

History 4485

U.S. Politics Since 1933

Spring 2007

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams
Office Hours: TLC 3225
MW, 10-12
Tues, 10-12, 1-3
(and by appointment)

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Course website: www.westga.edu/~dkwillia

Class Location:
Pafford 204
MW, 3:20-4:40pm

Description:

This course will explore the history of national politics from the New Deal to the present. We will focus on four central themes throughout the semester: the history of congressional and presidential elections, presidential policy, the development of modern conservative and liberal political ideologies, and changes in the national party system. You will discover the reasons why political parties shift their positions on important issues, and why certain issues become part of the national political agenda. This course will give you an opportunity to explore the impact of grassroots political campaigns, social movements, the media, and voter participation on the nation's politics. It will also give you a more informed perspective on the American presidency, because you will have the opportunity in this class to explore and discuss the policies of every president from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush.

In short, this class will take you inside the smoke-filled rooms of political convention halls and the nation's capitol, behind the scenes of the nation's election campaigns, and inside the Oval Office to discover how the American political system works and the forces that determine the outcome of the nation's political debate.

Classes will consist mainly of interactive lectures and class discussions. I encourage all students to participate by asking questions during lectures and making comments in discussion sessions. Four classes will be devoted entirely to discussions of the reading material, and the lecture-based classes will include some discussion time, as well.

Learning Outcomes:

This course will help you to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze opposing points of view, and it will also give you the knowledge that you need to evaluate contemporary political issues. By the end of this semester, you will have a good understanding of the origins and assumptions of modern liberalism and conservatism, and

the way in which the nation's major political parties have evolved to accommodate the interests of American voters. You will gain practice assessing the effectiveness of presidential policies. The focus of this course will be on national politics, but the principles that you learn in this class will give you a better understanding of state and local politics, as well. This course will make you a more informed voter by giving you the background that you need to interpret the nation's political debates and evaluate policy proposals.

This course will also help you to improve your writing, research, and communication skills.

Assessment:

Students' final grades will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam	15%
Book analysis (or analyses)	15%
Research paper	30%
Class participation	20%
Final exam	20%

There will be no opportunity for extra-credit assignments in this course.

Grading Methodology: This university does not use a plus / minus grading system, but during the course of the semester, I will use plus / minus grades, as well as split-letter grades (e.g., an A- / B+), in order to evaluate students' written work with precision. In computing final course grades, I convert all grades into numeric scores according to the following system:

A = 95

A/A- = 94

A- = 92

A-/B+ = 90

B+ = 88

B+/B = 87

B = 85

B/B- = 84

B- = 82

B-/C+ = 80

(A similar pattern is used for grades in the C-range and D-range).

In computing final course grades, a grade average of 89.5 or higher converts to a course grade of A, a grade average between 79.5 and 89.49 converts to a course grade of B, and a grade average between 69.5 and 79.49 converts to a course grade of C. A grade average of 59.5, which converts to a D, is the lowest possible passing grade in the course.

A-range grades, including the grade of A-/B+, are reserved for work that is of exceptional quality. In order to receive an A-range grade on an essay assignment, a student's essay must show evidence of original thinking and the ability to synthesize information from a wide variety of sources, as well as an accurate understanding of the material and good writing technique. Papers that receive a grade of 90 or above must be cogent and persuasive in their argumentation, and they must be well written and tightly organized around a strong thesis. In short, a paper that receives an A-range grade not only meets the basic requirements for the assignment, but also demonstrates that a student has mastered the interpretative, analytical, and writing skills expected for a course at this level.

B-range grades are given to essays that demonstrate a student's accurate understanding of the material, adequate use of the assigned documents, and competence in writing. They rarely contain the sophisticated analysis required for an A-range essay, but they meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

C-range grades are given to essays that contain factual inaccuracies, errors in interpretation, inadequate use of the assigned documents, or poor writing technique, even though they usually meet most of the basic requirements for the assignment.

D-range and failing grades are assigned to work that fails to meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Exams: There will be one midterm exam and a take-home final exam. The midterm exam will consist of essay questions and I.D. terms based on concepts covered in the lectures, discussions, and readings. One week before the exam, I will post a study guide on the course website that will give you more information about the material covered on the test. I will give a make-up exam only in cases of a pre-arranged, excused absence for which documentation must be provided, or in cases of a legitimate health or family emergency that must be documented with a doctor's note, dean's note, or similar measure of proof. In all other cases, a make-up exam will not be an option.

The take-home final exam will consist of broadly-based essay questions relating to themes covered in the course readings and lectures throughout the semester. I will give you the exam on Wednesday, April 25, and you will have until 4pm on Monday, April 30 to write 7-10 pages in response to the essay questions.

