

HIST 494
LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER: Party Politics in Modern America
University of Washington
Winter 2008
Wednesdays, 3:30-5:20
<http://faculty.washington.edu/momara/Courses.html>

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This course explores the evolution of the national Democratic, Republican, and independent political parties over the course of the twentieth century. We address how shifting demographics, market changes, and social issues changed the composition of the major national parties over time, and examine key political leaders who shaped the identity and future of their political party – from Teddy Roosevelt to Franklin Roosevelt, Strom Thurmond to Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon to Ronald Reagan, to two Bushes and two Clintons. Readings and discussion cover the major social movements that shifted party allegiances, watershed elections, cultural and social issues shaping party platforms, the influence of grassroots activism on formal political institutions, and the growing influence of the independent voter. Our work in this seminar will consider differing approaches to and definitions of 'political history' over time, and how this subfield relates to the broader sweep of American historical scholarship.

READINGS

American political historiography consists not only of works by academic historians but also the writings of political scientists, sociologists, and other social scientists, as well as books written by professional journalists. Our readings draw from all of these sources. Required texts are available for purchase in the University Bookstore and on reserve at Odegaard Undergraduate Library.

Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (1955)
Nancy Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (1983)
Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (2001)
Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President 1968* (1969)
Jason DeParle, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare* (2005)

Additional short readings and multimedia assignments will be available on the course website and/or library e-reserves.

Readings listed for a given week are expected to be completed by the date under which they are listed on the syllabus, e.g. the first part of Hofstadter will be discussed on January 16.

ASSIGNMENTS

Grades for the class will be based on participation and writing.

Your participation grade is based on three things:

1. Thoughtful engagement in class discussion, reflecting completion of assigned readings;
2. Writing and posting at least one question or comment each week to the online discussion board; and
3. Working in two-person teams to create a simple web page discussing the evolution of a particular issue in US presidential elections since 1896, drawing upon publicly available source materials.

Your writing grade consists of:

1. Two reader response papers of 2 pages each, submitted on a week of your choosing, that discuss the week's reading and relate it to other readings and issues discussed in class; and
2. One final 10-12 page historiographical essay.

Grading is broken down as follows: in-class discussion 15%; discussion question posting 15%; web page 15%; reader responses (10% x 2 = 20%); final essay 35%.

See the end of this syllabus for detailed information about assignment guidelines and expectations.

THE POLITICS OF THE CLASSROOM

As informed, voting-age adults, you likely have well-formed political opinions and identify as a Democrat, Republican, a member of a third party, or an independent. There are places to express these positions; this classroom is not one of them. Your comments in class should approach matters of politics and policy in ways that are respectful of others' opinions and contextualize these issues historically. Informed debates based on the readings are encouraged; partisan editorial commentary is not, and will adversely affect your participation grade.

SCHEDULE

January 9 – Introductory Session: Politics and History

READ IN CLASS, DISCUSS: selections from George Washington Plunkitt, Henry George (to be handed out in class)

SIGN UP for web page topics and for reader response papers

January 16 – From Machine Politics to Populism

READ: Hofstadter, 1-130

LISTEN: William Jennings Bryan, "Cross of Gold" Speech, delivered July 9, 1896 at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354/>

January 23 – Progressivism to Reform

READ: Hofstadter, 131-269

READ (E-RESERVE): Robert D. Johnston, "The Age of Reform: A Defense of Richard Hofstadter Fifty Years On," *Journal of Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, April 2007

READ: T. Roosevelt, "It Takes More Than That to Kill a Bull Moose" (1912)
<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/research/speech%20kill%20moose.htm>

January 30 – **A New Deal**

READ: Weiss, xiii-95, 157-208

READ (E-RESERVE): Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," from *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, 1989)

LISTEN: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fireside Chat 13, June 24, 1938 (Purging the Democratic Party) <http://millercenter.virginia.edu/scripps/digitalarchive/speechDetail/24>

February 6 – **Race and Region**

READ: Weiss, 208-301

READ (E-RESERVE): Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950," *Political Science Quarterly* 108:2 (Summer 1993), 283-306.

LISTEN: Harry Truman Address to the NAACP, June 29, 1947
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/audio/audio.htm>; READ: Southern response
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/truman/psources/ps_south.html

LAST DAY TO SUBMIT READER RESPONSE I

February 13 – **Suburban Warriors**

READ: McGirr, 1-186

READ (E-RESERVE): Kruse, "The Politics of Race and Public Space: Desegregation, Privatization, and the Tax Revolt in Atlanta," *Journal of Urban History* 31 (2005)

LISTEN: Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing," October 27, 1964
http://www.millercenter.virginia.edu/scripps/digitalarchive/speeches/spe_1964_1027_reagan

February 20 – **The Television President**

READ: McGinniss

February 20 MOVIE NIGHT: *The Candidate* (1972)

WEB PAGES MUST BE POSTED ONLINE BY 12PM WED, FEB. 27

February 27 – **Church and State**

READ: McGirr, 187-273

READ (E-RESERVE): Dionne, “The Virtues of Virtue” from *Why Americans Hate Politics* (Simon and Schuster, 1991)

READ (E-RESERVE): Falwell, “Strengthening Families in the Nation” (1982)

March 5 – **The End of Welfare**

READ: DeParle

March 5 MOVIE NIGHT: *The War Room* (1993)

March 12 – **The Modern Political Machine**

READ (E-RESERVE): Ben-Cramer, “The Price of Being Poppy,” from *What it Takes: The Road to the White House* (Random House, 1992)

READ (E-RESERVE): Sidney M. Milkis and Jesse H. Rhodes, “George W. Bush, the Republican Party, and the ‘New’ American Party System,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5:3 (September 2007), 461-488.

