

## **The American Presidency**

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to make an appointment.

### **Syllabus**

This course is an introduction to understanding the American Presidency. We use a historical approach to survey the major themes of the study of the Presidency, considering a variety of explanations for the actions of Presidents, including: personality, skills, historical context, party, ideology, institutional incentives and understandings of the job. It is not course in which the students are expected to learn history; rather, the course uses historical examples to explore a basic question: why do Presidents do the things that they do?

This is a serious reading course, and students will be expected to do the reading at the required times. Readings should be completed in time for the first class of the week (i.e. readings for the week of January 21 should be completed before class on January 21). Current events will supply additional examples of the main course themes, and so students should read a daily newspaper and otherwise stay informed of the major actions of President Bush and his administration. Other specific (short) articles about President Bush will probably be assigned. In addition to staying current with the reading and participating in class discussion, students will write a short (4-7 page) analytic essay due February 18, and take midterm and final exams. Paper topics will be distributed two weeks before the essays are due. Both the midterm and final are blue book (essay) exams.

**Prerequisites.** While there are no formal prerequisites for this course, a general working knowledge of American political history will be very helpful. For those who don't remember exactly who James Polk was or whether the Vietnam War was during the Truman or Nixon administrations or what the Contras were or where Inchon is, I suggest referring frequently to either a basic history text or a basic encyclopedia, just to refresh your memory of the basic historical facts.

Course assignments will be weighted as follows:

Class participation: 10%  
Midterm examination: 25%  
Essay: 25%  
Final examination: 40%

**The required texts are**

1. A daily newspaper.
2. George and George, Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House.
3. Neustadt, Richard E. Presidential Power.
4. Haldeman, H.R. The Haldeman Diaries.
5. Wills, Garry. Reagan's America.
6. Assigned articles.

**Course Materials** included readings, which should be completed before the class where it is to be discussed, which generally means that they should be completed by the date on the syllabus. Other course materials – excerpts from films, and photos of works of art – will be presented in class.

**Further Suggestions** are additional readings or materials that students interested in the topic may wish to pursue on their own in the future. They also include material that may be mentioned in lecture, but students are not expected to read any of these materials for this course.

## **COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS**

Week of:

### **August 25. Origins of the Presidency.**

Course Materials:

Magna Carta: Preamble; items 39-63.  
The Constitution, Preamble; Articles I and II.  
Federalist 67 and 69.  
D.T. Max, "The Making of the Speech."  
Excerpt: "Henry V" dir. Branagh.  
Excerpt: "Richard III" dir. Loncraine.

Further Suggestions:

Jack N. Rakove, Original Meanings, pp. 244-287.

### **September 1. Washington**

Course Materials:

Parson Weems, Life of Washington. Chapters 1-2.  
Images of Washington  
Grant Wood, "Parson Weems's Fable."

Further Suggestions:

Garry Wills, Cincinnatus.  
Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic.

**September 8. Consequences of Party Reform, I: Polk and Lincoln**

Course Materials:

None

Further Suggestions:

Austin Ranney, Curing the Mischiefs of Faction.

John Aldrich, Why Parties?

“Young Mr. Lincoln” dir. Ford.

Michael Rogin, “The King’s Two Bodies.”

**September 8 (continued). Personality, I: Roosevelt and Wilson**

Course Materials:

George and George, Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House Ch. 1-3, 9-15.

**September 15 and September 22. Skill and The Modern Presidency: Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

Course Materials:

Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power. Chapters 1-8.

Excerpt: “Yankee Doodle Dandy” dir. Curtiz.

James Bennet, “C.E.O., U.S.A.”

Further Suggestions:

William Leuchtenberg, In the Shadow of FDR.

## **September 29. The Cold War and the Modern Presidency: Truman, Ike, Kennedy**

### Course Materials:

Fred I. Greenstein, The Hidden-Hand Presidency, Chapter 3 (pp. 57-99).

### Further Suggestions:

Hart, The Presidential Branch.

“Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb”,  
dir. Kubrick

## **Essay Due September 29**

## **October 6, October 13, October 20 and October 27. The Imperial Presidency: Johnson and Nixon**

### Course Materials:

Milkis and Nelson, The American Presidency, pp. 326-332; 335-347.

H.R. Haldeman, The Haldeman Diaries (pp. TBA).

Stanley Kutler, ed., Abuse of Power, pp. 4-41; 47-75; 247-257.

Elizabeth Drew, Washington Journal, pp. 45 - 56 (and pp. 31 - 44 optional)

### Further Suggestions:

Robert Dallek, Flawed Giant.

