

HI283A1: The Modern American Presidency
Fall 2018
CAS 229, Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:15

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Overview:

The presidency is perhaps the most important yet misunderstood office in the American government. On one hand, the president has tremendous ability to shape events and policy. On the other hand, it is surprising just how little power a president sometimes has in influencing events. HI 283 examines the development of the institution of the presidency from the election of William McKinley in 1896 to the present day. We will examine not only the careers of the presidents themselves, but also those that served in their administrations as well as the evolution of the Executive Branch. We will look at how presidents win elections, how they manage their administrations, how they deal with Congress, and how Americans perceive the office and its occupants.

Course Organization/Requirements:

Specific course requirements are as follows:

Midterm Exam (25%) (In class,)
Analytic Paper (30%) (Hard copy due at start of class, December 4 **or** December 11)
Final Exam (30%) (Tuesday, December 18)
Attendance and Class Participation (15%)

The paper prompt will be posted to the Blackboard site on November 1.

Attendance: Students are required to attend lectures and discussions, and attendance will be taken at each class meeting via a sign in sheet. Attendance will be considered when calculating class participation grades, and students will be docked a full grade for every three classes they miss (i.e. 3 missed classes moves a grade you from an A to a B, 6 from a B to a C, etc.). Note that these absences need not be consecutive. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., varsity athletics, religious observances), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester.

Exams: Students are expected to take the midterm and final on the days they are administered (October 23 and December 18). Make-up exams will only be given in the event of a medical emergency (with a note from a doctor) or a family emergency.

Technology: Use of laptops (and other digital devices) is not permitted in class. If you need to use a laptop for notetaking, please speak to myself or Charley.

Readings

The following books are available at the Barnes and Noble bookstore in Kenmore Square:

Lewis Gould, *The Modern American Presidency* (2nd Edition)
Bruce Schulman, *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism*
Jacob Weisberg, *Ronald Reagan*

In addition to these, other readings are posted to the class' Blackboard site

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the passing off of another's words or ideas as your own, and it is a serious academic offense. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in the College of Arts and Science Academic Conduct Code. All students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online at:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Penalties for plagiarism can range from failing an assignment or course to suspension or expulsion from the university. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please speak with me.

Schedule of Lectures, Readings, and Assignments

Tuesday, September 4-Intro to Class

Thursday, September 6-How William McKinley Stayed on His Front Porch and Reinvented the Modern Campaign

Blackboard Material:

Presidential Power, Chapters 1 and 2

The Imperial Presidency, Chapters 1 and 2

Tuesday, September 11-Theodore Roosevelt and the Bully Pulpit

Thursday, September 13-The Election of 1912 and Third Parties

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 1

Blackboard Material:

Republic of Spin, Chapter 1

Theodore Roosevelt, Chapters 5-8

Tuesday, September 18-Woodrow Wilson Changes the White House and the World

Thursday, September 20-Edith Wilson and the Role of First Ladies

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 2

Blackboard Material:

Richard Neustadt Memos for Hilary Clinton

“Modern First Ladies in Historical Perspective” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*
“Michelle Obama and the Power of Mom” *The Atlantic*

Tuesday, September 25-America's Worst President, America's Quietist President, and the
Greatest President Who Never Was

Thursday, September 27-Discussion

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 3

Blackboard Material:

Warren G. Harding “A Return to Normalcy”

Herbert Hoover, “Principals and Ideas for the United States Government”

Calvin Coolidge, Chapters 5-7

Tuesday, October 2-The Only Thing We Have to Fear is Franklin Roosevelt

Thursday, October 4-Saving the White House, America, and the World

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 4

Lyndon Johnson, Chapter 1

Blackboard Material:

“The New Deal and the Idea of the State” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal
Order*

FDR’s First Inaugural Address

FDR’s Campaign Address at Madison Square Garden

Tuesday, October 9-**NO CLASS (Monday Schedule)**

Thursday, October 11-Inventing the National Security State

Readings:

Lyndon Johnson, Chapter 2

Blackboard Material:

In the Shadow of the Oval Office, Chapter 1

“Preparing for the New Pearl Harbor” in *Origins of the National Security State
and the Legacy of Harry Truman*

Harry Truman announce the Truman Doctrine

Tuesday, October 16-Dwight Eisenhower’s Hidden Hand

Thursday, October 18-Camelot and How the World Almost Ended

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 6

Blackboard Material:

“Making the Celebrity Presidency” in *Recapturing the Oval Office*

In the Shadow of the Oval Office, Chapter 2

Primary Documents on the Kennedy Administration

Tuesday, October 23-Discussion

Thursday, October 25-**MIDTERM (The Exam, not the Elections)**

Blackboard Material:

Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents, Chapter 7

Tuesday, October 30-The Great Legislator: Lyndon Johnson

Thursday, November 1-Vietnam and *The Fog of War*

Readings:

Lyndon Johnson, Chapters 4-7 and Documents 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 14

Blackboard Material

Select LBJ Presidential Tapes

Tuesday, November 6-Midterms (The Elections, not the Exams)

Thursday, November 8-Nixon Part 1: He Says He's Not a Crook

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 7

Blackboard Material:

Richard Nixon, Chapters 3 and 4

Whistlestop: Foreign Collusion and the Dragon Lady

Select Nixon Presidential Recordings

Tuesday, November 13-Nixon Part 2: Things Fall Apart

Thursday, November 15-Victims of Circumstance and Infighting: Gerald Ford and

Jimmy Carter

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 8

Reagan, Intro to Chapter 6

Blackboard Material:

Slow Burn: A Very Successful Cover-up

Tuesday, November 20-Morning in America and Ronald Reagan in the White House

Thursday, November 22 5-**NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)**

Readings:

Reagan, Chapter 7-15

Blackboard Material:

Reagan's First Inaugural, Evil Empire, and Star Wars Speeches

Tuesday, November 27-The Perils and Promises of the Clinton Administration

Thursday, November 29-Discussion

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 10

Blackboard Material:

The Impossible Presidency, Chapter 9

Tuesday, December 4-41 and 43: The Bush Legacies

Thursday, December 6-Yes We Can?

Readings:

The Modern American Presidency, Chapter 11

Blackboard Material:

“My President Was Black” *The Atlantic*
“The Obama Doctrine” *The Atlantic*

Tuesday, December 11-Can the Office Survive? Trump and the Future of the Presidency
Blackboard Material:

“Will Trump Destroy the Presidency” *The Atlantic*
“The Unconstrained Presidency” *Foreign Affairs*

Note: I have also posted to the Blackboard site the article version of the video we watched on the first day of class. It might be useful to skim it, either before the last day of class or the final, to see how your thoughts may or may not, have changed on Dickerson’s arguments.

In Class Final: **3pm-5pm, Tuesday, December 18**