The Prose, Poetry and Politics of Robert Penn Warren

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Over six decades, Robert Penn Warren distinguished himself in just about every literary genre -- literary fiction, poetry, political prose, and literary criticism. His novel All the King's Men is the greatest American novel about politics in the English language, and possibly in any language. Warren actually considered himself to be a poet first of all, and twice won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. His narrative poem, Brother to Dragons, is a harsh meditation on racism and American history, concerning the actual murder of a slave by two nephews of Thomas Jefferson in early 19th century Kentucky.

We will spend three two hour sessions on Warren's great novel, paying historical attention to the Huey Long regime in Louisiana, of which it is an oblique portrait, and to its trenchant analysis of southern politics, and of the American political system more generally. We will spend our fourth session reading Brothers to Dragons, as important today as it was when first written.

Texts:
- Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men
- Robert Penn Warren, Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices (1979)

INSTRUCTOR
John Burt is professor of English at Brandeis University, where he has taught American literature since 1983. His book, Lincoln's Tragic Pragmatism, was published by Harvard University Press in January 2013.

Complimentary for BOLL! Members. No RSVP required.