

Races to the White House!

Loyola University Chicago

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Just what does the president do? And how exactly do Americans go about picking a new one? This course aims to cut through the confusion, acrimony, and excitement of the 2016 race for the White House in order to show how the president's election, job, power, and mystique has changed dramatically over the course of American history. But this course will not be a chronological march from George Washington to Barack Obama but a thematic exploration of the topics shaping the modern presidency. For example, students will delve into the long origins of the modern primary and party system, the fierce debates about the Electoral College's continuance, the controversies over executive branch bureaucracies' autonomy, the media's importance to how Americans perceive their candidates, the first families' shifting importance to voters, and the citizenry's decades-old expectation for immediate change. This course accordingly aims to give students a deeper understanding of American political history as well as awareness of how that past has shaped the contemporary White House and the race to it.

Course Structure and Requirements:

This course is structured around 3 units, who has the president been, how have they been elected, and what could and did they do. Only the second unit, Running for President, proceeds somewhat chronologically. Every week, we will instead explore a big theme befitting the stages of obtaining and holding the presidency. Tuesdays will always include reading on the contemporary campaign but Tuesday lectures and discussions will also offer a broad historical overview of that week's theme. Thursday readings, lectures, and discussions will subsequently offer concrete examples from past presidencies to flesh out how the presidency has evolved since the Early Republic.

Units and themes also shape class assignments. There are **10 weekly assignments**, which require teams of students to explain how the past shapes contemporary coverage. For example, students will be given a quotation or term from the contemporary news coverage assigned on Tuesday and asked to make a connection to the history discussed in class lectures and Thursday readings. These assignments will be given out at the end of Thursday's classes and will be **due the following Monday at 4pm in my mailbox on the 5th floor of Crown**. The **in-class exam on November 15^h** as well as the **final take-home exam due on December 13th via Sakai** will draw on the work for these short assignments because the questions will relate specifically to how the past shapes the contemporary presidency.

Students will be expected to attend events outside of class time. The first will be a viewing of **vice-presidential debate, 630-830 on Tuesday October 4th** in lieu of a lecture that evening (you can just come for part of it). The **second** is a talk by historian Kevin Schultz, who speaks about Catholicism and Kennedy's election on **November 2nd, 5-630pm on the IC's 4th floor**. The final required event is the **Election Night Event, 730-11pm** (you don't have to come for all of it), which will feature Chicago policymakers, activists, and journalists discussing the returns as they come in. Any student missing these events will need to let me know well in advance and provide supporting documentation.

This course also has **three short written assignments**. The first is a **3-5 page paper** on presidential debates, which requires students to watch one of the debates on their own (dates posted on syllabus) or with the class on October 4th. Students will connect one aspect of the actual debate, or its coverage in the media, to how presidential debates have evolved (relevant readings will be discussed in the October 6th lecture). October 13th will subsequently be a writing day. There will be office hours on October 14th to help with this assignment (due October 17th by 4pm in my Crown Center mailbox). The **second** writing assignment is due during this class's Election Night event. Students will be asked to bring a snack to share with a written **one-page** explanation of how what they bought or made has historical relevance to the presidency. The readings for that night will include many examples of the

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favorite and least favorite foods associated with past presidents. Other food will also be provided at this event!

The **final paper**, 4-6 pages, will look at how the presidency has been portrayed in popular culture. Students will have the option of either writing on *The American President*, a portion of which will be shown on November 17th), or writing on a film, television show, etc. of their choice. Anyone wishing to use a different piece of popular culture will need to get permission from me by November 21st. We will not meet as a class on November 22nd in order to give students a chance to write this paper. Students will instead have extended office hours for help on this assignment, which is **due via Sakai on November 23**.

Please be in touch and provide documentation if you are a student with a disability who may have difficulty meeting the course requirements.

Readings & Required Books:

This course mixes historical scholarship with coverage of the ongoing 2016 campaign. The bulk of your readings will be on Sakai and have already been posted. I **highly** recommend that you read the material in the order that I have uploaded them. In general, Tuesday readings are contemporary political coverage and Thursday materials are historical primary and secondary sources.

Warning: I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus because the election will be going on while this course is being taught. The contemporary coverage may change or additional resources may be added. You will be notified several days ahead of time of any changes made.

Required Books: (also on reserve at Cudahy)

O'Mara, *Pivotal Tuesdays: Four Elections That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, ISBN 9780812247466
Dickerson, *Whistlestop: My Favorite Stories from Presidential Campaign History*,
ISBN 9781455540488

Attendance: Students may **only miss two classes**. I will need documentation if you need to miss any additional sessions. Missed weekly assignments cannot be made up.

Course Grade Breakdown

Weekly Assignments	10%
Test for Units 1 & 2	20%
Film Paper	20%
Debate Paper	10%
Class Participation	10%
Consuming the Election Paper (Food Assignment)	10%
Final Exam (cumulative)	20%

Schedule:

Week 1: Course Introductions and a Primer on American Politics

Tuesday: Course Introduction

September 1: Federalism and Political Ideologies

Milkis, "Creating the Presidency"

Milkis, "The Presidency, Democratic Reform, and Constitutional Change"

Hemmer, "Why The Vice Presidency Still Matters"

News Coverage Candidate Opinions

Unit 1: Anyone Can Grow Up to President?

Week 2: "Who Do You Want Answering the Phone at 3am?" Intersectional Fitness for the Presidency

September 5: Assignment 1 Due

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September 6: News Coverage & Dill on Intersectionality

September 8: Race, Religion, and Ethnicity

Horowitz, "For Donald Trump's Family, an Immigrant's Tale With 2 Beginnings"
"Hamilton and History"

Dickerson, *Whistlestop*, "1800—Keep Your Attack Dog Fed"

Coates, "It Wasn't A Compliment..."

