

HIS 2131A: The Presidency in American History



**Department of History
The University of Western Ontario
Fall 2017**

**Tuesday 2:30-4:30
Sommerville House 2355**

Instructor: Geoffrey Stewart
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The President of the United States is the single most influential figure within the American government and one of the most important leaders in the world. In times of economic, political and military crisis, Americans look to their president for strong leadership. Beyond America's borders, he has led the liberal-international world order. In November 2016 Donald J. Trump, one of the most controversial presidential candidates in recent memory, was elected to this office, defeating a more seasoned and experienced candidate, Hillary Clinton. Now, under his administration the paramount position the executive office of the United States holds in both the American and international imagination stands in the balance.

Trump threatens to undo the global order that has maintained peace and order among the developed nations of the world for more than seventy years. Domestically, he has employed social media to exploit the bitter fissures that have been the hallmark of the American electorate since the 1970s to redefine the ideological divide of the United States. How are we to make sense of this?

This course is designed to understand Trump's Presidency as part of an evolutionary process that has shaped the Executive Office since the founding of the Republic. When the United States Constitution was written, it provided a broad outline of the powers and duties of the president, but left considerable leeway for individual presidents and future events to mold the executive office. This has given Trump tremendous leverage with which to wield the power of his office at home and abroad. But was this what the Founder's intended?

As we will see, when the Office of the President was created, the president was intended to play a far less dominant role in the affairs of the nation than he does today. This course will examine how that happened. It will highlight the major developments that have shaped the idea of presidential power in American history, including some of the debates about the proper definition of executive authority and the institutional changes that have followed as successive presidents have used the office to advance their particular visions of what the United States represents both at home and abroad. Central to this process is the underlying tension that sits at the heart of the American national identity: the need for a strong centralized authority to guide the American people, and their concern that it not infringe excessively upon their individual liberties.

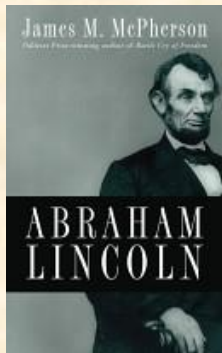
As well, the course will explore the various roles presidents have come to play in the history of the United States including Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, steward of the public welfare, chief diplomat and popular celebrity. It considers the impact of phenomena like "Manifest Destiny," the Civil War, the Progressive Era, the Great Depression, the rise of the United States as a world power and the Vietnam War on the expansion and contraction of presidential power, while assessing how they have contributed to the political environment that allowed Trump to "Tweet" his way into the Oval Office.

Outcomes:

Upon completing the course, students will be able to:

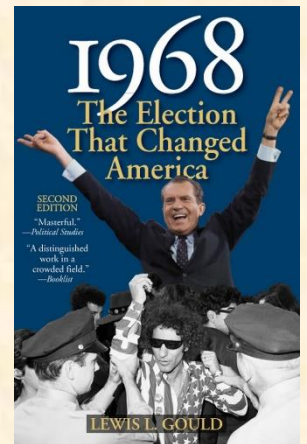
- Identify and describe key figures, events and trends that have defined the American presidency
- Connect present day issues to historical events and place them in a broader historical context.
- Discuss, from a historical perspective, contemporary issues that facing the President of the United States

Textbooks:



James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Lewis L. Gould, *1968: The Election that Changed America* Second Edition (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010)



Course Requirements:

Midterm Exam 30% (October 17, 2017)

Assignment 30% (Due November 14, 2017)

Final Exam 40%

Midterm and Final Exam:

There will be one Midterm exam held in class and a Final exam held during the Mid-Year Exam period. The university sets the examination schedule, and students must not make travel plans (*e.g.*, buy expensive plane tickets) until after the university publishes the exam schedule for the mid-year exams.

Assignment:

Students will write a **4 to 6 page (double-spaced)** paper discussing the significance of any president of their choice to the evolution of the presidency. The paper should use a **minimum of five secondary sources** (books, monographs, journal articles) from the Western Library system. On-line material beyond the Western Library system is acceptable only in certain cases which must be verified by the professor or Teaching Assistant. All citations should appear as footnotes or endnotes and follow Chicago Style in format. The essay will be due in class* on **November 14, 2017**.

***Assignment Submission**

Hardcopies of all assignments are to be submitted in class as well as electronically to turnitin.com *by the time that class has started*.

“Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.”

Late assignments will be penalized 5% the first day and 2% each subsequent day.

Late assignments handed in after the last day of class will not be accepted.

Students must complete this assignment to pass the course.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Prerequisites and Antirequisites:

Unless you have either the requisites for this course, as described in the Academic Calendar description of the course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The Academic Calendar description of each course also indicates which classes are considered antirequisites, i.e., to cover such similar material that students are not permitted to receive academic credit for both courses.

Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely

independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

Medical Issues:

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links to the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or vangalen@uwo.ca

Lectures:

September 12: Introduction: Donald Trump and the American Presidency

September 19: The Presidency Takes Shape: George Washington

September 26: Thomas Jefferson through Andrew Jackson and the American Party System

October 3: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War

October 10: Reading Week

October 17: Mid-Term – will include a question on **James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009)**



October 24: The Progressive Presidents: TR & Woodrow Wilson

October 31: The Presidency in Depression and War: FDR

November 7: Truman and Eisenhower and the Birth of the National Security State

November 14: JFK, LBJ and the Limits of Liberalism

Assignments Due

November 21: Nixon: The Presidency in Crisis

November 28: America's Right Turn: Reagan through Clinton

December 5: "W" and Obama: Towards 2016 and Trump's America

Final Exam during the Mid-Year Exam Period, December 10 to 21, 2017. The exam will include a question on **Lewis L. Gould, *1968: The Election that Changed America Second Edition* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010)**