READ: On History News Network <http://hnn.us>, at least two articles (of your choosing) that discuss the 2008 election

LAST DAY TO SUBMIT READER RESPONSE II

FINAL PAPERS DUE NO LATER THAN 6:00PM THURS, MARCH 20

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ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

THE PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS:

Class Discussion. In small colloquia such as this one, consistent and respectful engagement in discussion is the key to your success. To receive high marks for discussion, you must be both a thoughtful commentator and a good listener. This is discussion, not oration; I grade on quality of commentary, not quantity. An “A”-range student comes to class with an understanding of the readings and how they relate to one another, and with discussion points already in mind. She actively and consistently contributes to discussion, but she also knows when to let others speak and responds to their comments with respect. Obviously, if you are not in class you cannot show off your mastery of the material and your penetrating analysis of the issues at hand; an unexcused absence will lower your class discussion mark by one third of a letter grade.

Discussion Questions. Posting substantive and thought-provoking questions to the online discussion board (<https://catalysttools.washington.edu/gopost/board/momara/3573>) is an important component of your participation grade. It also is your opportunity to hone in on issues in the reading that you find particularly interesting and provocative, and for you and your peers

to set our agenda for the day. Questions must be posted no later than **2:00PM** on the day of class in order to allow your fellow students to read them in a timely fashion. You can post as early and as often as you like during the week, but you must post at least once prior to the deadline in order to receive credit from me.

Web Page Project. The first week of class you will sign up to create a simple web page that places a current campaign issue in historical perspective. Using Simple Site, available at <http://catalyst.washington.edu>, you and a fellow student will build a single page that includes original content and analysis as well as links to historical materials available on the web. This is *not* a web design assignment; you do not need to have any experience as a webmaster, simply as a web user. Quality content, clearly presented for a general audience, is the most important criterion for success. The page should trace the evolution of an issue from the 1896 election to the present. Note that all may not have been an issue in every single election; I do not expect an exhaustive chronology. (It may well be just as instructive to discuss why an issue dropped off the table in a particular cycle.) Each team will tackle one of the following:

Immigration
Environment
Taxes
War

The economy
Moral issues
Health care
Poverty

To prepare for this project we will discuss examples of useful (and not so useful) web sites in class, and I'll provide a list of recommended sources for primary materials. I also strongly recommend that you and your partner meet with me during my office hours the week of February 20. Come to our meeting with a good sense of the content you'd like to feature on the page, including web sources, and I will help you troubleshoot both substantive and technical issues. I will post outstanding pages on my permanent web site.

THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Reader Response Papers. You will write two of these essays over the course of the quarter. In order to give you flexibility in managing your assignments for this and other courses, I have not given these fixed due dates. At the first class session, you will sign up for the two weeks in which you will submit an essay; one must be in the first half of the quarter (on or before 2/6), the other must be in the second. Papers should be submitted via the HIST 494A Collect It dropbox: <https://catalysttools.washington.edu/collectit/dropbox/momara/1098>. These are not book reports, but concise analytic documents that give me your assessment of the readings for a given week, their relation to one another, and how they reflect other themes addressed in class. You should not be reluctant to point out shortcomings you find in the readings, but criticism must be constructive and convincingly argued. A paper grade and comments will be available for your review on Collect It by noon on Fridays. I will accept rewrites on response papers if you are dissatisfied with your grade. You must submit rewrites to me no more than one week after you have received your graded paper; I will record the higher of the two grades.

Final Paper What *is* political history? Using the required readings from this class, write a 10-12 page essay that traces how historians and others have answered this question over the course of the past 60 years, comparing and contrasting the sources, methods, and conclusions of successive generations of scholarship. Conclude with discussion of how present-day politicians, analysts, and voters might learn from this historiography. This will also be submitted via the Collect It dropbox.

GRADING STANDARDS FOR PAPERS

Grade Ranges

	A	B	C	D	F
Has cogent and incisive analysis that reflects full understanding of source material. Shows original insight and creative thinking. Tells us not only “what” and “why” but also “why this matters.”	*				
Well-written and well-organized, with a clear statement of thesis at the beginning and consistent and clear references throughout to how the evidence and analysis relates to main thesis.	*	*			
Clearly and consistently footnoted using a widely recognized style, such as MLA or Chicago.	*	*			
Demonstrates that you have read the source material and understand its main arguments, but lacks analytic rigor and does not provide new insights into the material.		*	*		
Sub-par writing and sloppy organization.			*	*	*
Demonstrates partial or no mastery of the material.				*	*
Fails to meet the basic length and topic requirements of the assignment.					*