Introduction

This course examines selected theories and studies of presidential leadership, and the lives and administrations of selected presidents. It considers an eclectic set of materials contributed by psychologists, political scientists, historians, biographers and journalists. Our goal is to review varied approaches to understanding presidential leadership and apply those treatments to understanding the careers of specific presidents.

Below is a calendar listing topics and readings for each day the class meets. The assigned books for the course are The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House by James David Barber; His Excellency: George Washington by Joseph J. Ellis; Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership, Nixon to Clinton by David Gergen; Presidential Leadership and African Americans: “An American Dilemma” from Slavery to the White House by George R. Goethals; Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin; The Presidential Difference and Inventing the Job of President by Fred I. Greenstein; George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream by Dan P. McAdams; Where They Stand: The American Presidents in the Eyes of Voters and Historians by Robert W. Merry; and The Politics Presidents Make by Stephen Skowronek. Assigned articles or chapters are posted on Course Reserves, and the Course Reserve number is listed next to the readings (e.g., CR1).

Course Requirements

1. All students are expected to attend class and to come fully prepared to participate in discussion.

2. Each week you should email me a one page (200-300 words) explaining your take away from the reading and/or questions it raises for you. Your emails will be about the readings for either Tuesday or Thursday, depending on whether you are assigned an odd or an even number. The comments are due by noon on the day of the class. I will respond to them, ordinarily within a day or two.

3. There will be an exam on the material from the first part of the course on Thursday, March 11.

4. There will be an exam integrating material from the whole course during exam on Thursday, April 27,
5. A paper of approximately 15 pages is due on Friday May 7 at 5:00 P.M. We will schedule meetings shortly after spring vacation for you to discuss your paper with me. You may write the paper by yourself or team up with one other person. The paper should discuss a single presidency or a comparison of two presidencies, based on reading that we will plan together. Those who do the paper in pairs must submit assessments of the relative contributions of each member of the pair.

Your course grade will be based on each of the first five requirements above, weighed equally.

Class Schedule and Readings

Tuesday, January 19

Introduction

Thursday, January 21

The 2020 Election and the Biden Inauguration


Tuesday, January 26 (Odd numbers email)

Meet the Presidents


Thursday, January 28 (Even numbers email)

The Presidential Character


Tuesday, February 2 (Odd numbers email)
The Presidential Difference


Thursday, February 4 (Even numbers email)

FDR


Thursday, February 11 (Odd numbers email)

The Politics Presidents Make


Tuesday, February 16 (Even numbers email)
George Washington, Part I


Thursday, February 18 (Odd numbers email)

George Washington, Part II


Tuesday, February 23 (Even numbers email)

Abraham Lincoln, Part I


Thursday, February 25 (Odd numbers email)

Abraham Lincoln, Part II


Tuesday, March 2

Harry Truman, Part I


**Thursday, March 4**

**Harry Truman, Part II**


**Tuesday, March 9 (Even numbers email)**

**Dwight David Eisenhower**


**Thursday, March 11**

**Midterm Exam**

**Tuesday, March 16**

**John F. Kennedy (Odd numbers email)**


**Thursday, March 18** (Even numbers email)

**Lyndon B. Johnson, Part I**


**Tuesday, March 23** (Odd numbers email)

**Lyndon B. Johnson, Part II**


**Thursday, March 25** (Even numbers email)

**Richard Nixon, Part I**


**Tuesday, March 30** (Odd numbers email)

**Richard Nixon, Part II**

Thursday, April 1  (Even numbers email)

Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter


Wright, L.  *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David.* Day Thirteen, pp. 253-266; Epilogue, pp. 267-289. (pdf on Blackboard)

Tuesday, April 6  (Odd numbers email)

Ronald Reagan


Thursday, April 8  (Even numbers email)

George Herbert Walker Bush

Jon Meacham (2015) *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush.* Chapter 37, This Will Not Stand, pp. 421-433; Chapter 38, Not Blood For Oil, pp. 434-442; Chapter 39, Read My Hips, pp. 443-449; Chapter 40,The Threat of Impeachment, pp. 450-457; Chapter 41, Nothing Like It Since Truman, pp. 458-469; Chapter 50, The Buck Stops There, pp. 580-594; Epilogue, I Don’t Want to Miss Anything, pp. 595-601. (pdfs on Blackboard)

Tuesday, April 13  (Odd numbers email)

Bill Clinton


**Thursday, April 15 (Even numbers email)**

**George W. Bush**


**Tuesday, April 20 (Odd numbers email)**

**Barack Obama**


**Thursday, April 22 (Even numbers email)**

**Donald Trump**


Tuesday, April 27
Integrative Exam