**Corruption in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* and Upton Singlair’s *The Jungle* against the backdrop of Naturalism as a mode of storytelling. [A work in progress]**

Corruption plays a fundamental role in the shaping of Richard Wright’s *Native Son* and Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. Moreover, both novelscan be called “Naturalist” novels in that they depict stories in which the protagonists’ fates appear somewhat fixed because of external forces—like corruption. In *The Jungle*, conniving salesmen, employers and, ultimately, politicians, continuously swindle Jurgis and his family, leading to their clean and comprehensive decline. In *Native Son*, Bigger is the object of both broad and exacting forms of corruption: one, the legal, yet wholly corrupt institution of segregation; the other, the illegal, yet wholly accepted corruption of Bigger’s trial. And so we are confronted with a question regarding the relationship between corruption as a theme in both novels and Naturalism as a mode of storytelling implemented in both novels, too: is corruption simply a characteristic of Naturalism, or a fundamental societal trait from which Naturalism grows? [need two more sentences]

Section 1: Historical Context

* Corruption in Sinclair’s Chicago
* Corruption in the trial of Robert Nixon

Section 2: Naturalism Context

* Explain its roots in France
* Explain its roots in American Lit

Section 3: Corruption in Text

Point 1 🡪 Corruption in Native Son

* Legal Corruption
  + “When the men were through they gathered up their pails and brushes and got into the truck and drove off. He looked at the poster: the white face was fleshy but stern; one hand was uplifted and its index finger pointed straight out into the street at each passer-by. The poster showed one of those faces that looked straight at you when you looked at it and all the while you were walking and turning your head to look at it it kept looking unblinkingly back at you until you got so far from it you had to take your eyes away, and then it stopped, like a movie blackout. Above the top of the poster were tall red letters: YOU CAN’T WIN!"  
    He snuffed his cigarette and laughed silently. "You crook," he mumbled, shaking his head. "You let whoever pays you off win!"

Point 2 🡪 Corruption in The Jungle

* Local, at the Job level
  + [find quotes]
* Political
* “The ruler of the district was therefore the Democratic boss, a little Irishman named Mike Scully. Scully held an important party office in the state, and bossed even the mayor of the city, it was said; it was his boast that he carried the stockyards in his pocket. He was an enormously rich man--he had a hand in all the big graft in the neighborhood.”
* “America differed from Russia in that its government existed under the form of a democracy… so there were two rival sets of grafters, known as political parties, and the one got the office which bought the most votes” (98-99)

Section 4:

Corruption against the backdrop of Naturalism

[Still need to figure out]

Conclusion:

Restate thesis

Expand argument to make comment on Chicago as a city, America as a country perhaps?