have adopted policy areas on which to focus, to be more than a hostess, but to be part of the administration. Hillary Clinton focused on health care and Laura Bush has focused on reading programs. For children, the presidency can be both a trial and a source of pride. Sometimes, they can benefit from the extra attention but more often than not, it is perceived as stifling and doesn't allow them a normal life. It is particularly hard on younger children, who may have not had a lot of time to get used to the media attention, while the older children can sometimes embrace the media or assist their parents in social duties.

Most of the time, families are supportive of the president and his job, acting as support systems, boosting him/her up when he/she might be down and sharing in the triumphs.

*Independence Day* features a First Lady who refuses to leave Los Angeles early while her husband is under attack by the press and who has a loving, teasing relationship with him. In

*Warm Springs*, Eleanor Roosevelt believes so much in the rehabilitation efforts Franklin is undertaking at the mineral springs, that she stands up to her mother-in-law in terms of allowing Franklin to spend most of his trust fund to refurbish the resort, thus risking the financial stability of her family. *American Dreamz* portrays a First Lady who is very supportive of her husband and even becomes his Chief of Staff, when the other one is fired for being unable to accept the president's change for the better in attitude about policy. *Path to War* portrays a first family very supportive of President Johnson, staying by his side, even though Lady Bird isn't too fond of Washington or the job itself. In *Truman*, Bess Truman is equally unappreciative of Washington but supports her husband's run for the presidency on his own merits, because he has to govern in his own right. In *Running Mates* (2000), Jenny Pryce is very supportive of her Democratic presidential candidate husband, even when he takes actions she doesn't feel particularly right about but trusts his judgment.

The presidency, though, can be very hard on families. From the publicity to the threats that come with that publicity, families get the brunt of the pressure and stress. The president's children often express frustration with the pressure of the office. In *Chasing Liberty*, Anna Foster wants a normal life: friends; to be alone if she wants; and to be able to decide what she wants to do for herself. She goes on a whirlwind trip around Europe by herself, though accompanied by an undercover Secret Service agent, and discovers something about herself and what she wants out of life. In *Commander in Chief* ("First Strike") late-President Bridges' son Tommy cautions President Allen's youngest daughter, Amy, that she won't see much of her mother anymore, now that Allen is the president. Particularly, Zoey Bartlet, President Bartlet's youngest daughter, feels the pressure in *The West Wing*, describing the attention in "Evidence of Things Not Seen": "It's been four years in the White House, another being the daughter of a candidate. Eight years as

Governor. My grades get printed in the paper. My boyfriends are in the paper. I live and die by my parents' successes and failures.” She gets the brunt of the pressure and stress when a terrorist cell kidnaps her from a graduation party at a club and is held for a few days before the FBI finds her.

Presidents tend to be protective of their families as well, more so than normal spouses or parents due to the security risks inherent in the job. In *Chasing Liberty*, President Foster seems to allow his daughter to go on a tour of Europe alone but her father not only has an undercover Secret Service agent follow her but her normal detail as well, though farther behind. In *Air Force One*, President Marshall goes so far as to stay on the hijacked plane to try to rescue his family and ask Russia for the release of a dangerous military dictator in order to free them. In the “Pilot” of *The West Wing*, President Bartlet takes a religious leader to task for not denouncing a fundamentalist group that sent a doll with a knife in it to his granddaughter. He also sets high barriers to press access to his children and is furious if a member of the press gets past those barriers.

