



HSTAA 213: HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

Professor Margaret O'Mara (she/her/hers)
Department of History
University of Washington
Winter 2021
Online, MW 2:30-3:30 (synch and asynch, see note below)

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This is a class on the history of the American presidency and the men who have occupied the office since 1789. We explore the office's origins and evolution, significant presidents and their times, and how historical sources and methods can contextualize America's political present.

Format:

We will meet every week for a synchronous discussion/work session on **Wednesday from 2:30-3:30 PT**. This will be immediately followed by 30-40 minutes of open office hours where students can choose to stay online to continue discussion with the professor.

On some but not all weeks, you will have small-group work meetings on **Monday from 2:30-3:30 PT**. Recognizing that remote learners may have geographic and other life constraints, synchronous sessions are optional, although strongly encouraged.

Plan to spend 3.5-5 hours per week in "class" (synchronous sessions and watching lectures and other media on your own time) and another 5 hours per week reading, writing, posting, etc.

Auditors are welcome, but synchronous sessions and online discussions are for registered undergraduate students only.

Learning goals:

- A refined understanding of how the office of the American presidency has changed over time in relation to broader economic, political, demographic, and geopolitical transformations;
- Sharpened critical thinking and writing about history, including ability to distinguish different types of sources (primary, secondary) and analyze their context and meaning;
- An ability to apply this historical awareness to understanding present-day political, economic, and social structures; and
- Knowing sources and methods for discerning truth and separating fact from fiction.

Readings:

You are not required to purchase texts for this course. Your only course costs will be renting two streaming films (total cost about \$8), and you are welcome to watch together with class colleagues and share the expense, or the popcorn. All other required readings and audio/video are free and in an **electronic course pack** available to enrolled students and auditors on the course Canvas website by the start of Winter Quarter. Expect to read 75-100 pages per week (or multimedia sources that take approximately the same amount of time to consume). To obtain access to all these sources, please make sure you are signed into your computer with your UWnet ID.

Curveballs:

This course is happening in extraordinary times. I may revise or substitute readings, assignments, content as news cycles demand and student interest allows. Overall workload will remain the same.

Grading:

I am adopting a new approach to grading this year, prompted by the constraints and opportunities of the current moment and my desire for you to have an engaging intellectual experience. While you are expected to keep up with your work, some deadlines are flexible and all grades are interim until the end of the quarter.

You have suggested due dates for your four papers. When you submit at the suggested time, you will receive an interim grade and some feedback from the course's graduate grader. There are no penalties for late assignments, although we will not be able to provide narrative feedback on assignments submitted after the suggested due date. If you are dissatisfied with your interim grade on the first three papers, you may use feedback to revise and resubmit at the end of the quarter; you will either receive the same or better grade for the assignment. (If you're happy with what you got, you don't need to do anything, and your interim grade will become a final one automatically.)

Your discussion posts have suggested due dates of Thursday 5pm the week they are assigned, but you also may add them late. These are ungraded assignments and there are not penalties for late posting, although it may be most interesting and lively for you to be posting in the week when others are in conversation on the string as well.

The one hard deadline is the group video project.

While this schedule is designed to give you maximum flexibility and discretion over how and where you do your work, keep in mind that the assignments have been designed to be completed over the full quarter. It is up to you to keep up so that you are able to complete them to your satisfaction by the quarter's end. Success in this class will also depend on staying engaged with discussion, chats, and group work throughout the term.

If you have any concerns about your work or progress (e.g., "c'mon, prof, what's my grade, really?"), make an online appointment with me so we can chat more about your situation 1-1. Bottom line: I want you to engage with and enjoy this class, leave with lasting, useful knowledge, and make a positive contribution to your academic and preprofessional goals. Let's work together to make that happen.

