

HIST 388
LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER: Partisan Politics in Twentieth Century America
University of Washington
Autumn 2011
Tuesdays 1:30-3:20 – Raitt Hall 116
<http://faculty.washington.edu/momara/HIST388.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. It introduces you to the questions historians ask about U.S. politics and policy, and the way they go about asking them. We address how shifting demographics, market changes, and social issues changed the composition of the major national parties over time, and the role of key political figures in reshaping the political landscape. 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 give you practice in the basic skills of reading, analysis, and communication (both verbal and written) that are central to the historical craft.

READINGS AND FILMS

Required paperback texts are available for purchase in the University Bookstore and on reserve at Odegaard Undergraduate Library.

Eric Rauchway, *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt's America*
Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*
Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*
Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President*
Jason DeParle, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare*

Films and multimedia will be available through streaming e-reserves at the library, and may be watched on any computer using an on-campus wireless or wired connection.

Studying history requires reading lots of books, and the reading load for this course is heavy. Students are encouraged to start reading early. Limited time in the classroom is predicated on your spending additional time outside of it completing the readings and assignments in a thorough, thoughtful fashion. I expect you to manage your time so that you can get this reading done, and I encourage you to read ahead on weeks when we have lighter reading loads or a research week. [Readings and film viewings](#)

listed for a given week should be completed by the date under which they are listed on the syllabus, e.g. come to class on October 11 prepared to discuss Rauchway.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Thoughtful engagement in class discussion, reflecting completion of assigned readings (25%);
2. Writing and posting a comment of at least fifty words per week to the online discussion board (15%);
3. Working in teams to create a short in-class presentation about one twentieth-century Presidential election, drawing upon publicly available source materials (5%);
4. Three 2-page papers that evaluate and contextualize a primary source (10% each x 3 = 30%);
5. One 2-page research paper prospectus (**required**; credit/no credit); and
6. One final 7-10 page research paper (25%)

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

Oct 4 Introduction: the practice of politics, and the practice of history

DISCUSS syllabus and assignments

IN CLASS exercise on sources

SIGN UP for Presidential election projects

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 PRIMARY or SECONDARY source about the election, telling us who authored it, why it could be considered an authoritative and accurate source, and one interesting thing you learned from this resource. **Post no later than 10PM on Monday, Oct 10.** (You must find different sources than those already posted. The earlier you post, the more likely you will have your pick of sources.) We will discuss and evaluate these sites in the second hour of class on Tuesday Oct 11. This is an ungraded exercise but will count towards your general participation grade.

Oct 11 Progressives, populists, anarchists: Theodore Roosevelt's America

Rauchway, *Murdering McKinley*

GROUP PRESENTATION I: THE ELECTION OF 1912

IN-CLASS SOURCE EXERCISE: Oral histories

Oct 18 The Kingfish and the Radio Priest

Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, pp. 3-106

[Paul Weinstein, "History Written with Lightning"](#)

STREAMING FILM: *All the King's Men* (1949)

IN-CLASS SOURCE EXERCISE: Newspapers and radio

PAPER ONE DUE: Oral histories of the Great Depression (from Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*)

Oct 25 New Deal Democrats

Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, pp. 107-268

[Franklin Roosevelt, Fireside Chat 7: On the Works Relief Program and the Social Security Act, April 28, 1935](#)

GROUP PRESENTATION II: THE ELECTION OF 1948

Nov 1 Business and politics

Philips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, pp. 1-149

PAPER TWO DUE: Essays and punditry from *The National Review*

Nov 8 Liberalism and conservatism

Philips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, pp. 150-269

STREAMING FILM: *Primary* (1960)

IN-CLASS SOURCE EXERCISE: Photographs and documentary film

GROUP PRESENTATION III: THE ELECTION OF 1964

Nov 15 The televised presidency

McGinniss, *The Selling of the President*

STREAMING FILM: *The Candidate* (1972)

PAPER THREE DUE: Television commercials of 1968

GROUP PRESENTATION IV: The Election of 1972

****Nov 22 – NO CLASS – RESEARCH WEEK****

Nov 29 Retrenchment

DeParle, *American Dream*

STREAMING FILM: *Primary Colors* (1998)

GROUP PRESENTATION V: The Election of 1988

Dec 6 Politics, policy, and the practice of history

STREAMING FILM: *A Perfect Candidate* (1996)

PROSPECTUS DUE

TWO-MINUTE PRESENTATIONS ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

Wed Dec 15 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 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 and focuses on the primary sources from this election that are available online. 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 each group 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.

THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Paper length is based on double-spaced text with 11- or 12-point font and standard margins. Papers must be footnoted. 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.

Three short papers on primary sources. These assignments ask you to examine closely and give a 2-3 page (double-spaced) written analysis of a primary source, helping you develop one of the key skills of historical research. Each assignment presents a different kind of textual or visual source and asks you to interrogate its purpose and meaning. Worksheets accompanying each assignment will further outline the questions that each written response should ask and answer. These papers should be submitted in hard copy in class on October 18, November 1, and November 15.

Research prospectus. This is a two-page document. On the first page, you will write a prose outline that states your research topic, describes the questions you will explore, and explains the broader relevance of the topic to American political history. On the second page, you will list primary and secondary sources to be consulted in researching and writing this paper. This list should be in standard bibliographic form, adhering to the Chicago Manual of Style's guidelines for bibliography. It should list at least seven sources in total. The prospectus is ungraded but is REQUIRED in order to pass this class. You will submit the prospectus, and share your topic with your classmates, on December 6.

Final Paper. For your final 7-10 pp. paper, you will discuss either the political career of an individual or the history of an interest group, nongovernmental lobbying organization, or advocacy organization. Your subject can be active in national politics, Washington State politics, or local politics. You should use this story as a window to analyze broader trends in twentieth century political history. The paper is not a biography or an institutional timeline, but should instead use the events in a person's career or in an organization as examples of, or responses to, wider trends. The essay should use both primary and secondary source materials, and you are strongly encouraged to take advantage of UW library collections related to local and state politics as well as our Government Document stacks. The paper should be submitted no later than 5:00 P.M. on Wednesday, December 15 via email to the professor.

CLASS POLICIES

LATENESS AND ABSENCES: We meet only nine times as a class. It thus is critical that you make a point to attend every class session. 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 very significant family events should be discussed with me as early in the term as possible. Please keep in mind that, even if an absence is excused, your missing class makes increases the difficulty in earning a high participation grade. For assignments, your grade on an assignment will be reduced by 0.1 of a grade point every five minutes it is late.

LAPTOPS: The seminar format depends on face-to-face dialogue and a singular focus on the topic at hand. Thus, laptops, netbooks, iPads, or other devices for electronic reading and note-taking are not allowed in the classroom.

GRADING STANDARDS, PAPER-WRITING GUIDELINES, AND OTHER POLICIES: I have a number of handouts available on my web site at <http://faculty.washington.edu/momara/Resources.html>. Please read and refer to these as needed.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: In all assignments you are expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity outlined by the University of Washington Student Conduct Code. In an age of internet-based research and writing, the standards for plagiarism and academic dishonesty can become unclear, and I strongly encourage all students to read the statements and guidelines found on my website that outline acceptable practices and procedures. For clarification of these standards and disciplinary penalties, see <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/honesty.html>.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the UW Disability Resources for Students Office. If you have a letter from their office indicating that you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to the professor at the start of the quarter so we can discuss the accommodations that you might need in this class. Letters presented later in the quarter may come too late to allow proper accommodations for examinations and other assignments.