

# **The American Presidents**

**HIST 5397.01**

Mondays, 6:00-8:45, CAS 216

3 Credit Hours

The American Presidents offers an in-depth study of historical scholarship associated with the presidency of the United States from the late eighteenth century to the present.

It is designed to help graduate students gain mastery over the history of individual presidents, and the dynamic institution itself. It does so by exploring the evolving research questions historians ask about those issues and the historiographic debates that arise in answering them.

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Spring 2024 Student Hours  
Mondays 4:00-6:00  
Or by Appointment

## **Course Objectives**

This course uses the lens of Arthur Schlesinger's concept of the "Imperial Presidency" to explore shifting historiographic debates surrounding the institution and also popular conceptions of presidents. It seeks to answer this research question: To what extent does the concept of the "Imperial Presidency" influence academic historians' debates from its publication in the Watergate Era until the present, and what interpretive frameworks has it given rise to? Students will be introduced to wide-ranging forms of historical analysis, and you will begin to apply these varying forms of historical inquiry to your own evolving approach. Assigned course readings will center first on situating Schlesinger's "Imperial Presidency" argument, and subsequently on important monographs or synthesis works highlighting significant presidencies.

This course will strengthen your abilities to develop critical and original analysis of historical processes, events, and monographs associated with the American Presidency. In addition to studying Schlesinger, important monographs, and synthesis works; class participants will identify and array individual journal articles around the common readings and historiographic debates. Each meeting students will find one recently published article (within the last twenty years) from a major peer-reviewed journal on the topic and briefly assess it for the class. I will also train you to write well-developed discussion lesson plans and we will all take turns leading discussions. In these ways students will gain analytical tools to achieve their intellectual, personal, and professional goals. Thus, in accordance with the Student Learning Outcomes for this course, by the end of the semester you will develop:

- Critical thinking skills that reflect an ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information while improving creative thinking, innovation, and inquiry.
- Communication skills that reflect the ability to develop, interpret, and express your own ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
- A sense of social responsibility that reflects intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in local, regional, national, and global communities.
- A sense of personal responsibility in your ability to connect individual choices, actions, and

consequences to ethical decision-making.

More specifically, in accordance with the Student Learning Outcomes as they pertain to the material in this course, students will:

- Understand the general social, cultural, and political history of American presidents from the late eighteenth century to the present.
- Delineate the broad historiographical debates and issues that have defined the American presidency.
- Develop the ability to think critically about historical monographs, including the merits or demerits of their source base, the quality of their arguments, and their contributions to the broader field of historiography, in and beyond the American presidency.
- Discuss the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that historians employ in analyzing historical processes.
- Identify the various lived experiences of Americans and their interactions with the presidency in all arenas of life, including the social, political, cultural, economic, and transnational.
- Analyze the effects of the presidency on the lives of Americans and other humans.
- Analyze and be able to identify the ways in which Schlesinger's concept of the Imperial Presidency shaped, modified, or moved beyond prior ideologies and paradigms.
- Analyze what the history of the American presidency reveals about world history and historical process.
- Identify how trends in American political history can inform our understanding of history, cultures, societies, and peoples in other parts of the world.
- Compare and contrast the ways in which different societies conceptualize and construct identities within terms of race, class, gender, ideology, and other categories of analysis.

### **Required Readings**

Students are required to complete **all** the readings for the course. As this is a graduate readings seminar, you are expected to complete one book a week. Each book is available as an ebook through the library. Please note that **all books are available digitally through the library**, so you are expected to have access to all readings and to be able to complete them for class without the delays that purchases and orders can sometimes create. Beginning with our second meeting, you will also choose and download one recently published peer reviewed article on that week's topic from an online database accessible to UTT students.

### **Course Requirements**

There are **three major elements** that comprise your grade in this seminar-style course: attendance and participation; weekly writing assignments and lesson plans; and a 7000-8500 word historiographical essay.

**I. Attendance and participation (15%):** Graduate students are expected to attend every class session. Participation means coming to class after reading and taking notes on all assigned materials, and speaking about what you gathered. Students will each lead discussion during at least two class sessions, and will verbally participate in each class session. **Two unexcused absences will result in a zero (0) for your semester attendance and participation grade.** Participation also involves

courtesy. Healthy debate is both anticipated and encouraged, and our classroom prizes informality and discussion. However, disruptive behavior, disrespect towards fellow students or the professor, personal insults, or offensive language will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade, first for the day's class, and, if such patterns continue, for the course.

**II. Weekly Assignments and Lesson Plans (15%):** Each week you will write and turn in one of two types of assignment. Most weeks you will type a short STEAM Analysis Paper (a formal method of dissecting an article taught in session one) of an article you have chosen related to that week's common assigned reading and turn it in. Some weeks you will prepare and turn in a typed lesson plan of discussion questions covering the assigned readings and lead the class discussion with my guidance. I will train the students in a method of preparing such lesson plans and distribute the rubric I will use to grade them. I reserve the right to request either Canvas submissions or hard copies of these papers but am open to department and class culture on this and other issues.