However, sometimes family simply plays into the political power games or has politics driving the relationship. In *The Manchurian Candidate*, Eleanor Shaw seems to care about her son, but she is more interested in him becoming president, thus giving her more power and influence than she already has. *The Reagans* portrays the couple as being very involved in each other, with Nancy Reagan as particularly interested in Ronald’s political career, encouraging him through exposure to social contacts that would get him involved in politics. *Executive Power* portrays a First Lady who only stays with her cheating husband because he would sink without her and she can use the threat of leaving to blackmail him into giving her control over policy. In *Dave*, the president and first lady seem the happy couple in public, but once they are out of sight

drop all pretense of an amiable relationship. The president also seems to have a fairly constant mistress that works on his staff. *The Sentinel* portrays a First Lady who stays with her husband, instead of following her heart with a Secret Service agent, because his career would be ruined if they got divorced. *24* portrays David and Sherry Palmer's relationship as driven by politics, with Sherry doing everything she can to get him elected, wanting the power of the office at her disposal. David Palmer subverts this quest for power, however, by divorcing her during the campaign.

In television shows, there is more time to explore the complexities of the family interaction with the presidency. *The West Wing* portrays the first family as loving and supportive but also sometimes at odds over both policy decisions and the job itself. First Lady Abigail Bartlet is as passionate about her job as a doctor and helping others as President Bartlet is about politics and his job. She doesn't like to be handled by the president's staff ("The White House Pro-Am") and believes strongly in her causes, mostly concerning women's and children's rights and health care. She makes sacrifices for her husband's career, agreeing to a suspension of her medical license ("Dead Irish Writers"), but is also able to influence policy and help people, both in the US and around the world ("Privateers"). Even when the president hasn't told her he is going to run again, his intentions to do so clear in his State of the Union address ("Bartlet's Third State of the Union"), she is able to be supportive, while he has to handle a crisis in Haiti. She delays their argument until he has time to focus ("The War at Home"). Abigail is also able to boost Bartlet up when he is down, both in getting him ready for the presidential debate ("Game On") and in helping to spur him to solve the government shutdown by actually talking to his staff ("Shutdown"). Zoey is the daughter most seen, going to college at Georgetown and dating the president's personal aide, Charlie, but the oldest, Elizabeth, comes to the White House while

Zoey is kidnapped and Eleanor ‘Ellie’ is summoned to the White House regarding a comment she made to the press, and ends up closer to her father (“Ellie”).

*Commander in Chief* complicates the family dynamic by having the wife be the president and the husband the First Gentleman. Rod struggles with his role in the administration, bouncing between having a role in the senior staff to considering a job outside of the administration to accepting his duties in the East Wing so Mackenzie can govern, without being seen to be under his influence. Both husband and wife are at times equally frustrated with the other, but continue to support one another throughout it all. As for the children, Horace adapts to the changes in attention better than his sister Rebecca (“First Strike”), who is uncomfortable with both the attention and the feeling of being alone. Amy is young enough to escape most of the attention from the media, but does feel the loss of her mother to the job.

When it comes to the family, there is a struggle between a normal family life and politics. Families generally support the president out of disinterested love and affection. Presidents are protective of their families, trying to shield them from harm and unwanted attention. Children, however, bear the brunt of the media attention and often struggle under it, wanting a normal life where their parents, and therefore they, aren’t the focus of such attention. Sometimes couples only stay together for the sake of the office or to preserve power. Often there is infidelity involved with these couples, usually on the president’s side, which is ignored by the wife for the sake of his career or because she can do more by staying in the relationship. Television shows enable the complexities of family dynamics to be explored in a deeper fashion, allowing for both frustration with the job and support for both the policies and the person to be examined.

Conclusion

So what do we learn from all of these portrayals? I think that we learn more about our political and social expectations. We learn what a leader can be like and how that leader can respond to our needs in a given situation. Yes, these portrayals are dramatizations, but film holds such a vital place in our culture and in our socialization that the idea of film as learning tool has long been established. A film or television show has set character molds, protagonist, antagonist, supporting players on each side that may be simplifications of real life but they still mirror real life, and if they didn't we wouldn't understand the film or episode plot. Even in science fiction, which is supposed to be completely futuristic and alien, there is a mirrored social structure and political system that we can recognize parts of. We can't really conceive of a totally removed "other" that bears no resemblance to our own society and lives and the same goes for non-science fiction films and television shows. Presidents and presidential candidates on film are visions of what our real presidents and candidates can be like, to both warn us against problems that can happen with real presidents and give us hope that our real presidents can live up to or emulate the screen presidents.

