

**The American Presidency
From George Washington to Barack Obama**

**512:205
Prof. David Greenberg
Rutgers University
Fall 2014**

Class Time: MW 4:30-5:50pm
Email: davidgr@rutgers.edu
Office Hrs: M 10:00am-12:00 pm
Course No.: 01:512:205:01

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Index No.: 57882

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 achievements of the most significant presidents. Structured chronologically, it 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.) Intermittent lectures break from the chronological thrust of the course to explore aspects of the presidency in greater depth across time.

Objectives. This course studies the American presidency as it has been defined by the individuals who have held the office and the public it has served. As a survey, it aims to give an overview of key moments in the history of the presidency; but as a one-semester offering, it can't be comprehensive, and so certain presidencies are explored in depth. Above all, it seeks to instruct students in thinking critically, originally, and analytically about the material, so that they can understand history not as a fixed body of facts but as a set of problems about the past to be engaged.

Course Requirements.

- **Regular attendance.** 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. 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 an 8-page paper due **Wednesday, Nov. 19.** Topics will be provided on a handout and posted on the class website. ***Extra credit:*** *Students who submit the paper in person, by the start of class on*

Wednesday, Oct. 15 will not receive lower than a B (unless the work is so substandard as to be unacceptable). No exceptions.




- **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 the scheduled exam, you will get a zero for that exam. Grading is scaled.
- **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. Please check regularly.
- **Rutgers University email** should be checked regularly.

Additional Rules and Information.

- No use of cellphones, ipads, or laptops. The tendency to use these devices for things besides taking notes has become so prevalent that they detract from, rather than enhance, learning. Please come prepared to take notes on paper.
- Students must show up on time and stay for the duration. Students may not walk in and out of the class willy-nilly. 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 promptly, on a first-come, first-served basis. Don't assume that I've gotten your email. If I don't reply and it's urgent, please call me.

Academic Integrity. Plagiarism and cheating are, of course, forbidden. You are responsible for reviewing and obeying Rutgers University policies. The academic integrity policy, which you should read before our first class, is here: http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf.

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.

1. Henry Adams, *Democracy: A Novel*. Penguin, 2008. ISBN: 0-14-303980-6. \$13.00.
2. Lewis Gould. *The Modern American Presidency*. University Press of Kansas. ISBN: 0700613307. \$15.95.

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*, 4th edition, CQ Press, 2008. ISBN: 0-87289-608-0. \$35.95. (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. Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987 [1956]. ISBN: 0801835453. \$25.00.
6. 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.)

Weekly Schedule.

WEEK 1

W Sep. 3: INTRODUCTION: THE PRESIDENTIAL SYNTHESIS, PROS AND CONS

Reading:

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

📖 Rutgers academic integrity policy:

http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

WEEK 2

M Sep. 8: GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE CREATION OF THE PRESIDENCY

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 1. (Founding Fathers)

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #1 (Constitution), #3 (Federalist excerpts), #4 (Washington's First Inaugural), #7 (Washington's Farewell).

📖 Akhil Amar, *America's Constitution: A Biography*, Chs. 4, 5.

W Sep. 10: JEFFERSON, ADAMS AND THE EMERGENCE OF PARTIES

Reading:

📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 2 (Jefferson)

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #8 (Jefferson's first Inaugural), #9 (Letter to Vermont)

📖 Rossiter, *American Presidency*, Ch. 3

WEEK 3

M Sep. 15: ANDREW JACKSON AND THE POPULAR PRESIDENCY

Reading:

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

📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #12 (Jackson's Message to Congress), #13 (Jackson's Bank Veto).

W Sep. 17: ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE CIVIL WAR

Reading:

- 📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 5. (Lincoln)
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #14 (Letter to Hodges), #15 (Gettysburg Address), #16 (Second Inaugural), #17 (*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. 22: ANDREW JOHNSON AND THE CRISIS OF IMPEACHMENT

Reading:

- 📖 Adams, *Democracy*, Chs. 1-5.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #18 (impeachment articles).
- 📁 David Donald, “Why They Impeached Andrew Johnson,” *American Heritage*, December 1956.

W Sep. 24: ROSH HASHANAH

WEEK 5

M Sep. 29: MIDTERM #1

W Oct. 1: THE GILDED AGE

Reading:

- 📖 Adams, *Democracy*, Chs. 6-Conclusion.
- 📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 7. (Spoilsmen)
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #19 (Pendleton Act).