**III. Historiographic Essay (10% for Annotated Bibliography; 60% for final paper)**

An historiographic essay based primarily on journal articles chosen from outside the common class readings will make up the final 70% of your grade. These articles will include the weekly articles chosen by yourself and the other students during the semester, but must also be supplemented by additional articles found by you and tailored to your particular interest. This paper comprises 7000-8500 words in length and is due at the end of the semester. This essay will analyze the state of research in a particular subject or area of the history of the American Presidents and will be based on a subject/conceptual framework that interests you. To aid the student in selecting a topic or/and theme, you are expected to email your topic idea or meet with Dr. Liles to discuss it by **week 7**. You will turn in an annotated bibliography of the works we have selected in **week 11**. This annotated bibliography will be worth 10% of the total paper grade, with the final paper making up the remaining 60% of the grade. We will discuss what an annotated bibliography is (and is not) as the semester progresses. The final paper will be due **by 7:00AM on Monday, May 9**. There will be a guide on what a historiographic essay is, and some of the methods and strategies for writing one, posted to Canvas.

**Grades**

Grading will occur on the traditional scale (A=90-100%; B=80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=0-59%). Based on the assignments outlined above, your grade breaks down as follows:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Weekly Assignments and Lesson Plans	15%
Historiographic Essay's Annotated Bibliography	10%
<u>Final Historiographic Essay (7000-8500 words)</u>	<u>60%</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Attendance and Makeup Policy**

Because this is a course that only meets once a week, you must make every effort to be in class regularly. As outlined above, attendance in the class is **mandatory**, and more than two unexcused absences will result in a **zero (0)** for attendance and participation. In cases of **emergency** (i.e., serious illness, family emergencies, etc.), however, an absence may be excused. The student should make sure to consult with the professor as soon as possible in order to provide advance warning of absences where possible. There are no exams that will require makeup in this course. However, you must put forth every effort to submit papers on time. Each day the paper is late will result in a reduction of one-letter grade from the student's paper. If the paper is one week late, it will not be accepted, and the student will receive an **automatic zero** for the assignment. In the event a student needs a paper extension due to serious illness, family emergency, etc., they must make every effort to speak with the professor in advance, keeping in mind that paper extensions remain the professor's prerogative. In the event a student has to miss an oral presentation for medical, family, or university-related reasons, the professor and the student can arrange a time to present their work to the class, at the professor's prerogative.

### **Syllabus Notice**

The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus; however, you will be given ample warning to any possible changes, and no changes will be made in ways that negatively affect your expected deadlines.

**UT Tyler Honor Code** Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. Students Rights and Responsibilities To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

## **Semester Schedule**

### **Week 2 (January 22):** Course Introduction

STEAM Paper Exercise

How to write a Discussion Lesson Plan

Instructions on finding scholarly articles

### **Week 3 (January 29): The Imperial Presidency I**

Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).  
Ch 1 "What the Fathers Intended" through Ch 7 "The Presidency Rampant"

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

#### **Week 4 (February 5): The Imperial Presidency II**

Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

Ch 8 “The Revolutionary Presidency: Washington” through Epilogue “After the Imperial Presidency”

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

#### **Week 5 (February 12): The Founding Presidency**

James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994). (Please read all)

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.

#### **Week 6 (February 19): The Early Republic**

Gordon S. Wood, *Friends Divided: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017) (Please read all)

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

#### **Week 7 (February 26): The Jacksonian Period**

Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy from Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

**\*\*Historiographic Essay Topic Due\*\***

#### **Week 8 (March 4): Lincoln**

Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010). (Please read all)

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

#### **Week 9 (March 11): Spring Break, No Class!**

#### **Week 10 (March 18): Progressivism**

H.W. Brands, *Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Times Books, 2003)

Louis Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Times Books, 2002)

(Please read all of both)

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

**Week 11 (March 25): The New Deal**

Roy Jenkins, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: Times Books, 2003).

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

**\*\*Annotated Bibliography Due\*\***

**Week 12 (April 1): The Great Society**

Julian E. Zelizer, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

**Week 13 (April 8): Watergate**

Elizabeth Drew, *Richard M. Nixon* (New York: Times Books, 2007).

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

**Week 14 (April 15): The Reagan Revolution**

Jacob Weisberg, *Ronald Reagan* (New York: Times Books, 2016).

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

**Week 15 (April 22): The Clinton Era**

Michael Tomasky, *Bill Clinton* (New York: Times Books, 2017).

\*Students bring one relevant article from a major peer reviewed journal to present to class.\*

**Week 16 (April 29): War on Terror**

James Mann, *George W. Bush* (New York: Times Books, 2015)

**Week 17 (May 6): Finals Week**, Historiographic essay due at 7AM on Monday, May 6.