



President Richard Nixon departing the White House on Marine/Army One, for the last time as president, August 9, 1974. Nixon Presidential Library.

## **HSTRY 388B**

### **Watergate and the American Presidency**

University of Washington  
Winter 2018

TuTh 3:30-5:20  
Smith Hall 407

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From dirty tricks to Deep Throat to the Congressional hearings to Richard Nixon's resignation, the Watergate scandal not only brought down a two-term president but also transformed American politics and culture in lasting ways. In this seminar, we will explore the key people and events of Watergate, the broader political landscape that precipitated the scandal, and its enduring legacy on American presidential politics, executive-branch governance, the media, and growing partisan divides.

The seminar emphasizes the basic skills of reading, analysis, and community (both verbal and written) that are central to the historians' craft. You will be expected to read a lot, write a lot, and be an active participant in both all-class discussion and small-group work. Successful completion of the seminar will fulfill I&S and W requirements.

#### REQUIRED READING (at the UW Bookstore as well as on reserve at Odegaard)

Elizabeth Drew, *Washington Journal*

David Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image*

Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion*

Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies*

Electronic reading articles and primary sources, available in PDF on Canvas and as in-class handouts.

REQUIRED FILMS (to be watched independently or during class screenings)

*Frost/Nixon*

*All the President's Men*

*Dick*

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Thoughtful, historically informed, and courteous engagement in every class discussion, reflecting completion of assigned readings (30%). A grading rubric for this component of class work can be found at the end of this syllabus.
2. Writing and posting two reader's reflections totaling at least 150 words per week to the online discussion board (20%). The professor will pose 2-3 questions related to the reading as prompts for this reflection; you do not need to answer all of them, but may choose one as a starting point for your post. This is more than merely a reading summary, but should be a substantive, thought-provoking comment that considers and cites examples from the reading to make your point. You may also use your post to home in on other issues in the reading that you find particularly interesting and provocative. Tuesday's reading reflection should be posted no later than **9AM on Tuesday morning**; Thursday's reading reflection **to be posted no later than 9AM on Thursday morning**.
3. Making a 30-minute appointment for an in-person meeting with Prof. O'Mara during her office hours at least once during the quarter to discuss academic interests and professional goals (required; credit/no credit).
4. Writing two 3-5 page "briefing papers" analyzing different types of primary source materials (10% each paper; 20% in total), due **week three** and **week seven** of the quarter. Sources and topics will be announced on Canvas ten days before the due date. Guidelines for how to write a primary source analysis are at the end of this syllabus.
5. Working in teams to create a ten-minute in-class presentation about one member of Watergate's "cast of characters" to be presented during **week six** of the quarter (5%).
6. Writing one final 10-12 page research paper (25%) due **Thursday of exam week**.

SCHEDULE:

**WEEK ONE**

Thu Jan 5: NO CLASS due to instructor travel. Instead, you are expected to obtain the course texts and begin reading so that you are prepared for the following week's classes. Your first reader's reflection, on Greenberg pp. xv-72, should be posted on Canvas no later than 9AM on Tuesday, January 9.

**WEEK TWO – 1946-1968: Richard Nixon, politician**

Tue Jan 9: Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow*, pp. xv-72

During this first class, we will discuss primary source analysis strategies and expectations for your two briefing papers, the first of which will be due at the end of next week.

Thu Jan 11: Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow*, pp. 73-125

**WEEK THREE – 1968-1970: Things fall apart**

Tue Jan 16: Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, Chs 10 and 11 (PDF on Canvas)

Thu Jan 18: Schell, *Time of Illusion*, pp. 17-74

FIRST BRIEFING PAPER DUE THURSDAY 11:59PM

“The Television President.” Comparative analysis of three campaign ads (one each from the campaigns of Nixon, Humphrey, Wallace) from the 1968 presidential election, chosen from the Living Room Candidate online exhibit.

**WEEK FOUR – 1970-1972: Dirty tricks**

Tue Jan 23: Schell, *Time of Illusion*, pp. 199-254

Thu Jan 25: Schell, *Time of Illusion*, pp. 199-254

**WEEK FIVE – 1972-1973: The break-in and the reporters**

Tue Jan 30: Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow*, pp. 126-179

FILM SCREENING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING CLASS: *All the President's Men* (140 minutes). If you are unable to stay late, please make time before Thursday's class to watch the film independently (either at the media library [free] or via a streaming service of your choice).

Thu Feb 1: Schell, *Time of Illusion*, pp. 255-334

**WEEK SIX – 1973: The Watergate Committee**

Tue Feb 6: Drew, *Washington Journal*, Introduction—Cast—“Autumn”

Thu Feb 8: Drew, *Washington Journal*, “Winter” and “Spring”

GROUP PRESENTATIONS DURING CLASS ON THURSDAY

**WEEK SEVEN – 1973-1974: The end of a presidency**

Tue Feb 13: Drew, *Washington Journal*, “Summer”—Afterword

Thu Feb 15: Schell, *The Time of Illusion*, pp. 337-388

SECOND BRIEFING PAPER DUE THURSDAY 11:59PM: “First Drafts of History.” Close reading and analysis of print journalism of the Nixon era, using two examples of your choice from newspapers and/or popular magazines. Sources must have been written/published during or immediately after Nixon's presidency.