These idealizations, inverse idealizations, and situations can all be seen in our political reality as much as they can be identified in film. We want a leader, a president, who will respond to events with a rational, measured thought process, one who considers the needs of the many as well as the needs of the few and isn't willing to sell out a minority group. The president should have principles that he/she adhere to and show in their policies and actions. Presidents should be independent thinkers, willing to stand up to those who would try to bring them down or control them, and they should stand by their decisions and policies. Presidents should also be humble, true public servants doing the job because they have something to offer the public and because they want to make a difference. They should be able to recognize when their job is rewarding

and when they have to do things not because they want to but because they have to, carrying that burden for the rest of us. The office is a duty, not a privilege, and the president swears an oath, they don't accept a blank check to do what they want with the job. The presidency is more than the person in the chair: it is an institution that has been carefully crafted by documents, societal change, and the people who came before them. The president is a guardian of that history and a steward for the future, what he/she does not only lives in the minds of the people of the United States, but the people of the world and in history.

The inverse idealizations show us what we should insist our presidents never do and if they do, we should hold them accountable. No person is perfect, but a president can't be the "bad guy" in real life. Presidents should not be controlled by outside forces, outside of their own principles and political philosophy, whether these forces are an outside business group or a persons inside the administration. The president should be able to stand-alone and must make the final decision in matters of military or government action and in policy decisions. No one should be able to pick up the phone or close the office door and tell the president what to do. Presidents should not be self-absorbed and think they are due everything because they have "sacrificed" so much for the country. The power of the presidency does not entail a free reign for the president, as the ultimate enforcer of the laws of the land he/she must abide by them as much as the lowest among us, as no one is above the law. Presidents should not lie to us, they should tell us the truth about their policies, their actions, and themselves. Presidents should also be responsible and not willing target a small or vulnerable section of the population in order to "protect" the whole.

The situation in movies and television series show us how a president should, or could, act in certain circumstances that are regular issues related to the job. Contemporary presidents often win elections or policy battles over the idea of change, a rejection of the status quo or life

as usual. The status quo is regarded as being stagnant, an unwillingness to accept change and the belief that nothing is wrong with society or politics so why rock the boat? When dealing with the status quo, the president is supposed to be the voice of change and the voice of realism, saying that of course not all is well so we have a duty to try to correct the imbalances. Historical trends show us that political outsiders are often regarded as an injection of new ideas and talent into the political mainstream and thus are seen as a positive change. Congress, though supposedly the voice of the people, is often portrayed as an enemy of the president and thus of the people. Congress just wants to hold onto its power and doesn't care about helping actual people while the president does. This is a reflection of societal frustration with Congress and the way it is so entrenched, with incumbents winning far more often than not. However, since the voters have more of a say when electing a president, since they can change every four years, presidential candidates have to try harder than congressional candidates to appeal to the voters. Films and shows with elections are an excellent way to highlight this rejection of the status quo and showcase a candidate or president's leadership potential through their policy ideas or actions during the campaign.

Crises are a way to feed the societal appeal for danger and action films as well as to show how a president should respond in times of crisis. These crises could be very large or have the president directly involved or they could involve military action with the president as Commander in Chief, sending American citizens out to fight and perhaps die. Domestic and foreign policy situations are a way for the president to represent the people while also helping them. With challenges of the job, we see that the presidency is more than just the president; it is also the president's staff, the vice-president, and the first family. The staff serves as a sounding board for the president, trusted advisors and sources of inspiration, as well as being the arms and

legs of the administration, doing the day-to-day work as well as managing the smaller things so the president can focus on the big picture and the larger policy concerns. Historically, there is not much basis for presidents and vice-presidents working together, which is often reflected in film, but the change in the last two administrations has brought the two offices closer together and made it more of a team, which is also reflected in film. We'd like to think that the president and vice-president should work together and the vice-president should certainly not take the spotlight away from the president, where it rightly belongs. The first family serves as a refuge for the president, an unconditional support system but one that is willing to tell them when they are not on the right track and help the president self-correct. Families should not be estranged from the president but work with them and support them.

