THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY
Undergraduate Lecture
01:512:205:01

Prof. David Greenberg
Fall 2017

Class Time: MW 2:50pm - 4:10pm
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Office Hrs: TBA
Course No.: 01:512:205:01

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Syllabus
updated 09/28/2017

Description. The course looks at the American Presidency in historical perspective. We examine the powers of the office, its place in the American imagination, and the achievements of the most significant presidents. Structured chronologically, the course emphasizes the growth and transformation of the office and how it has come to assume its dominant place in the political landscape. Individual presidents are studied to understand 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.) A few thematic lectures break from the chronological thrust of the course to explore aspects of the presidency in greater depth across time.

Course Requirements. Requirements mean required—they are a must. Failure to fulfill requirements will mean failing the course.

- Regular attendance at lecture. In a class this large, I cannot take attendance. I recognize that some students will from time to time miss 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 never a legitimate excuse. Arriving on time and staying for the duration are also essential. If you have a standing commitment that will make you miss, come late to, or leave early from class with any frequency, you should not take this course.

- Term Paper. You are to write a 10-page paper due December 4. Topics will be provided on a handout and posted on the class website. If you do not submit a term paper by the deadline, you will fail the course.

- Examinations. There are two midterms and a final. Exams are cumulative, covering all material from the class to that point. There are no make-ups. If you miss any of the scheduled exams, you will fail the course. Grading is scaled.

- Grading. There is no exact formula. Grades are based on the exams and paper as well as other markers of dedication (such as a paper that goes above and beyond the assignment or exceptionally valuable contributions to class) or by steady improvement on the exams. Invariably, professors and teaching assistants use discretion and judgment to make sure the grade best reflects the work done.

- Sakai will be our class website. 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.

- Rutgers University email should be checked regularly.
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- **Phones, tablets, and laptops are not permitted.** It’s human nature to be distracted by these devices and use them for pursuits others than classwork. I’ve found that when we all put away our devices, the conversation and level of engagement is much higher.

- **I will return all emails.** Don’t assume that I’ve received your email. Sometimes messages get stuck in a spam folder or lost in cyberspace. If I don’t reply within 48 hours, please follow up with a phone call. If it’s urgent, please call me.

- **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://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers).

**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 available for purchase at Barnes & Noble or online. Additional articles, if assigned, will be posted on the class Sakai website.


**Weekly Schedule.**

**WEEK 1**
W Sep. 6: **INTRODUCTION**

**WEEK 2**
M Sep. 11: **WASHINGTON AND THE CREATION OF THE PRESIDENCY**
Reading:
- Jones, *Very Short Introduction*, Ch. 1

W Sep. 13: **JEFFERSON, ADAMS AND THE EMERGENCE OF PARTIES**
Reading:

**WEEK 3**

M Sep. 18: ANDREW JACKSON AND THE POPULAR PRESIDENCY

*Reading:*
- Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 3 (Jackson)

W Sep. 20: ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE CIVIL WAR

*Reading:*
- Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 5. (Lincoln)
- Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 17 (Gettysburg Address), 18 (Second inaugural), 19 (ex parte Milligan).

**WEEK 4**

M Sep. 25: ANDREW JOHNSON AND THE CRISIS OF IMPEACHMENT

*Reading:*

W Sep. 27: GUEST LECTURE: RACHEL SWARNS

Alexander Library, 4th floor Teleconference Lecture Hall

**WEEK 5**

M Oct. 2: THE GILDED AGE

*Reading:*
- Adams, *Democracy*, Chs. 6-Conclusion.
- Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 7. (Spoilsmen)

W Oct. 4: MIDTERM #1

**WEEK 6**

M Oct. 9: WILLIAM MCKINLEY AND AMERICAN EMPIRE

*Reading:*
- Jones, *Very Short Introduction*, Ch. 7

W Oct. 11: THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE GROWTH OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER

*Reading:*

**WEEK 7**

M Oct. 16: WOODROW WILSON AND WORLD WAR I

*Reading:*
W Oct. 18: HARDING, COOLIDGE, AND THE RISE OF PRESIDENTIAL BALLYHOO
Reading:

W Oct. 25: FDR AND THE NEW DEAL
Reading:
- Republic of Spin, Chs. 20-27.
- Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 26 (first inaugural), 29 (Court speech), 30 (Brownlow Committee).
- Christopher Claussen, “The President and the Wheelchair,” *Wilson Quarterly* (Summer, 2005).

M Nov. 6: PRESIDENCY AND TELEVISION (THEMATIC LECTURE)
Reading:
- Republic of Spin, Chs. 36-37.

M Nov. 13: KENNEDY AND THE RETURN OF LIBERAL GOVERNANCE
Reading:
- Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 35 (JFK inaugural), 36 (Cuban Missile Crisis).
- Republic of Spin, Chs. 38-41.
W Nov. 15: JOHNSON, GUNS, AND BUTTER
Reading:
- Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 37 (Great Society), 38 (Tonkin), 39 (Howard University speech)

WEEK 12
M Nov. 20: NIXON AND THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY
Reading:

W Nov. 22: No Class (Thanksgiving)

WEEK 13
M Nov. 27: JIMMY CARTER AND THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY
Readings:

W Nov. 29: RONALD REAGAN AND THE POLITICS OF SYMBOLISM
Reading:
- *Republic of Spin*, Ch. 46.

WEEK 14
M Dec. 4: BILL CLINTON AND THE CHALLENGES OF LIBERALISM
Reading:
- *Republic of Spin*, Ch. 47.

PAPERS DUE

W Dec. 6: GEORGE W. BUSH AND THE CRISIS OF CONSERVATISM
Reading:
- *Republic of Spin*, Ch. 48.

WEEK 15
M Dec. 11 BARACK OBAMA AND THE PERSISTENCE OF RACE
Reading:
- Republic of Spin, Ch. 49.
- Nelson, Evolving Presidency, doc. 56 (speech on race).

Reading: Jones, Very Short Introduction, Ch. 7

F Dec. 22, 2017: 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM
Final Exam