

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

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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 means 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.

- 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> .

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.

1. Henry Adams. *Democracy: A Novel*. Penguin, 2008. ISBN: 0-14-303980-6. \$13.00.
2. David Greenberg. *Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency*. W.W. Norton. ISBN: 0393353648. \$18.95.
3. Richard Hofstadter. *The American Political Tradition: And the Men Who Made It*. Vintage Books. 0679723153. \$15.95.
4. Michael Nelson. *The Evolving Presidency: Addresses, Cases, Essays, Letters, Reports, Resolutions, Transcripts, and Other Landmark Documents, 1787-2010*, 5th edition, CQ Press, 2016. ISBN: 0-87289-608-0. \$35.95. Please note that this is 5th edition. If you purchase an older edition, make sure you are reading the correct documents, since the selection and numbering changes slightly with each edition.
5. Charles O. Jones. *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*.
6. Theodore H. White. *The Making of the President 1960*. Harper Perennial. 2009 (1961). \$16.99 ISBN: 0061900605.

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
-  Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 1. (Founding Fathers).
-  Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 2 (Constitution), 4 (Federalist Papers 69-73), 4 (Washington's inaugural), 7 (Farewell Address).
-  Akhil Amar, *America's Constitution: A Biography*, Chs. 4, 5.

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

Reading:

-  Jones, *Very Short Introduction*, Chs. 2-3.
-  Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 2 (Jefferson).

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 9 (Jefferson's inaugural), 10 (Jefferson's letter to Vermont legislature).

WEEK 3

M Sep. 18: ANDREW JACKSON AND THE POPULAR PRESIDENCY

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 3 (Jackson)

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 13 (Jackson's first message), 14 (Jackson's veto).

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).

📖 Eric Foner, "Our Lincoln," *The Nation*, January 7, 2009. found at:

<http://www.thenation.com/article/our-lincoln?page=full>

WEEK 4

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

Reading:

📖 Adams, *Democracy*, Chs. 1-5.

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 20 (impeachment articles).

📖 David Donald, "Why They Impeached Andrew Johnson," *American Heritage*, December 1956.

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)

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 21 (Pendleton Act).

W Oct. 4: MIDTERM #1

WEEK 6

M Oct. 9: WILLIAM MCKINLEY AND AMERICAN EMPIRE

Reading:

📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 1-2.

📖 Jones, *Very Short Introduction*, Ch. 7

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

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 9 (TR).

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 23 (TR and Taft's theories).

📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 3-7.

WEEK 7

M Oct. 16: WOODROW WILSON AND WORLD WAR I

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 10 (Wilson).

📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 8-12.

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 24 (Fourteen Points).

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

Reading:

📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 13-16.

📖 Elmer Cornwell, "Coolidge and Presidential Leadership," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 21:2 (1957), 265-278.

WEEK 8

M Oct. 23: HERBERT HOOVER AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Reading:

📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 17-19.

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 11 (Hoover).

📖 Carl Degler, "The Ordeal of Herbert Hoover," *Yale Review*, 52:4 (1963), 563-83.

W Oct. 25: FDR AND THE NEW DEAL

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 12. (Roosevelt)

📖 *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).

WEEK 9

M Oct. 30: TRUMAN, EISENHOWER, AND THE COLD WAR PRESIDENCY

Reading:

📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 28-35.

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 32 (Truman Doctrine), 34 (Little Rock).

W Nov. 1: HISTORY OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (THEMATIC LECTURE)

Reading:

📖 White, *Making of the Presidency, 1960*, Chs. 1-4.

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 41 (McGovern-Fraser)

📖 Robert Westbrook, "Politics as Consumption: Managing the Modern American Election," in *The Culture of Consumption*, eds., Richard Fox and Jackson Lears, 145-173.

WEEK 10

M Nov. 6: PRESIDENCY AND TELEVISION (THEMATIC LECTURE)

Reading:

📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 36-37.

📖 White, *Making of the President*, Chs. 10-15.

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

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

W Nov. 8: MIDTERM #2

WEEK 11

M Nov. 13: KENNEDY AND THE RETURN OF LIBERAL GOVERNANCE

Reading:

📖 White, *Making of the President*, Chs. 5-9.

📖 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:

- 📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 42-44.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 37 (Great Society), 38 (Tonkin), 39 (Howard University speech)
- 📖 Robert Dallek, “Lyndon B. Johnson,” in *Character Above All*, pp. 105-126.

WEEK 12

M Nov. 20: NIXON AND THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY

Reading:

- 📖 *Republic of Spin*, Chs. 45.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 42 (War Powers), 43 (impeach), 44 (*US v. Nixon*).
- 📖 *New York Times* articles on Nixon’s resignation, from *End of a Presidency*, pp. 9-72.

W Nov. 22: No Class (Thanksgiving)

WEEK 13

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

Readings:

- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 47 (Malaise speech).
- 📖 Leo Ribuffo, “Malaise Revisited: Jimmy Carter and the Crisis of Confidence,” in *The Liberal Persuasion*, ed., John Patrick Diggins, pp. 164-184.
- 📖 Joshua Muravchik, “Our Worst Ex-President,” *Commentary*, March 2007 (found at <http://bit.ly/1k7DdA9>).
- 📖 James Fallows, “The Passionless Presidency,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979, (found at <http://tinyurl.com/57bpkf>)

W Nov. 29: RONALD REAGAN AND THE POLITICS OF SYMBOLISM

Reading:

- 📖 *Republic of Spin*, Ch. 46.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. 48 (Reagan’s inaugural).
- 📖 Hendrik Hertzberg, “The Child Monarch,” *The New Republic*, September 9, 1991.

WEEK 14

M Dec. 4: BILL CLINTON AND THE CHALLENGES OF LIBERALISM

Reading:

- 📖 *Republic of Spin*, Ch. 47.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 50 (impeachment articles).
- 📖 Sidney Blumenthal, *The Clinton Wars*, Chs. 1, 18.

PAPERS DUE

W Dec. 6: GEORGE W. BUSH AND THE CRISIS OF CONSERVATISM

Reading:

- 📖 *Republic of Spin*, Ch. 48.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. 51 (Bush v. Gore), 52 (War on Terrorism), 55 (Hamdan).
- 📖 Robert Kagan, “Neocon Nation: Neoconservatism, c. 1776,” *World Affairs*, Spring 2008 <http://tinyurl.com/atmugeq>
- 📖 Ron Suskind, “Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush,” *New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004. <http://tinyurl.com/533kj>
- 📖 George Packer, “The Fall of Conservatism,” *New Yorker*, May 26, 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/4d225u>

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).

📖 Sean Wilentz, “Race Man,” *The New Republic*, February 27, 2008.

<http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/race-man>

📖 John Judis, “The Unnecessary Fall,” *The New Republic*, September 2, 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/arly4p>

📖 Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Fear of a Black President,” *The Atlantic*, September 2012.

<http://tinyurl.com/98m99gx>

W Dec. 13: DONALD TRUMP AND THE REVENGE OF THE PALEOCONSERVATIVES

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

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

Final Exam