Assignments:

1. Four essays (15% each x 4 = 60% of final grade): Short, footnoted papers of 1000-1500 words (or 4-6 double-spaced pages) that consider reading and lecture content and respond to the professor's prompts. The suggested due dates for the first three (see below) are at the end of Week 2, Week 4, and Week 6. The last paper is due at the end of Week 10. If you are dissatisfied with your grade on any of the first three essays, you may rewrite and resubmit for the same or potentially higher grade.
2. One group video project (10%) presenting a major theme in American presidential history with a popular audience in mind, due at the end of Week 8. The grade for this will be a combination of self-evaluation, peer evaluation by your fellow group members, and the professor's assessment of the final product.
3. Weekly discussion posts (20%) are ungraded research-based and primary-source analysis assignments posted weekly, with suggested due dates of Thursdays 5pm PT.
4. Class engagement (10%) is measured by consistent engagement throughout the quarter in full-class and small-group discussion online and during synchronous discussion sessions. Come to each synchronous class session with 1) one "talking point" and 2) one question about the reading for that session, ready to add them to

the class chat and to speak to those points among a small group or in the full class. If you cannot be in the synchronous session, you may email these questions and talking points to the instructor by 2:30PM PT the day of the class.

This course is W optional; if you'd like a W credit for this course, you can expand one of the first three essays into a 12-15 page paper, incorporating instructor feedback, and submit it to the professor via email by Friday of exam week at 5PM.

There are no midterm or final examinations in this course.

Course schedule (summary):

Week	Subject	Assignments
Week 1	George Washington and the Invention of the Presidency The Presidency and Slavery	[Discussion board posting of online projects and class engagement are ongoing through all weeks of the term]
Week 2	Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and the Two-Party System Andrew Jackson and the Populist Presidency	Essay #1 due 5PM Friday 1/15
Week 3	The Disunion of the 1850s Abraham Lincoln and the Unlikely Presidency	
Week 4	Johnson, Grant, and the Reconstruction-Era Presidency The Gilded Age Presidency	Essay #2 due 5PM Friday 1/29
Week 5	William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and the Art of Modern Campaigning	
Week 6	The New Deal Presidency America at War	Essay #3 due 5PM Friday 2/12
Week 7	Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Cold War Presidency The Television President	
Week 8	Richard Nixon and the Imperial Presidency	Group Video Project due 5PM Friday 2/26

Week	Subject	Assignments
Week 9	The Conservative Ascendancy: Reagan, Bush, and Clinton	
Week 10	9/11 and the New World Order Obama to Trump: Hope and Change	Essay #4 due 5pm Friday 3/12

Readings and post prompts for each week can be found on Canvas on the module for that week.

Each week, **WATCH and READ prior to Wednesday’s class session**. Come to that session with 1) one “talking point” and 2) one question for the professor based on what you have watched and read. I’ll explain in the introductory video (Welcome to HSTAA 213) what that should look like. If you are unable to be in class for any reason, you may email any talking points and assigned coursework by 5pm PT Wednesday to me for 1-1 feedback and discussion.

Each week’s **POST assignment has a suggested deadline of Thursday at 5PM**. Posts should be around 250 words each (ok to do more or less, as long as you can get your point across). Late posting is ok, although it may be most interesting and lively for you to be posting in the week when others are in conversation on the string as well.

Course schedule (week-by-week):

Week One

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: Welcome to HSTAA 213
- 2) LECTURE: The Invention of the Presidency

LISTEN

- 1) [Erica Armstrong Dunbar discusses the story of Ona Judge](#) (10 min)

READ

- 1) [Diary of George Washington](#) (browse 4-5 entries of your choice)
- 2) [Washington’s Farewell Address in the U.S. Senate](#)
- 3) [Nicholas Guyatt, “1619, Revisited”](#)
- 4) Ron Judd, [“Washington is named for a president who owned slaves. Should it be?”](#)

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself—via text, video, audio—on our class Introductions page on Canvas.

CHOOSE YOUR GROUP

By the end of the first week of class, sign up for membership in one of the ten small groups created for this class (The Washingtons, The Jeffersons, The Jacksons, The Lincolns, The Grants, The Roosevelts, The Trumans, The Kennedys, The Nixons, The Reagans). Each group has a maximum of six members. Groups will work together on the video project as well as meet occasionally throughout the quarter for other discussions and small assignments. You are welcome to meet as a group as often as you wish.

POST: THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested deadline Thursday 5pm.

