

The American Presidency
512:205
Prof. David Greenberg
Rutgers University
Fall, 2009

Class Time: MW 1:10-2:30

Email: davidgr[at]rutgers.edu

Office Hours: M 10.00 a.m.-12.00 p.m.

Course No.: 01:512:205:01

Room: Campbell Hall, Room A4

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Index No.: 33789

Syllabus

Description. The course looks at the American Presidency in historical perspective. It examines the powers of the office, its place in the American imagination, and the substantive achievement of the most significant presidents. Structured chronologically, it emphasizes the growth and transformation of the office and how it has come to assume such a dominant place in the American political landscape. Individual presidents are used to explore not only their own times but also salient issues with which they are associated (Jefferson and Adams with the rise of parties; Andrew Johnson with impeachment; etc.) Intermittent lectures will break from the general chronological thrust of the course to explore aspects of the presidency in greater depth across time.

Objectives. The general purpose of this course is to study the American presidency as it has been defined by both the individuals who have held the office and the publics it has served. The presidency is both the most powerful office in American politics and an unparalleled focus for the intellectual and emotional energies of all kinds of citizens. The course seeks to convey a sense of how different occupants of the office have used its powers to achieve political and social change; how they have expanded its powers in different ways; and how they have figured in the American imagination. As a survey, the course aims to give a general overview of the key moments and turning points in the history of the presidency, but as a one-semester offering, it cannot really be comprehensive, and so selected presidencies will be explored in particular depth. Additionally, then, the course tries to impart a sense of how the presidency has changed over time; in the same vein, it raises questions about whether it makes sense to compare presidents across large time spans, as we often do. And most of all, it seeks to instruct students in ways of thinking critically, originally, and analytically about the specific aspects of the subject under study, so that they emerge with a view of history not so much as a canonical body of facts but as a set of problems about the past to be engaged.

Course Requirements.

- Regular attendance. In a class of this size, I cannot take attendance. I recognize that some students will from time to time miss a class. But it

remains your responsibility to find out from other students in the class—*not* by emailing me—what you missed. Jobs, sports, or other extracurricular activities are not a legitimate excuse for missing class. If you have an existing commitment that will make you miss, come late to, or leave early from class with any frequency, then you should not take this course.

- **Term Paper.** You are to write an 8-page paper due November 9. Topics will be provided on a handout and posted on the class website. ***Extra credit:*** *Students who submit the paper by October 14 will not receive lower than a B (unless the work is so substandard as to be unacceptable). To qualify, the paper must be submitted in person by the start of class on October 14. No exceptions.*
- **Examinations.** There will be two midterms and a final. The exams will be cumulative, covering all the material from the class until that point. There will be no make-up exams. If you miss the scheduled exam, you will get a zero for that exam. Grading will be scaled.
- **Question Time.** I have built in a few periods devoted to fielding your questions about previous lectures and the readings.
- We will be using Sakai for the class. On the Web, go to <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal> and log in using your Rutgers ID and password. On the site I will post announcements, assignments, readings, and so on. Please check regularly.
- Please check your Rutgers University email regularly.


Additional Rules and Information.


- Cell phones must be turned off upon entering the classroom and may not be used in the classroom or during class time.
- Laptops may be used for note-taking only. No emailing or Web-surfing during class.
- Students must show up on time and stay for the duration. During class, students should not engage in personal conversations, read newspapers, do crossword puzzles, or undertake other diversions unrelated to class activity.
- I will return all emails on a first-come, first-served basis. Do not assume that I have received your email. If I don't reply, and it's important, please follow up with a phone call.

Academic Integrity. Plagiarism and cheating are, of course, forbidden, according to Rutgers University policy. You are responsible for reviewing and obeying these policies. A lengthy statement of the policy is at: <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>.

Reading List.

 **Book** available at Rutgers University Bookstore or Alexander library reserves.

 **Article** available at online on the class website at the Sakai site.

 **Article** on the Web.

Books are on reserve in Alexander Library and at the Rutgers University Bookstore. Additional articles, if assigned, will be posted on the class Sakai website.

