

HIST 494
LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER: Partisan Politics in Twentieth Century America
University of Washington
Winter 2010
MW 1:30-3:20 – Savery Hall 140
<http://faculty.washington.edu/momara/HIST494.html>

Prof. Margaret O'Mara
Department of History
Office: 20 Smith Hall
Office hours: Tuesdays 11:00am-1:00pm
Email: momara@uw.edu [replies sent during regular business hours, M-F]
Office ph: (206) 685-2928

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

Required paperback 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*
Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*
Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*
Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President*
Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s*

Additional articles and multimedia assignments will be available on the course website, indicated by a (W) on this syllabus. You may choose to print these out or simply read them online.

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 on January 11.

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 a comment of at least fifty words every week to the online discussion board; and
3. Working in teams to create a simple web page and in-class presentation about one twentieth-century Presidential election, drawing upon publicly available source materials.

Your writing grade consists of:

1. Two reader response papers of 4-5 pages each, submitted on a week of your choosing, that each discuss an assigned book and relate it to other readings and issues discussed in class; and
2. One final 10-12 page essay.

Grading is broken down as follows: attendance and in-class discussion 20%; weekly discussion question posting 10%; team presentation 5%; reader responses (15% x 2 = 30%); final essay 35%.

See the end of this syllabus for detailed information about assignment guidelines and expectations. In all assignments you are expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity outlined by the University of Washington Student Conduct Code. For clarification of these standards and disciplinary penalties, see <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/honesty.html>.

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

Mon Jan 4 Introductory Session

DISCUSS syllabus and assignments

SIGN UP for Presidential election projects and for reader response papers

Wed Jan 6 Formal and Informal Politics

READ: (W) Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics," *American Historical Review* 89:3 (June 1984), pp. 620-647

(W) John H. Summers, "What Happened to Sex Scandals?," *Journal of American History* 87:3 (Dec. 2000), pp. 825-854

RESEARCH EXERCISE: As a prelude to your Presidential election projects, conduct web-based research to discover what you can about the 1800 Presidential election (Jefferson vs. Adams). On the class discussion board, post at least one link to an online source of information about the

election, telling us who authored it, why it could be considered an authoritative/accurate source, and one interesting thing you learned from this resource. We will discuss and evaluate these sites in the second hour of class on Wednesday the 6th. This is an ungraded exercise but will count towards your general participation grade.

Mon Jan 11 A Nation of Farmers

READ: Hofstadter, 1-81

Wed Jan 13 The People vs. the Powerful

READ: Hofstadter, 82-130

Mon Jan 18 NO CLASS – MLK HOLIDAY

Wed Jan 20 The Search for Order

GROUP PRESENTATION I: The Election of 1912

READ: Hofstadter, 131-269

HOFSTADTER RESPONSE PAPERS DUE

Mon Jan 25 The Kingfish

READ: Brinkley, 3-81

Wed Jan 27 The Radio Priest

READ: Brinkley, 82-142

Mon Feb 1 Social Reform

READ: Brinkley, 143-215

Wed Feb 3 Uneasy Alliances

GROUP PRESENTATION II: The Election of 1948

READ: Brinkley, 216-268

BRINKLEY READER RESPONSE PAPERS DUE

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

Mon Feb 8 Suburban Politics

READ: McGirr, 1-110

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

Wed Feb 10 Housewives and Revolutionaries

READ: McGirr, 111-146

Mon Feb 15 NO CLASS - PRESIDENT'S DAY

Wed Feb 17 Ascendant Conservatism

GROUP PRESENTATION III: The Election of 1960

READ: McGirr, 147-216 *McGIRR READER RESPONSE DUE*

Mon Feb 22 The Television President

READ: McGinniss – first half

Wed Feb 24 The Media is the Message

READ: McGinniss – to end *McGINNISS READER RESPONSE DUE*

WATCH: *The Candidate* (1972)

Mon March 1 Malaise and Revival

GROUP PRESENTATION IV: The Election of 1976

READ: Troy, 1-83

Wed March 3 Morning in America

READ: Troy, 84-146

Mon March 8 Reagan's Legacy

READ: Troy, 147-296 *TROY READER RESPONSE PAPER DUE*

WATCH: *A Perfect Candidate* (1996)

Wed March 10 The Modern Political Machine

GROUP PRESENTATION V: The Election of 1992

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

READ (W): 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) written by historians that discuss current politics

Wed March 17 FINAL PAPERS MUST BE EMAILED TO INSTRUCTOR BY 5:00 P.M.

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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 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 **10:00 A.M.** 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.

Group Presentation. The first week of class you will sign up to for a group project that discusses a presidential election contest during the twentieth century. Elections have been chosen because of their significance to American political history, and also because of an abundance of primary and secondary sources that discuss and dissect these elections. Many of these sources are on the web. Your task has two parts. The first is to search the web for validated, authoritative sources of information about this electoral contest and assemble a Power Point presentation about the election that features these resources. The second is to make a ten-minute, timed presentation of this material to your classmates. 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 recommend that you and your partner(s) meet with me during my office hours to discuss resources. Come to our meeting with a good sense of the content you'd like to highlight and a list of 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:

**Paper length is based on double-spaced text with 11- or 12-point font and standard margins. As these are not research papers, you do not need to include footnotes or a bibliography but you must cite page numbers when referring to (or directly quoting) a part of another text. Refer to the Chicago Manual of

Style or another widely-used style manual for guidance on proper documentation. All papers should be proofread and spell-checked, and pages should be numbered. Electronic submittals must be in Word or PDF format only.**

Reader Response Papers. You will write essays on two of the five books assigned in this course. At the first class session, you will sign up for the two books for which you will submit an essay. Papers should be turned in on the due date for each book indicated on this syllabus. They may be submitted one of two ways: 1) as a hard copy given to me in class, or 2) via email to me **prior to** the class session. Papers emailed to me after class that day will be considered late and grade penalties will apply. These papers are more than descriptive book reports. They are concise analytic documents that give me your assessment of book, its relation to the other readings and to our discussion, 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. I will strive to have papers graded and comments sent to you no later than one week after the day they are submitted. 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. Presidents and other national figures often call upon professional historians to tell them about how past officeholders handled the challenges of campaigning and governing. For this project, you are assuming the role of one of these historians. Using the required readings from this class, write a 10-12 page memorandum to a national political figure of your choice (for example, President Obama, or one of the people who might be considering challenging him in 2012, or another prominent politician). Your job is to advise this person about what he or she can learn from history about how to run for office, position him or herself on major issues, and make use of the media. The essay should use **specific examples** drawn from the books we have read, and it should use parenthetical citation. It should be written in an objective voice and refrain from excessive advocacy of a particular ideology or political position, although you may note how past events have shown the viability or vulnerability of a particular political approach or ideological position. You may choose to focus on a particular issue of importance to this political figure, tracing its evolution over the past century, or you may discuss more general tactics. This essay should be submitted no later than 5:00 P.M. on Wednesday, March 17 via email to the instructor.

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LATENESS AND ABSENCES: Your grade on an assignment will be reduced by one grade point every five minutes it is late. Due to the widespread nature of this year's flu, I will not require a doctor's note because of incapacitation because of illness, but I ask for written notification of absence prior to the missed class if at all possible. Scheduled absences due to prior university obligations or significant family events should be discussed with me as early in the term as possible.

GRADING STANDARDS, PAPER-WRITING GUIDELINES, AND OTHER POLICIES: All of these are available on my web site at <http://faculty.washington.edu/momara/Courses.html>. I encourage you to read and refer to these as needed.