



The University of Western Ontario
HISTORY 2131B
The Presidency in American History
Fall/Winter 2018-19
Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30 Sommerville House 2355

Instructor: Geoff Stewart, Assistant Professor
Office Hours: TBA
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Course Description:

Examines the development of the modern presidency in terms of the challenges facing presidents and their success or failure in responding to the needs of the time. Special attention will be given to the evolution of presidential power and its historical consequences.

Course Syllabus:

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.

Students will be evaluated by completing a brief assignment discussing the significance of a president of their choosing and both a mid-term and final examination.

Course Materials:

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)

Methods of Evaluation:

Midterm Exam 30% (February 12, 2019)

Assignment 30% (Due March 19, 2019)

Final Exam 40%

Policy on Accommodation for Illness

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.

Students seeking academic accommodation on illness grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

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.

Students should read carefully the Faculty of Social Science “Instructions for Students Registered in Social Science Who are Unable to Write Tests or Examinations or Submit Assignments as Scheduled.”

They are appended to this syllabus or on the History Department website. Pressures of work (too many assignments in a short period) or computer/printer difficulties do not constitute acceptable reason for an extension. Remember to back up all notes and coursework on your computer, including research notes and drafts, and retain all notes until after final grades are issued.

Course Schedule and Readings:

January 8: Introduction: Donald Trump and the American Presidency

January 15: The Presidency Takes Shape: George Washington

January 22: Thomas Jefferson through Andrew Jackson and the American Party System

January 29: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War

February 5: The Progressive Presidents: TR & Woodrow Wilson

February 12: Mid-Term – will include a question on **James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln***
(Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009)

February 19: No Class – *Reading Week*

February 26: The Presidency in Depression and War: FDR

March 5: Truman and Eisenhower and the Birth of the National Security State

March 12: JFK, LBJ and the Limits of Liberalism

March 19: Nixon: The Presidency in Crisis

Assignments Due

March 26: America's Right Turn: The Reagan Revolution

April 2: Clinton, "W" and Obama

April 9: Trump's America

Additional Statements

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

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 for such checking 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>).

Accessibility Options:

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 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

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. 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.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

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.

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Support Services

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

Use of Electronic Devices

Electronic Devices are not permitted during exams.

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 e-mail vangalen@uwo.ca.