SYLLABUS

HSTRY 288/HSTAA 290

Elections as History
University of Washington
Autumn 2016
MW 1:30-3:20 – ART 006

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Every four years—including this year—the battle to win the U.S. presidency captures the attention of American voters, reporters, and observers all over the world. There are few historical events as consuming of public attention, and as exhaustively analyzed. In this seminar, we will place today’s candidates and debates in historical context by exploring the evolution of presidential campaigns and candidates since the late nineteenth century. We address how shifting demographics, market changes, and social issues changed the composition of the major national parties over time, how successive generations of “new” media reshaped how to run and win, and the personalities and social movements that remade the political landscape. Through readings of primary and secondary sources, group discussion and project work, and original research, our work in this seminar will also give you practice in the basic skills of critical reading, data analysis, and communication (both verbal and written) that are central to the practice of history.

READINGS

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

1. Brett Flehinger, The 1912 Election and the Power of Progressivism
3. Joe McGinniss, The Selling of the President 1968
4. Anne Kornblut, Notes from the Cracked Ceiling: What it Will Take for a Woman to Win
5. HSTRY 288/HSTAA 290 Course Pack containing articles, chapters, and primary sources listed on this syllabus. Table of Contents with detailed references found at the end of this syllabus.
This course has an intensive reading load and students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss all readings and place them in conversation with one another. Please read ahead on weeks when we have lighter reading loads or a research week. Readings listed for a given week should be completed by the date under which they are listed on the syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Thoughtful, historically informed, and courteous engagement in every class discussion, reflecting completion of assigned readings (30%);

2. Writing and posting a reader’s reflection of at least 75 words per week to the online discussion board (30%), considering all the week’s readings (both M and W), to be posted no later than 10PM on Tuesday evenings;

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. Working in “campaign strategy” teams to create a short in-class presentation describing the pros and cons of a declared candidate for U.S. President in any election prior to 2000, to be presented on Monday and Wednesday, November 21 and 23 (10%);

5. One two-page research paper proposal (required; credit/no credit) due in class on Monday, November 28, and

6. One final 8-10 page research paper on the history and significance of a twentieth-century election of your choice (30%) due to the professor on Wednesday, December 14th by 10PM.

** EXTRA CREDIT: Watch and write a review of a documentary or theatrical film about modern U.S. electoral politics. (The film must be different than those we watch as a group. A suggested filmography is at the end of this syllabus; if you have a different film you would like to review, please discuss with me first.) Post review to the class discussion board. You can earn up to 2% extra credit per film, with a maximum of two films per student. Sign up with me to review; first come, first served on choice of films. **

There are no midterm or final exams. 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**

**W Sept 28**   **Introduction: the practice of politics, and the practice of history**

*Discuss syllabus and assignments*

*In-class exercise on different types of primary sources*

**AFTER-CLASS RESEARCH EXERCISE:** 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 Friday, September 30**. (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 class on Monday October 3. This is an ungraded exercise but will count towards your general participation grade.

**M Oct 3**   **Spectacle and partisanship in nineteenth century elections**

Jeffrey L. Pasley, “The Cheese and the Words”
Mark Brewin, “The History and Meaning of the Election Night Bonfire”

*Discussion of the Election of 1800*

**W Oct 5**   **Political citizenship without the vote**

Michael McGerr, “Political Style and Women's Power, 1830-1930”
Frederick Douglass, “Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester,” July 5, 1852

**M Oct 10**   **Populism and the press in the 1896 campaign**

Mary Lease, “In Defense of Home and Hearth”
Speeches to the 1896 Democratic National Convention: William Jennings Bryan, Ben Tillman, David Bennett Hill (audio of Bryan found online at [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354))
William D. Harpine, “Playing to the Press in McKinley's Front Porch Campaign”

*In-class source exercise: newspapers and political cartoons*

**W Oct 12**   **The progressive campaign of 1912**

Flehinger, *The 1912 Campaign and the Power of Progressivism*
M Oct 17   NO CLASS (campaign strategy group meeting [mandatory] during class time; head start on Wednesday reading)

W Oct 19   Interest groups and the public image

Flehinger, *The 1912 Campaign and the Power of Progressivism*  
Brian Balogh, “Mirrors of Desires”  
Thomas J. Heflin, “Warning Against the ‘Roman Catholic Party’”

M Oct 24   Franklin Roosevelt and his critics

Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, pp. 3-81  
*In-class source exercise: radio*

W Oct 26   Franklin Roosevelt and his critics

Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, pp. 82-123, 242-268

M Oct 31   The Solid South

Kari Fredrickson, “Setting the Postwar Agenda” and “The Dixiecrat Presidential Campaign”  
Harry S Truman, “Message on Civil Rights,” February 2, 1948  
George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness”  
Joseph Crespino, “Ronald Reagan’s South: The Tangled Roots of Modern Southern Conservatism”

W Nov 2    NO CLASS (campaign strategy group meeting [mandatory] during class time; head start on next week’s reading)

Mon Nov 7   Redefining conservatism and liberalism

Kathryn Olmsted, “Revolution and Reaction”  
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “The Restoration of Radical Nerve”  
David Greenberg, “The California Conservatives: Nixon as Populist”

Wed Nov 9   Were the polls right?