Book analyses and research papers: You are required to write EITHER two two-page summaries of two of the books that you read for class discussion OR one 4-6 page summary of one of the books that you read for this course. Each of those analyses is due on the date on which the class discussion for the book is scheduled. A short book analysis should give a brief summary of the book while highlighting the author's thesis or point of view, and it should give a brief evaluation of the historical significance of the subject. A longer book review should cover similar themes, but should also include a lengthier analysis of the subject's relationship to broader historical trends discussed in the

textbook and in lectures. The book review guidelines on the course website give more specific directions regarding this assignment.

You will also be expected to write one 6-8 page research paper for this course. Consult the online guidelines for research papers for more information about this assignment.

Papers that are turned in after the assigned date will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are overdue.

It should go without saying that all papers that you write must be your own work, and that any students who are caught plagiarizing another student's work, a paper from a web site, a textbook, or any other source will automatically fail this course and may be subject to further disciplinary action. Plagiarism is a serious offense that will not be tolerated. Please look at the course website to find guidelines on proper footnoting procedures and avoiding inadvertent plagiarism.

All of your written work for this class must be original; you are not allowed to submit essays that you have written for other courses or that you have completed prior to this semester.

Class participation: Classes will consist of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings. In addition, there are four class periods reserved for discussion of the assigned books. It is very important for you to read these books prior to the class discussions so that you can come to class prepared to participate. Failure to attend these discussions will adversely affect your class participation grade. I do not have a formal attendance policy, but since students cannot participate in class discussions if they do not attend class, habitual absences, as well as habitual silence in class throughout the semester, could negatively affect a student's class participation grade.

In addition, as part of your class participation, you should email me short, one-paragraph summaries of each of the four books that we discuss in class, with the exception of the book(s) for which you write a book analysis. These emails should consist of five or six sentences that briefly summarize the book and suggest at least one intriguing question for class discussion. Each of these emails is due at noon (two hours prior to class) on the day on which we are scheduled to discuss the book in question. I will not assign these emails a letter grade, nor will I evaluate them on the basis of grammar or structure, but I will instead treat them as I would comments that you make in class, and I will consider their content when I formulate class participation grades at the end of the semester.

Class communication: I may send out periodic email communiqués to students in this course, so please check your UWG email account regularly. The university administration has stipulated that all email communication between faculty and students should take place on UWG email accounts, so please use your UWG email account for all electronic communications that you send me.

University policy also prevents me from disclosing grades over email, so if you would like to discuss your grade on any assignment in the class, please set up an appointment to meet with me in my office. Please do not email me with a request for your grades, since I am not allowed to email that information to you.

To protect students' privacy rights, I will not return graded papers or exams to any third party (e.g., a student's friend or relative who asks to pick up a student's work on that person's behalf) unless a student gives me permission in writing (e.g., an email) to do so. There are occasions when I must disclose a student's grade to university administrators, other history department faculty (e.g., the department chair), or athletic coaches who need to know the academic status of students on their team, but in all other cases, I will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of students' grades.

I would like to do whatever I can to help you succeed in this course. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a question about any subject pertaining to this class. I make it a priority to respond promptly to emails from students, and I am happy to talk with students during my office hours, so please feel free to stop by my office to introduce yourself and discuss any concerns that you may have about this course. I believe that this will be an excellent semester, and I'm pleased to welcome you to this class.

Required readings:

The following texts are available in the college bookstore, and are required:

M.J. Heale, *Twentieth-Century America: Politics and Power in the United States, 1900-2000* (Hodder Arnold, 2004)

Allida M. Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, 1996)

Nick Kotz, *Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Laws that Changed America* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005)

Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton University Press, 2001)

E.J. Dionne, Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (Simon & Schuster, 2004)

