

The George Washington University
History 176
History of the Modern American Presidency
Fall Semester, 2004
Tuesdays, Thursdays, 2:20-3:35
2020 K St—Room 26

Professor Edward D. Berkowitz
Phillips Hall 329
202-994-8174 (direct line); 202-994-6230 (departmental office)
ber@gwu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays, 1:10-2:10

This class uses the device of biography to investigate the lives of eight influential twentieth century American presidents. Through a series of lectures, readings, and discussions, the class seeks to illuminate major themes of twentieth century politics and to explore the links between politics and policy.

For this semester, the course concentrates on Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton. We will also focus on the historical meaning of the 2004 presidential election.

Requirements

The instructor asks that students read six books, take hourly examinations, and complete two writing assignments.

The books are as follows:

John Milton Cooper Jr., The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt
William E. Pemberton, Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan
Thomas C. Reeves, A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy
Joe Klein, The Natural
Robert B. Dallek, Portrait of a President
Richard D. Polenberg, The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1954

The first hourly examination will take place in class on Thursday, October 21 and the second hourly examination will take place in class on Tuesday, December 7. There will be no final.

The first writing assignment will be due in class on Tuesday, September 23. It will consist of a five page essay that marks an attempt to put the 2004 presidential election in historical perspective and predicts a winner based on historical factors.

The second writing assignment will be due in class on Tuesday, November 23. Please note that

this date is the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and no late papers will be accepted. This assignment involves an analytic book review, five to fifteen pages in length, of a major biography of a twentieth century president. I will circulate a list of books from which to choose. The book that you select must be from the list or it must be cleared with me.

All papers must be double-spaced and word processed. You may, if you wish, send me the paper, in word format, as an e-mail attachment but you must take responsibility that I actually receive the paper. I reserve the right to lower the grade of any paper that I receive late, regardless of the reason that the paper is late.

Grading

Grades for the course will be computed by averaging four letter grades as follows:

First Hourly—20%
Second Hourly—20%
First Writing Assignment—20%
Second Writing Assignment—20%
Quality of class participation--20%

Schedule of Lectures, Discussions, Writing and Reading Assignments

Week of August 31
No assignment
Tuesday, August 31—No class.
Thursday, September 2—Orientation

Week of September 7
Assignment: Read Cooper, Chapters 1-12.
September 7: Background on the Presidency
September 9: Further Background

Week of September 14
Assignment: Read Cooper, Chapters 13-21.
September 14: The Rise of Teddy Roosevelt
September 16: No Class

Week of September 21
Assignment: **Complete paper on the 2004 election and bring to class on September 23**
September 21: The Presidency of Teddy Roosevelt
September 23: The Rise of Woodrow Wilson

Week of September 28

Assignment: Read Polenberg, pp. 1-35.
September 28: The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson
September 30: The Republican Revival

Week of October 5
Assignment: Read Polenberg, pp. 36-232.
October 5: The Ascendance of FDR
October 7: FDR and the New Deal

Week of October 12
Assignment: Read Reeves (entire).
October 12: In the Shadow of FDR
October 14: JFK and the Postwar World

Week of October 19
Assignment: Study for Hourly
October 19: The Travails of JFK
October 21: **Hourly Examination in Class.**

Week of October 26
Assignment: Read Dallek (entire)
October 26: The Rise of LBJ
October 28: LBJ and the Great Society

Week of November 2
Assignment: Read material in blackboard
November 2: Richard Nixon
November 4: Richard Nixon and Watergate

Week of November 9
Assignment: Read Pemberton (entire)
November 9: Jimmy Carter
November 11: Ronald Reagan

Week of November 16
Assignment: Read Klein (entire)
November 16: The First Bush
November 18: Bill Clinton

Week of November 23
Assignment: Write Analytic Book Review
November 23: The Current President. **Analytic Book Review due at start of class.**
November 25: **No class.**

Week of November 30

Assignment: No assignment

November 30: The Meaning of the Current Election

December 2: Review and Summary

Week of December 7

Assignment: No Assignment

December 7: **Second Hourly Examination in Class**

Analytic Book Review

I would like you to select a major biography of a twentieth century president and write an analytic review of it. In your review, you might consider how the author portrays the particular president's strengths and weaknesses and how historical forces shaped that president's term in office.

Here are some suggestions as to authors and subjects:

Edmund Morris on Theodore Roosevelt; Arthur Link on Woodrow Wilson; Frank Freidel, James McGregor Burns or Arthur Schlesinger on FDR; Ted Sorensen, Arthur Schlesinger, Robert Dallek, Nigel Hamilton or Herbert Parmet on JFK; Robert Dallek or Robert Caro on LBJ; Herbert Parmet or Steve Ambrose on Nixon; Clinton on Clinton; Lou Cannon on Reagan.

Please talk about your choice of book with me.