Sarah Igo, “Polling the Average Populace”  
*Discuss election night coverage by different press outlets, review polling data*

Mon Nov 14  The television president

Theodore H. White, “Round Two: The Television Debates”  
McGinniss, *The Selling of the President*, pp. xi-61, 171-186  
*In-class film: Primary* (1960)
Wed Nov 16  The television president

McGinniss, *The Selling of the President*, pp. 62-168  
*In-class source exercise:* campaign advertising at www.livingroomcandidate.org

Optional but encouraged event, evening of Wed Nov 16:  
The 2016 Election in Global Context, a panel discussion featuring Professor O’Mara with Profs. Ray Jonas, Vicente Rafael, and Adam Warren of the UW History Department, Walker Ames Room, Kane Hall, 6:30PM

Mon Nov 21  The legacy of George Wallace

Dan T. Carter, “‘Stand Up For America’” and “Nixon, Wallace, and the Southernization of American Politics”  
*Campaign strategy group presentations*

Wed Nov 23  The Southern Strategy

*In-class film:* Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story

M Nov 28  New media

Timothy Crouse, “On the Bus,” and “Coming to Power”  
Hunter S. Thompson, “September”

W Nov 30  New Democrats

Matt Bai, “‘I Do Not Think That is a Fair Question’”  
William Galston and Elaine Kamarck, “The Politics of Evasion”  
Margaret O’Mara, “The CNN President”

M Dec 5  Madame President

Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, pp. 1-88  

W Dec 7  What’s next?

Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, pp. 89-254  
*Discussion of final projects and course evaluations*

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. I regularly will call on students, so be prepared! 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; each unexcused absence will lower your class discussion mark by 1% of the total class 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 home in on issues in the reading that you find particularly interesting and provocative, and for you and your peers to set our discussion agenda. Questions must be posted no later than **10PM Tuesdays** in order to allow your fellow students to read them in a timely fashion. I also welcome additional links to substantive contemporary political commentary you find online, but postings must be historically informed. I will take down extremely partisan posts. 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 for the week’s work.

**Group Presentation.** I will group the class into small strategy groups who each will assess the political strengths and weaknesses of a man or woman who ran for president or vice president during the twentieth century, drawing from primary and secondary sources on this individual that are available online and in the library. I will assign a candidate to each group. Your work product will be a ten-minute, timed presentation drafted as if it is a “pitch” to party leaders who are considering whether this candidate would be a fitting nominee.

**THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

**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.

**Final Paper.** Your final assignment is an 8-10 pp. research paper on the history and significance of a twentieth-century election of your choice. You may choose any election, and should be able to make a case about its significance to broader economic and social history. This is not a
narrative paper (who ran, who won, what happened when) but an analytic one, showing the key issues animating the political debate, the partisan structures and demographics shaping the outcome, and the role of changing media in shaping both message and strategy. The essay should use both primary and secondary source materials from the UW Libraries and reputable online sources. The paper should be emailed to Prof. O’Mara no later than 10PM on Wednesday, December 14.

EXTRA-CREDIT FILMOGRAPHY:

Here are suggested films for review; only one person may review each film. Sign up with Prof. O’Mara at any time in the quarter to do so. The latest date you may post a review is Monday, December 12.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)
Citizen Kane (1941)
All the King’s Men (1949)
A Face in the Crowd (1957)
The Manchurian Candidate (1962)
The Candidate (1972)
Bob Roberts (1992)
The War Room (1993)
A Perfect Candidate (1996)
Wag the Dog (1997)
Primary Colors (1998)
Bulworth (1998)
The Contender (2000)
Frost/Nixon (2008)

CLASS POLICIES

LATENESS AND ABSENCES: It 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 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 the statements and guidelines
found on my website that outline acceptable practices and procedures. For clarification of these
standards and disciplinary penalties, see

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.
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7. Speeches to the 1896 Democratic National Convention: William Jennings Bryan, Ben Tillman, David Bennett Hill (audio of Bryan found online at [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354))


23. Matt Bai, “‘I Do Not Think That is a Fair Question’,” from *All the Truth is Out: The Week Politics Went Tabloid* (New York: Knopf, 2014), pp. 118-162.