Michael R. Beschloss, ed., Taking Charge: The Johnson Tapes.

Michael R. Beschloss, ed., Reaching for Glory: The Johnson Tapes.

Garry Wills, Nixon Agonisties.

“All the President’s Men” dir. Pakula.

“Dick” dir. Fleming.

## **Midterm Exam October 29**

### **November 3: Consequences of Party Reform, II: Ford, Carter and George H. W. Bush**

#### Course Materials:

Nelson W. Polsby, Consequences of Party Reform, pp. 89-130.  
Richard Ben Cramer, What It Takes, pp. 3-29.  
Richard L. Berke, "The Last (E-Mail) Goodbye."  
Richard Brody with Catherine Shapiro, Assessing the President, pp. 45-78.

#### Further Suggestions:

William G. Mayer, ed., In Pursuit of the White House 2000.  
Symposium: "The Long, Complicated Road to the White House: The Presidential Nomination Process in 2004." PS: Political Science and Politics, April 2003.  
"The Candidate" dir. Ritchie.  
"The War Room" dir. Hegedus and Pennebaker.

### **November 10 and November 17: Personality II: Ronald Wilson Reagan**

#### Course Materials:

Milkis and Nelson, The American Presidency, pp. 361-377.  
Michael Rogin, Ronald Reagan: The Movie, pp. 1-43.  
Garry Wills, Reagan's America: Innocents Abroad, pp. TBA.  
"Dave" dir. Reitman.  
Excerpt: "King's Row" dir. Wood.  
Grant Wood, "American Gothic."

#### Further Suggestions:

John M. Barry, The Ambition and the Power.  
"Blue Velvet" dir. Lynch.  
"Back to the Future" dir. Zemeckis.  
"The Experts" dir. Thomas.  
"Hellcats of the Navy" dir. Juran.

## November 24: Representation: William Jefferson Clinton

### Course Materials:

Sydney Blumenthal, "Rendezvousing with Destiny."  
Joe Klein, "Eight Years."  
Sapiro and Canon, "Race, Gender, and the Clinton Presidency."  
Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power, Chapter 9.  
"The Man From Hope" (video).  
Excerpt: "Henry V" dir. Branagh.

### Further Suggestions:

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, The Concept of Representation.  
The New York Times assessment, beginning at:  
(<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/24/politics/24CLIN.html>).  
David Plotz, "President William Jefferson Clinton" (at Slate.com).  
Anonymous, Primary Colors.  
"The American President" dir. Reiner.

## December 1: Review

## Final Examination

POL 3283 Bibliography:

The Magna Carta.

The Constitution of the United States.

Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison and John Jay. The Federalist Papers. 1982. New York: Bantam Books, 340-344; 348-354.

Max, D.T. 2001. "The Making of the Speech." The New York Times Magazine. October 7.

Weems, Mason L. The Life of Washington. 1962. Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1-16.

Bennett, James. 2001. "C.E.O., U.S.A." The New York Times Magazine. January 14.

Greenstein, Fred I. The Hidden-Hand Presidency. 1982. New York: Basic Books, 57-99.

Milkis, Sidney M. and Michael Nelson. The American Presidency. 1994. Washington: CQ Press, 326-332; 335-347.

H.R. Haldeman, The Haldeman Diaries. 1994. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Stanley Kutler, ed., Abuse of Power. 1998. New York: Simon & Schuster, 4-41; 47-75; 247-257.

Drew, Elizabeth. Washington Journal. 1984. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 31-56.

Polsby, Nelson W. Consequences of Party Reform. 1983. New York: Oxford University Press, 89-130.

Cramer, Richard Ben. What It Takes. 1993. New York: Vintage Books, 3-29.

Berke, Richard. 2001. "The Last (E-Mail) Goodbye, From 'gwb' to His 42 Buddies." The New York Times. March 17.

Brody, Richard A. Assessing the President. 1991. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 45-78.

Milkis, Sidney M. and Michael Nelson. The American Presidency. 1994. Washington: CQ Press, 361-377.

Rogin, Michael. Ronald Reagan: The Movie. 1987. Berkeley: University of California Press , 1-43.

Blumenthal, Sydney. 1993. "Rendezvousing with Destiny." The New Yorker 69: March 3, 1993, 38.

Klein, Joe. 2000. "Eight Years: Bill Clinton Looks Back on his Presidency." The New Yorker 76: October 16 & 23, 2000, 188-217.

Sapiro, Virginia and David T. Cannon. 2000. "Race, Gender, and the Clinton Presidency" in Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman, ed., The Clinton Legacy. New York: Chatham House, 169-199.