Henry Adams, *Democracy: A Novel*. Penguin, 2008. ISBN: 0-14-303980-6. \$13.00.

Lewis Gould. *The Modern American Presidency*. University Press of Kansas. ISBN: 0700613307. \$15.95.

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition: And the Men Who Made It*. Vintage Books. 0679723153. \$15.95.

Michael Nelson, *The Evolving Presidency: Addresses, Cases, Essays, Letters, Reports, Resolutions, Transcripts, and Other Landmark Documents, 1787-2008*, CQ Press, 2008. ISBN: 0-87289-608-0. \$35.95.

Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987 [1956]. ISBN: 0801835453. \$25.00.

Theodore H. White. *The Making of the President 1960*. Harper Perennial. 2009 (1961). \$16.99 ISBN: 0061900605. (If this reissued version is not available, you may purchase another edition through any number of online websites.)

Web Resources.

The following are useful resources for learning more about the presidency. If you use any information from them in your research or written work, you should make sure you cite them.

- The American Presidency Project at the University of Santa Barbara:
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php>
- Bartelby: Inaugural Addresses of American Presidents:
<http://www.bartleby.com/124/>
- C-SPAN: The American President:
<http://www.americanpresidents.org/>
- The Living-Room Candidate (Presidential Campaign Commercials):
<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>

- Miller Center at University of Virginia:
<http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident>
- The Presidency Research Group:
<http://cstl-cla.semo.edu/Renka/PRG/index.asp>

Weekly Schedule.

WEEK 1

W Sep 2: Introduction

WEEK 2

M Sep. 7: No class/Labor Day.

Tu Sep. 8: The Presidential Synthesis, Pros and Conservative
(Makeup for missed Monday's class)

Reading:

📖 Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency*, Chs. 1 & 2.

W Sep. 9: George Washington and the Creation of the Presidency

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 1.

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 1,2, 3, 4, 6, 7.

WEEK 3

M Sep. 14: Jefferson, Adams and the Emergence of Parties

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, Ch. 2

📖 Nelson, docs. 8, 9

📖 Rossiter, Chs. 3

W Sep. 16: Andrew Jackson and the Popular Presidency

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, Ch. 3

📖 Nelson, docs. 12 & 13.

WEEK 4

M Sep. 21: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, Ch. 5.

📖 Nelson, docs. 14-17.

📖 Eric Foner, "Our Lincoln," *The Nation*, January 7, 2009. found at:
<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090126/fooner/single>

W Sep. 23: Andrew Johnson and the Crisis of Impeachment

Reading:

📖 Adams, *Democracy*, Chs. 1-5.

📖 Nelson, docs. 18.

📖 David Donald, "Why They Impeached Andrew Johnson," *American Heritage*, December 1956, Vol. 8, No. 1.

WEEK 5

M Sep. 28: The Gilded Age: The Presidency in Eclipse

Reading:

Adams, *Democracy*, Chs. 6-10 [*Democracy* will not on the first midterm exam]

W Sep. 30: **Midterm #1**

WEEK 6

M Oct. 5: William McKinley and American Empire

Reading:

📖 Adams, *Democracy*, Chs. 11-Conclusion.

📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 1.

W Oct. 7: Theodore Roosevelt and the Growth of Presidential Power

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, Ch. 9.

📖 Nelson, doc. 20.

WEEK 7

M Oct. 12: Woodrow Wilson and World War I

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, Ch. 10.

📖 Gould, Ch. 2.

📖 Nelson, doc. 21.

W Oct. 14: Harding, Coolidge, and the Rise of Presidential Ballyhoo

Reading:

📖 Gould, Ch. 3.

📖 Nelson, doc. 22.

📁 Elmer Cornwell, "Coolidge and Presidential Leadership," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1957), pp. 265-278.