Week Two

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: Adams, Jefferson, & the Escalation of Partisanship
- 2) LECTURE: Jackson & the Populist Presidency

READ/LISTEN

- 1) Joanne B. Freeman, "Dueling as Politics" (PDF on Canvas)
- 2) Notorious B.I.G., "[The Ten Crack Commandments](#)" (explicit lyrics)
- 3) Lin-Manuel Miranda, "[The Ten Duel Commandments](#)"
- 4) Jeffrey Pasley, "The Cheese and the Words" (PDF on Canvas)
- 5) William Cronon, "[Learning to Do Historical Research: What are the Documents?](#)"

POST: ANDREW JACKSON

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested deadline Thursday 5pm.

ASSIGNMENT

Essay #1 suggested due date Friday 5PM. Assignment details on Canvas.

Week Three

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: The Disunion of the 1850s
- 2) LECTURE: Abraham Lincoln & the Unlikely Presidency
- 3) "[Frederick Douglass' Descendants Read His Fourth of July Speech](#)" (7 min)

LISTEN

- 1) "[The Cotton Empire](#)," *Scene On Radio* (42 min)

READ

- 1) Heather Cox Richardson, "The West as a Land of Promise" (PDF on Canvas)
- 2) David Blight, "The Dead and the Living" (PDF on Canvas)

POST: THE CIVIL WAR IN POPULAR MEMORY

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested deadline Thursday 5pm.

Week Four

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: Johnson, Grant, Reconstruction
- 2) LECTURE: The Gilded Age Presidency

LISTEN

- 1) [Eric Foner of the Unresolved Legacy of Reconstruction](#), NPR *Fresh Air*, 2006

READ

- 1) Richard White, "Information, Markets, and Corruption: Transcontinental Railroads in the Gilded Age" (PDF on Canvas)
- 2) Inaugural Addresses of U.S. Grant (PDF on Canvas)

POST: THE ELECTION OF 1876

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested deadline Thursday 5pm.

ASSIGNMENT

Essay #1 suggested due date Friday 5PM. Assignment details on Canvas.

Week Five

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: McKinley v Bryan
- 2) LECTURE: Teddy!
- 3) LECTURE: The 1912 Campaign

~~READ~~ NO READING – MOVIE WEEK!

Choose and watch **one** of the following films about American presidents and/or their times. All available on multiple streaming services for rent (\$3-4), and most free at the UW Libraries.

- 1) [Jefferson in Paris](#) (Dir. James Ivory, 1995)
- 2) [Lincoln](#) (Dir. Steven Spielberg, 2012)
- 3) [Amistad](#) (Dir. Steven Spielberg, 1997)
- 4) [Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter](#) (Dir. Timur Bekmambetov, 2012)

POST: PRESIDENTS ON FILM

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested deadline Thursday 5pm.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Short email to instructor by Friday 5PM, telling me two things:

- 1) How you feel you've done in class thus far, assessing strengths and weaknesses, and outlining your goals for the remainder of the quarter.
 - 2) One thing you've learned in this course so far that you have been able to apply in another class, or that's helped you better understand or contextualize what's in the news.
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Week Six

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: The New Deal Presidency
- 2) LECTURE: America at War

READ/LISTEN

- 1) [Four speeches from 1912 \(audio/transcript\)](#): Theodore Roosevelt, "The Liberty of the People"; Woodrow Wilson, "On Labor"; William H. Taft, "On Popular Unrest"; Eugene Debs on "the monstrous system" of capitalism
- 2) Franklin Roosevelt, [First Inaugural Address](#), 1933
- 3) Roosevelt, [Fireside Chat on "Court-Packing"](#), 1937
- 4) Roosevelt, [Fireside Chat "On Sacrifice,"](#) 1942

POST: RADIO AS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested deadline Thursday 5pm.

ASSIGNMENT

Essay #3 suggested due date Friday 5pm. Prompt on Canvas.