Obama Race Speech

Kennedy Religion Speech

Romney Faith Speech

Hollinger, "Obama, the Instability of Colorlines, and the Promise of a Postethnic Future"

Week 3: "Not Tough Enough": Gendering the Presidency

September 12: Assignment 2 Due

September 13: News Coverage & Carlin & Winfrey, "Have You Come A Long Way..."

September 15: Gendering the Presidency

Dickerson, *Whistlestop*, chapters on 1824, 1884, 1988, 1992

Loewen, "We Have Had a Gay President..."

Greenberg, "Man Beneath the Hat"

Bloomer, "Was Mary Todd Lincoln Really Insane?"

Nelson, "America's First Woman President"

Piersen, "How Jackie Kennedy..."

Fitzpatrick, "Victoria Woodhull"

Week 4: "My Hands Are Normal Hands:" What Sizes Really Matter

September 19th: Assignment 3 Due

September 20: News Coverage

September 22: Sizing Up Presidents

Dickerson, *Whistlestop*, chapters 1884, 1960, 1972, 2000

"In Struggle with Weight"

Frelinghuysen, "Presidential Disability"

Clause, "President in the Wheelchair"

"Star Power"

Unit 2: Running for the Presidency

Week 5: Why Are Those People Caucusing?

September 26: Assignment 4 Due & First Presidential Debate

September 27: News Coverage & Ware, "Introduction" to *American Direct Primary*

September 29: Why the Primaries Matter

Kamarack, "The Good Old Days?"

O'Mara, *Pivotal Tuesdays*, Introduction & Part I

Week 6: "Two-Minute Stump Speeches" or an Actual Debate?

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- October 3: Assignment 5 Due
- October 4: Class Meets Mundelein 514 from 630pm-830pm to watch the VP Debate
- October 6: Debating History
 - Dickerson, *Whistlestop*, chapter on 1980;
 - Guelzo, Introduction to *Lincoln and Douglas*
 - Greenberg, "I Paid for this Microphone"
 - Greenberg, "Rewinding the Kennedy-Nixon Debates"
 - "Do Presidential Debates Really Matter"

Week 7: FALL BREAK

- October 9th: Presidential Debate Scheduled
- October 11th: No Class because of Fall Break
- October 13th: Writing Day for Debate Assignment
- October 14th: Office Hours to Work on Debate Assignment, 4pm-730pm

Week 8: Campaigning for or Marketing a Candidate?

- October 17: Debate Paper Due
- October 18: News Coverage
- October 20: Press Coverage or Marketing
 - O'Mara, *Pivotal Tuesdays*, Part 2
 - Wlezien & Erickson, "Timeline of Presidential Election Campaigns"

Week 9: General Election, "like an Etch-A-Sketch. You...kind of shake it up and restart all over again"

- October 24: Assignment 6 Due
- October 25: News Coverage
- October 27: Convention Crack Ups
 - Dickerson, Chapters on 1952 & 1964
 - O'Mara, *Pivotal Tuesdays*, Part 3
 - Shafer, "Introduction" to *Bifurcated Politics*
 - Beschloss, "If Party Conventions..."
 - Lepore, "How to Steal an Election"

Week 10: Broken Parties and Evolving Ideologies

- October 31: Assignment 7 Due
- November 1: News Coverage
- November 2: Kevin Schultz, 5pm-7pm, 4th Floor IC, "When a Catholic Became President"
- November 3: Evolving Party Systems
 - Dickerson, *Whistlestop*, Chapter on 2004
 - O'Mara, *Pivotal Tuesdays*, Part 4
 - Smith, "Can the States Save American Democracy?"
 - Smith, "'Political Thicket...'"

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Week 11: Polls Are Finally Closed: Election Week

November 7: Assignment 8 Due

November 8: Election Night Event, 730-11pm & Consuming Politics Assignment Due

November 10: Who Picked the President?

Dickerson, *Whistlestop*, 1840 & 1948

Peskin, "Was There a Compromise of 1877?"

Copeland, Another Peek Inside the Brain of the Electorate

"So, Who Really Won?"

"Nebraska to Abandon..."

"Voting Rights Success?..."

"Power of Superdelegates and Campaign Contributions"

Unit 3: Presiding

Week 12: Who Gets Anything Done Their First 100 Days?

November 15: In-Class Exam on Units 1 & 2

November 17: Campaign Promises & Start Film, *The American President*

Week 13: President's Popular Image

November 21: Assignment 9 Due

November 22: Extended Office Hours for Film Paper

November 23: Film paper due via Sakai

November 24: No class ☺ THANKSGIVING!

Week 14: What Have Presidents Done?

November 29: News Coverage & Slate Working podcasts (Rosenbaum, Keenan, Reeves)

December 1: Presidential Power

Skousen, "Lincoln"

Wiener, "Trouble with Steven Spielberg's Lincoln"

Smith, "From Woodrow Wilson..."

Schulman, "Great Society"

Schlesinger, "Runaway Presidency"

Yuill, "Another Take on the Nixon Presidency"

Zelizer & Jacobs, *Conservatives in Power*

Week 15: Leaving Office

10 Assignment Due

December 6: News Coverage

December 8: White House Exits

"Washington On a Proposed Third Term..."

"The Zero Curse: More than just a coincidence?"

"Impeachment: The Legacy"

"The Long Transition"

Dickerson, *Whistlestop*, Chapters on 1968, 1976 & 1980

December 13: Final Exam Due on Sakai