WEEK 8

M Oct. 19: Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, Ch. 11.

📁 Carl Degler, "The Ordeal of Herbert Hoover," *Yale Review*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1963), pp. 563-83.

W Oct. 21: FDR and the Modern Presidency

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, Ch. 12.

📖 Gould, Ch. 4.

📖 Nelson, docs. 24, 27, 28.

WEEK 9

M Oct. 26: *History of Presidential Elections*

Reading:

📖 Rossiter, Ch. 6.

📖 White, *Making of the Presidency, 1960*, Chs. 1-2.

📁 Robert Westbrook, "Politics as Consumption: Managing the Modern American Election," in Richard W. Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History*, pp. 145-173.

W Oct. 28: Truman, Eisenhower and the Cold War Presidency

Reading:

📖 Gould, Ch. 5.

📖 Rossiter, Ch. 5.

📖 Nelson, doc. 30.

WEEK 10

M Nov. 2: QUESTION TIME

Reading:

📖 White, Chs. 3-6.

W Nov. 4: **Midterm #2**

Reading:

📖 White, Chs. 7-8.

WEEK 11

M Nov. 9: Kennedy and the Return of Liberal Governance

Reading:

📖 White, Chs. 9-13.

****Papers due.****

W Nov. 11: *Presidency and Television*

Reading:

📖 White, Chs. 14-15.

📁 Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place*, Ch. 14.

📁 Michael Schudson, *The Power of News*, Ch. 5.

WEEK 12

M Nov. 16: Johnson, Guns and Butter

Reading:

📖 Gould, Ch. 6.

📖 Nelson, docs. 31-33.

📁 Robert Dallek, "Lyndon B. Johnson," in *Character Above All: Ten Presidents from FDR to George Bush*, pp. 105-126.

W Nov. 18: Nixon and the Imperial Presidency

Reading:

📖 Gould, Ch. 7.

📖 Nelson, docs. 38-41.

📁 original articles on Nixon's resignation from the *New York Times*, reprinted in *The End of a Presidency*, pp. 9-72.

WEEK 13

M Nov. 23: Jimmy Carter and the Crisis of Authority

Readings:

📖 Gould, Ch. 8.

📖 Nelson, doc. 42.

📁 Leo Ribuffo, "Malaise Revisited: Jimmy Carter and the Crisis of Confidence," in *The Liberal Persuasion*, John Patrick Diggins, ed., pp. 164-184.

📖 Joshua Muravchik, "Our Worst Ex-President," *Commentary*, March 2007 (found at <http://tinyurl.com/ptm4nm>)

📖 James Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979, (found at <http://tinyurl.com/57bpkf>)

W Nov. 25: No class/Thanksgiving.

WEEK 14

M Nov. 30: Ronald Reagan and the Politics of Symbolism

Reading:

📖 Gould, Ch. 9.

📖 Nelson, doc. 43.

📁 Hendrik Hertzberg, "The Child Monarch," *The New Republic*, September 9, 1991.

📁 David Greenberg, "The Empire Strikes Out," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2000.

W Dec. 2: Bill Clinton and the Challenges of Liberalism

📖 Gould, Ch. 10.

📖 Nelson, docs. 46, 48.

📁 Sidney Blumenthal, *The Clinton Wars*, Chs. 1, 18.

WEEK 15

M Dec. 7: George Bush and the Failure of Conservatism

📖 Nelson, docs. 49-53.

📖 Robert Kagan, "Neocon Nation: Neoconservatism, c. 1776," *World Affairs*, Spring 2008 (found at <http://tinyurl.com/mra5tx>)

📖 Sean Wilentz, "The Worst President in History?" *Rolling Stone*, April 2008 (found at <http://tinyurl.com/gr7wl>).

📖 Ron Suskind, "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush" *New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004 (found at <http://tinyurl.com/533kj>).

W Dec. 9: QUESTION TIME

FINAL EXAM

F Dec. 18: 12:00-3:00 p.m.