Week Seven

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: The Cold War Presidency
- 2) LECTURE: The Television President
- 3) [Richard Nixon, Television Address \("Checkers" speech\)](#), 1952 (30 min)
- 4) [Kennedy vs. Nixon: the first 1960 presidential debate](#) (58 min)

READ/LISTEN

- 1) William Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower*, Chapter 15 (PDF on Canvas)
- 2) Dwight D. Eisenhower, [Farewell Address to the American People](#) (listen to audio and read DDE's reading copy)
- 3) John E. Miller, "The Making of Theodore White's 'Making of the President 1960'" (PDF on Canvas)

POST: POLITICAL ADVERTISING THROUGH THE YEARS

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested deadline Thursday 5PM.

Week Eight

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: Richard Nixon and the Imperial Presidency
- 2) [Summer of Judgement: The Watergate Hearings](#) (60 min)
- 3) [Summer of Judgement: The Impeachment Hearings](#) (60 min)

OPTIONAL EXTRA WATCH

- 1) [All the President's Men](#) (Dir. Alan J. Pakula, 1976)
- 2) [Roger Ebert's review of ATPM](#), 1976

POST: PRESIDENTIAL CONCESSIONS AND FAREWELLS

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested due date Thursday 5PM.

ASSIGNMENT

Group video project due Friday 5PM. Group should email video URL to Prof. O'Mara and each member should post self/peer assessment on Canvas for credit.

Week Nine

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: Reagan Revolution
- 2) LECTURE: Clinton and the New Democrats
- 3) [The War Room](#) (Dir. Hegedus & Pennebaker, 1993, 96 min)

READ

- 1) "Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce," The White House, c. 1995 (PDF on Canvas)
- 2) Philip Weiss, "[Clinton Crazy](#)," *The New York Times Magazine*, 1997

POST: GENDER, POWER, AND THE PRESIDENCY

Prompt on Canvas. Suggested due date Thursday 5PM.

Week Ten

WATCH

- 1) LECTURE: 9/11 and the New World Order
- 2) LECTURE: Hope and Change, from Obama to Trump to Biden

READ

- 1) Lawrence Wright, "[The Counter-Terrorist](#)," *The New Yorker*, 2002

- 2) Mark Singer, "[Trump Solo](#)," *The New Yorker*, 1997
- 3) Robin D. G. Kelley, "[Births of a Nation, Redux](#)," *The Boston Review*, 2020

POST: COMMEMORATING, RENAMING, REMEMBERING
Prompt on Canvas. Suggested due date Thursday 5pm.

ASSIGNMENT

Paper #4 due Friday 5pm. Assignment details on Canvas.

There is no final examination in this class.

Additional Information

I am delighted to have all of you in this class with me, and I'm looking forward not only to sharing what I know of this subject but for you to become as engaged and excited about the study of history as I am. My intent is to work with you, wherever you might be in your learning curve, to make this a productive and information-rich experience that leaves you with new knowledge and skills that translate into multiple academic and professional environments. Assignments are designed with these goals in mind, as are the policies I have developed to guide our collective classroom experience.

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.

Writing Guidelines and Resources

I have a number of handouts and links available at <https://www.margaretomara.com/resources>. Some of these are by me, others are by other professors and university centers. Please read and refer to these as needed, and feel free to share with others as long as you note where you found it.

Fair Use

A number of the things I ask my students to do in class involve pulling digital materials from other places online. When repurposing this content, especially when using for a graded class assignment and *especially* when you plan to also publish online, do so with copyright law and fair use guidelines in mind. The UW Libraries has a useful and comprehensive guide for this: https://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/copyright/fair_use.

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: <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/student-code-of-conduct/>.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or uwdrs@uw.edu or disability.uw.edu. DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

Religious Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available [here](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](#).

Meeting with Me

I am available in a number of ways to connect with you 1-1. You can reach me via Canvas mail or regular email and we can converse that way. You also can sign up for my office hours on Zoom (see page 1 for the URL to book an appointment). Come see me to talk about questions you have about class content or assignments, or because you'd like an opportunity to talk further about the topics of this class. You do not have to have a problem or question to schedule a meeting, and you also are welcome to bring a friend if you'd like to talk to me together.

Grade Scale

Each assignment is worth a certain percentage, totaling 100%. I convert the total into a four-point scale at the end of the quarter following this rubric:

$\geq 95\% = 4.0$	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 \geq no credit