**WEEK EIGHT – 1974-1980: Aftermath**

Tue Feb 20: Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow*, pp. 304-348

FILM SCREENING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING CLASS: *Frost/Nixon* (122 minutes). If you are unable to stay late, please make time before Thursday's class to watch the film independently (either at the media library [free] or via a streaming service of your choice).

Thu Feb 22: Schulman, *The Seventies*, pp. 53-101

**WEEK NINE – 1976-1980: Toward the Reagan Revolution**

Tue Feb 27: Schulman, *The Seventies*, pp. 103-143

Thu Mar 1: Schulman, *The Seventies*, pp. 144-189

**WEEK TEN – 1980-present: America and the presidency after Watergate**

Tue Mar 6: Schulman, *The Seventies*, pp. 193-252

FILM SCREENING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING CLASS: *Dick* (94 minutes). If you are unable to stay late, please make time before Thursday's class to watch the film independently (either at the media library [free] or via a streaming service of your choice).

Thu Mar 8: Margaret O'Mara, *Pivotal Tuesdays*, pp. 157-212 (PDF on Canvas)

**FINAL PAPER DUE on Wednesday, March 14, 11:59 p.m.**

CLASS POLICIES:

**ELECTRONICS:** Consider class a 110-minute respite from the Internet and all its distractions. If you rely on a laptop for note-taking, you may use one, but the WiFi must be turned off. Phones must be on silent/do not disturb mode.

**PAPER-WRITING GUIDELINES, RESEARCH RESOURCES, & OTHER**

**HELPFUL STUFF:** I have a number of handouts and links available on my web site at <http://www.margaretomara.com/resources>. 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 UW statements and guidelines that outline acceptable practices and procedures.

**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.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** Assignments submitted late on Canvas will be penalized by 5% of the assignment grade per hour (or fraction of an hour) of tardiness. Allow enough time before deadlines to avoid any technical/computer problems that might make your assignment late.

**ABSENCES:** Success in this course will depend on your being present and consistently engaged in class sessions. Please alert me to any expected absences well ahead of time so that we can make arrangements for makeup assignments. In cases of unexpected

absences (illness, family emergencies), you must contact me within a week of the absence to be considered for makeup credit on any in-class written assignments.

**ILLNESS:** It's Winter Quarter! Please follow common-sense guidelines in order to protect yourself and your fellow students. Stay home if you have a fever or any malady that might be easily communicated to those sitting near you in classroom. Doctor's notes are not required for occasional absence, but are required in cases of debilitating illnesses that result in missing a significant stretch of class sessions.

**DISCUSSION/PARTICIPATION STANDARDS:** This is a seminar, and a major component of your work in this class is active participation—speaking, cordial discussion, collaboration, and general active engagement in the work at hand. Sometimes this will take place in all-class discussion; sometimes it will occur as you work in smaller groups. The work (consisting of up to 30% of your final grade) will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

- 25-30%: excellent contributor to class; participates in discussion in nearly every class session; speaks and listens thoughtfully to peers, reflecting careful reading and attention to class content; informed, collegial contributions to group and in-class assignments.
- 20-25%: contributes to discussion in 80-90% of class sessions, reflecting completion of reading assignments and attention to class content; completion of most in-class work.
- 17-19%: contributes to discussion 50-70% of time, reflecting completion of assigned reading and some attention to class content; completion of some in-class work.
- 12-16%: rarely speaks in class; low engagement in group work; missing in-class assignments.
- 11% and below: rarely or never speaks in class, could not demonstrate by comments or in-class assignments that reading had been completed or other content mastered; lack of collegiality to peers; not following course rules, especially re. electronics.

**FINAL GRADE SCALE:** Each assignment is worth a certain number of points, totaling 100 (the 40% grade on the final project, for example, is worth 40 points). I convert the total into a four-point scale at the end of the quarter following this rubric:

≥ 95% = 4.0	88 = 3.3	81 = 2.6	74 = 1.9	67 = 1.2
94 = 3.9	87 = 3.2	80 = 2.5	73 = 1.8	66 = 1.1
93 = 3.8	86 = 3.1	79 = 2.4	72 = 1.7	65 = 1.0
92 = 3.7	85 = 3.0	78 = 2.3	71 = 1.6	64 = 0.9
91 = 3.6	84 = 2.9	77 = 2.2	70 = 1.5	63 = 0.8
90 = 3.5	83 = 2.8	76 = 2.1	69 = 1.4	62 = 0.7
89 = 3.4	82 = 2.7	75 = 2.0	68 = 1.3	61 ≥ no credit