Introduction

This course examines selected theories and studies of presidential leadership and presidential campaigning, 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 brief—about 150 words—questions or comments on either Monday’s or Wednesday’s reading, depending on whether you are assigned an odd or an even number. Be sure to include a question that you would like us to discuss in class. 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 Wednesday, February 27.
4. There will be an exam integrating material from the whole course on Wednesday, April 24.

5. A paper of approximately 15 pages is due on Thursday May 2 at 5:00 PM. 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.

6. The class is going to visit Mount Vernon, George Washington’s home on the Potomac River, on Friday April 5. All students must take this trip. We leave on a bus at 9:00 AM and depart Mount Vernon at 3:00 PM. With any luck, we’ll be back at UR by 5:30 PM. Lunch will be served at Mount Vernon.

Your course grade will be based on each of the first five requirements above, weighed equally, and any relevant consideration from Mount Vernon.

Class Schedule and Readings

Monday, January 14

Introduction

Wednesday, January 16

Meet the Presidents


Wednesday, January 23 (Odd numbers email)

The Presidential Character


Monday, January 28 (Even numbers email)
The Presidential Difference


Wednesday, January 30 (Odd numbers email)

FDR


Monday, February 4 (Even numbers email)

The Politics Presidents Make


Wednesday, February 6 (Odd numbers email)

Abraham Lincoln, Part I


Monday, February 11 (Even numbers email)

Abraham Lincoln, Part II


Wednesday, February 13 (Odd numbers email)

Harry Truman, Part I


Monday, February 18 (Even numbers email)

Harry Truman, Part II


Wednesday, February 20 (Odd numbers email)

Dwight David Eisenhower


Monday, February 25 (Even numbers email)

John F. Kennedy


Wednesday, February 27

Midterm Exam

Monday, March 4 (Odd numbers email)

Lyndon B. Johnson


Wednesday, March 6 (Even numbers email)

Richard Nixon, Part I


SPRING BREAK

March 9-March 19

Monday, March 18 (Odd numbers email)

Richard Nixon, Part II


Wednesday, March 20 (Even numbers email)

Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter


Monday, March 25 (Odd numbers email)

Ronald Reagan


Wednesday, Marcy 27 (Even numbers email)

George Herbert Walker Bush


Monday, April 1 (Odd numbers email)

George Washington, Part I


Wednesday, April 3 (Even numbers email)

George Washington, Part II


Monday, April 8 (Odd numbers email)

Bill Clinton


**Wednesday, April 10 (Even numbers email)**

**George W. Bush**


**Monday, April 15**

**Barack Obama**


**Wednesday, April 17**

**Election of 2016 and Donald Trump**

Other reading to be determined.

Monday, April 22

Review and Conclusions

Wednesday, April 24

Exam 2