WEEK 6

M Oct. 6: WILLIAM MCKINLEY AND AMERICAN EMPIRE

Reading:

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

W Oct. 8: THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE GROWTH OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER

Reading:

- 📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 9. (TR)
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #20 (TR and Taft on presidential power).

WEEK 7

M Oct. 13: COLUMBUS DAY

W Oct. 15: WOODROW WILSON AND WORLD WAR I

Reading:

- 📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 10. (Wilson)
- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 2.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #21 (Fourteen Points).

****Early submission deadline for papers.****

WEEK 8

M Oct. 20: HARDING, COOLIDGE, AND THE RISE OF PRESIDENTIAL BALLYHOO

Reading:

- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 3.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #22 (Teapot Dome).
- 📁 Elmer Cornwell, “Coolidge and Presidential Leadership,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 21:2 (1957), 265-278.

W Oct. 22: HERBERT HOOVER AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Reading:

- 📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 11. (Hoover)
- 📁 Carl Degler, “The Ordeal of Herbert Hoover,” *Yale Review*, 52:4 (1963), 563-83.

WEEK 9

M Oct. 27: FDR AND THE MODERN PRESIDENCY

Reading:

- 📖 Hofstadter, *American Political Tradition*, Ch. 12. (Roosevelt)
- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 4.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #24 (FDR’s First Inaugural), #27 (Court Packing Speech), #28 (Brownlow Report).

W Oct. 29: HISTORY OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (THEMATIC LECTURE)

Reading:

- 📖 Rossiter, *American Presidency*, Ch. 6.
- 📖 White, *Making of the Presidency, 1960*, Chs. 1-4.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #37 (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. 3: TRUMAN, EISENHOWER AND THE COLD WAR PRESIDENCY

Reading:

- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 5.
- 📖 Rossiter, *American Presidency*, Ch. 5.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #30 (Little Rock Executive Order).

W Nov 5: KENNEDY AND THE RETURN OF LIBERAL GOVERNANCE

Reading:

- 📖 White, *Making of the President*, Chs. 5-8.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #31 (JFK Inaugural), #33 (Civil Rights address).

WEEK 11

M Nov. 10: MIDTERM #2

Reading:

- 📖 White, *Making of the President*, Chs. 9-12.

W Nov. 12: PRESIDENCY AND TELEVISION (THEMATIC LECTURE)

Reading:

- 📖 White, *Making of the President*, Chs. 13-15.
- 📁 Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place*, Ch. 14.
- 📁 Michael Schudson, *The Power of News*, Ch. 5.

WEEK 12

M Nov. 17: JOHNSON, GUNS AND BUTTER

Reading:

- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 6.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #34 (Great Society), #35 (Gulf of Tonkin).
- 📁 Robert Dallek, "Lyndon B. Johnson," in *Character Above All*, pp. 105-126.

W Nov. 19: NIXON AND THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY

Reading:

- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 7.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #39 (Impeachment articles), #40 (*US vs. Nixon*).
- 📁 *New York Times* articles on Nixon's resignation, from *End of a Presidency*, pp. 9-72.

*****Papers Due*****

WEEK 13

M Nov. 24: JIMMY CARTER AND THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY

Readings:

- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 8.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #43 (Crisis of Confidence 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://tinyurl.com/abkahc3>)
- 📖 James Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979, (found at <http://tinyurl.com/57bpfk>)

W Nov. 26: THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14

M Dec. 1: RONALD REAGAN AND THE POLITICS OF SYMBOLISM

Reading:

- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 9.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #44 (Reagan's first inaugural).
- 📁 Hendrik Hertzberg, "The Child Monarch," *The New Republic*, September 9, 1991.
- 📁 David Greenberg, "The Empire Strikes Out," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2000.

W Dec. 3: BILL CLINTON AND THE CHALLENGES OF LIBERALISM

Reading:

- 📖 Gould, *Modern American Presidency*, Ch. 10.
- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #46 (Clinton's Third State of the Union), #48 (impeachment articles).
- 📁 Sidney Blumenthal, *The Clinton Wars*, Chs. 1, 18.

WEEK 15

M Dec. 8: GEORGE W. BUSH AND THE CRISIS OF CONSERVATISM

Reading:

- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, docs. #49 (Bush v. Gore), #50 (terrorism address), #51 (Bush doctrine).
- 📖 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>

W Dec. 10: BARACK OBAMA AND THE PERSISTENCE OF RACE

Reading:

- 📖 Nelson, *Evolving Presidency*, doc. #54 (Obama's race speech).
- 📖 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. 16 FINAL EXAM. 8:00am – 11:00am.