

**2018 Sabbatical Report**  
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**1) Book Project: *Conservative Projections: The “Liberal Hollywood” Myth—and What Movies Actually Tell Us***

My Spring 2018 sabbatical revolved primarily around a book project about the entertainment media and their political import, a project which changed significantly as I began working on it in earnest and without distraction. I eventually came to realize that I needed to delimit the scope of the book and focus in most specifically on what I was most interested in and best qualified to write about: The ways in which modern Hollywood movies of the last 40-50 years often communicate conservative political messages, the notion that Hollywood is uniformly liberal notwithstanding. With that hard-earned new and clearer focus, and now a new title for the book, I spent much of my remaining sabbatical time on three key exploratory and planning components of the project leading up to the time I spent actually writing the book itself during the sabbatical period:

- a) Substantial additional research in the areas of film theory, media audience reception studies, textual analysis, narrative studies, and post-1960s American sociopolitical history, which was reflected in voluminous notes and in a bibliography of 16 pages;
- b) Substantial viewings and detailed analytical readings of the many relevant Hollywood movies of the last 40-50 years I will be discussing, from *Dirty Harry* (1971) to *A Quiet Place* (2018), which was reflected in voluminous notes and a filmography of 26 pages;
- c) Planning and organizing my work and thoughts sufficiently to eventually, after much internal debate and consultations, come up with a detailed outline of the book and its seven chapters. I find it challenging to start the actual writing process unless I have a very clear understanding of what I will be doing throughout the book and how it all will fit together. And even though changes are almost inevitable once the writing begins—as was the case with my first book and has already happened with this one—I needed that meticulous plan in place.

Given what I accomplished during the Spring 2018 sabbatical period, the pace of my work during the regular school year, and my realistic assessment of what I can continue to produce in the future, my goal is to have a draft of the *Conservative Projections* manuscript completed by December 2020.

**2) Additional Relevant Work: Consultant on 2019 *Alien* Documentary Film**

I appeared as an interviewee throughout Alexandre Philippe’s acclaimed 2017 documentary film *78/52: Hitchcock’s Shower Scene*, offering perspective on the meanings, messages, and historical context of *Psycho* (1960). After his success with *78/52*, and after our positive experience working together, Alexandre asked me to be a consultant on his next documentary, *Memory: The Origins of Alien* (2019). For many years I have been using the film *Alien* (1979) as a useful text when teaching my students psychoanalytic media criticism, and so I was already well-versed in different ways to interpret it. (It is also a film I am discussing in my book *Conservative Projections*.) Alexandre asked me to take that further and explore more of the existing research on and critical interpretations of *Alien*, as well as propose which other academics and filmmakers he should consider interviewing for the documentary. Given my

expertise and particular interest in the political power of movies, as well as my feeling that there was not enough diversity among the interviewees featured in *78/52*, I took it upon myself to push with particular intensity a feminist critique of *Alien*, as well as to propose potential interviewees for the new film who are predominantly women and/or people of color. In the end I performed approximately 70 hours of work on the project, which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2019, is arriving in theaters and pay-per-view in August 2019, and has already received widespread critical acclaim.

### **3) University and Community Service (selected)**

**\*Contributor to COMS Department Program Review\***

The COMS Department began preparing for its 2019 Program Review last Fall 2018, and I participated in those preparations through December 2017 and January 2018. That January I also conducted research on the department's assessment methods and findings, and wrote a draft of two brief sections of the Program Review document.

**\*Speaker at 78/52 Film Screening\***

In conjunction with the Sonoma Film Institute and the M.A. Program in Film Studies, in January 2018 I attended and spoke at a Sonoma State screening of the documentary *78/52: Hitchcock's Shower Scene*, a film in which I appear frequently as an interviewee.

**\*Guest Speaker in COMS 162B\***

In April 2018 I visited Professor Talena Sanders's Freshman Learning Community course COMS 162B. I primarily spoke with her students about how to best prepare themselves in our major and at SSU to eventually pursue the right career path and work they find meaningful.

**\*Faculty Reader at Convocation\***

As I have been honored to do many times before, in May 2018 I served as a Faculty Reader of graduate names at Sonoma State's Arts & Humanities Convocation.

**\*Volunteer Lead Fundraiser for GameChangers Baseball Organization\***

Between December 2017 and April 2018 I was the lead fundraiser for the GameChangers baseball organization's 11 years-and-under team, ultimately helping the team exceed its goal of raising \$2500. One of those fundraising efforts involved soliciting sponsors for the kids to perform a day of volunteer environmental and fire-safety clean-up in our community, which they carried out in March. GameChangers is an organization particularly dedicated to helping low-income families and kids have access to "travel sports" opportunities that are too often only available to families of greater means.