Class Schedule:**Please complete assigned readings before class.**

- 1/08 Introduction: A Short History of American Political Parties
- 1/10 The New Deal: How an Economic Experiment Reshaped the Nation's Politics
 Reading: Heale, ch. 8 (pp. 115-129)
 Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address
 (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrfirstinaugural.html>)
- 1/15 No class (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day)
- 1/17 Opposition to the New Deal
 Reading: Heale, ch. 6-7 (pp. 83-114)
 Huey Long, "Share Our Wealth"
 (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/hueyplongshare.htm>)
- 1/22 The Roosevelt Presidency in Peace and War
 Reading: Heale, ch. 9 (pp. 130-140)
 Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow*, pp. 23-49
- 1/24 Postwar Liberalism and the Truman Presidency
 Reading: Heale, ch. 10 (pp. 141-155)
 Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow*, pp. 51-84.
- 1/29 The Cold War's Effect on National Politics
 Reading: Heale, ch. 13 (pp. 189-204)
 Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow*, pp. 131-170
 Joe McCarthy, Speech (1950)
 (<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/06/documents/mccarthy/>)
- 1/31 **Discussion of *Casting Her Own Shadow***
- 2/05 Civil Rights Issues and the Nation's Political Parties
 Reading: Heale, ch. 11 (pp. 156-172)
 Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics"
 (<http://www.socialdemocrats.org/protopol.html>)
 Fannie Lou Hamer's Testimony (1964)
 (<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/flhamer.html>)
- 2/07 The Eisenhower Presidency
Source List for Research Paper Due
- 2/12 John F. Kennedy's New Frontier
 Reading: Heale, ch. 12 (pp. 173-188); John F. Kennedy's Inaugural
 (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>)

- 2/14 Lyndon Johnson's Great Society
Lyndon B. Johnson, "The Great Society" (1964)
(<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbjthegreatsociety.htm>)
- 2/19 The Antiwar Movement: Johnson's Challenge from the Left
The Port Huron Statement (1962)
(http://dmcc.lib.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SD_S_Port_Huron.html)
Mario Savio, Speech from the Free Speech Movement (1964)
(http://www.fsm-a.org/stacks/mario/mario_speech.html)
Jane Fonda, Broadcast from Hanoi (1972)
(<http://www.richmond.edu/~ebolt/history398/JaneFondaBroadcast.html>)
- 2/21 The Rise of a Conservative Movement
Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing"
(<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreaganatimeforchoosing.htm>)
Young Americans for Freedom, Sharon Statement, 1960
(<http://www.yaf.com/sharon.shtml>)
- 2/26 Three Elections: 1964, 1966, and 1968
Jackie Robinson, "Political Life After Baseball"
(<http://www.framinghamdems.org/JackRob.html>)
Robert F. Kennedy, "Announcement for President"
(<http://www.angelfire.com/pa4/kennedy/speech.html>)
- 2/28 **Discussion of *Judgment Days***
- 3/05 The Nixon Presidency
Reading: Heale, ch. 17 (pp. 257-272)
Richard Nixon, "What Has Happened to America?" (1967)
(http://www.wadsworth.com/history_d/templates/student_resources/0030724791_ayers/sources/ch29/29.4.nixon.html).
- 3/07 Cultural politics in the 1970s
Reading: Heale, ch. 14-16 (pp. 207-256)
Shirley Chisholm, "For the Equal Rights Amendment" (1970)
(<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/shirleychisholmequalrights.htm>)
Declaration of American Women (1977)
(<http://www.wiwomensnetwork.org/1977declaration.html>)
Jerry Falwell, "Listen America"
(http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/resources/documents/ch36_02.htm)
- 3/12 Ford and Carter: Moderation in a Troubled Time
Jimmy Carter, "A Crisis of Confidence" (1979)
(http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carter/filmmore/ps_crisis.html)

3/14 **Midterm Exam**

3/19-23 – Spring Break

3/26 The Election of Ronald Reagan
 Ronald Reagan's First Inaugural Address
 (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreagandfirstinaugural.html>)

3/28 No class (instructor at a conference)

4/02 **Discussion of *Suburban Warriors***
First Draft of Research Paper Due

4/04 The Reagan Presidency: The Domestic Agenda
 Reading: Heale, ch. 19 (pp. 291-307)
 Ronald Reagan, Tax Reform (1986)
 (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreagantaxreformactof1986.html>)

4/09 Global Changes and National Elections, 1985-1992
 Reading: Heale, ch. 18 (pp. 273-290)

4/11 The Clinton Presidency
 Bill Clinton's Second Inaugural Address (1997)
 (<http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres65.html>)

4/16 Political Polarization during the 1990s
 Contract with America (1994)
 (<http://www.house.gov/house/Contract/CONTRACT.html>)
 Rush Limbaugh: (<http://www.rushonline.com/topics/r4.htm> and
<http://www.rushonline.com/topics/r29.htm>)

4/18 **Discussion of *Why Americans Hate Politics***

4/23 George W. Bush and Neoconservative Politics
 George W. Bush's Commencement Address at West Point (2002)
 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>)
 Robin Wright, "Iraq Occupation Erodes Bush Doctrine" (2004)
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A10539-2004Jun27.html>)
 Nicholas Lemann's profile of Karl Rove (2003)
 (http://www.bnfp.org/neighborhood/Lemann_Rove_NYM.htm)

4/25 Liberalism, Conservatism, and Contemporary Politics: An Assessment
Research Paper Due

4/30 **Final Exam Essays Due at 4pm**