Based on all of these idealizations, inverse idealizations, and situations, what would an ideal president look like? I think that they would be a responsible, caring individual engaged in the world around them. They would have a good education and while not being afraid to rely on it sticking to the "tried and true" methods wouldn't hamper them, they would be able to think outside the box. They would strive to do the right thing, not just on the moral level but the right thing for the country and the people. They would tell the truth to the people, not just political truth that is covered in misdirection but the real truth. They would be mindful of the legacy of the office and work to keep scandal free. They should have the courage of their convictions and be willing to fight to hold onto those principles. The president should also be faithful to his/her oath, the laws of the land, and moral constraints.

They should be an independent thinker, but not so independent that they won't take good advice from their staff or from outside actors. They would rise above political pettiness and fighting while being willing to work with anyone who has a good idea for bringing about

positive social change. The president would be personable and enjoy meeting the public but reject trite photo ops in favor of genuine engagement with the populace. They would be calm under pressure and able to consider the situation rationally to come up with the best solution for all involved. They should have the ability to communicate their opinions and thoughts coherently, without having to always rely on a speechwriter or a staff member to suggest what to say. They should have an engaged and educated staff that is able to inspire and support the president, allowing him/her to focus on the bigger issues and the big picture. They should have a supportive family that understands the political world that the president has to live in and can help them with their presidential duties. Added to all of this, the president would have a reasonable amount of charisma and enjoy working to help the country and the world.

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- . Season 4, Episode 6. "Game On." Dir. Alex Graves. Original Air Date: 30 Oct. 2002.
- . Season 4, Episode 9. "Swiss Diplomacy." Dir. Chris Misiano. Original Air Date: 20 Nov. 2002.
- . Season 4, Episode 12. "Guns Not Butter." Dir. Bill D'Elia. Original Air Date: 8 Jan. 2003.
- . Season 4, Episode 14. "Inauguration Part I." Dir. Chris Misiano. Original Air Date: 5 Feb. 2003.

---. Season 4, Episode 15. "Inauguration: Over There." Dir. Lesli Linka Glatter. Original Air Date: 12 Feb. 2003.

---. Season 4, Episode 17. "Red Haven's On Fire." Dir. Alex Graves. Original Air Date: 26 Feb. 2003.

---. Season 4, Episode 18. "Privateers." Dir. Alex Graves. Original Air Date: 26 Mar. 2003.

---. Season 4, Episode 19. "Angel Maintenance." Dir. Jessica Yu. Original Air Date: 2 Apr. 2003.

---. Season 4, Episode 20. "Evidence of Things Not Seen." Dir. Chris Misiano. Original Air Date: 23 Apr. 2003.

---. Season 4, Episode 21. "Life On Mars." Dir. John David Coles. Original Air Date: 30 Apr. 2003.

---. Season 5, Episode 3. "Jefferson Lives." Dir. Alex Graves. Original Air Date: 8 Oct. 2003.

---. Season 5, Episode 4. "Han." Dir. Chris Misiano. Original Air Date: 22 Oct. 2003.

---. Season 5, Episode 6. "Disaster Relief." Dir. Lesli Linka Glatter. Original Air Date: 5 Nov. 2003.

---. Season 5, Episode 7. "Separation of Powers." Dir. Alex Graves. Original Air Date: 12 Nov. 2003.

---. Season 5, Episode 8. "Shutdown." Dir. Chris Misiano. Original Air Date: 19 Nov. 2003.

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