Instructor: Edward D. Berkowitz
Phillips 319
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-2:15 or by appointment
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This course uses the lives of the presidents to describe the political history of twentieth century America. The main narrative tool will be biography, with lectures and readings that focus on the individuals who became president in the course of the twentieth century.

Students will be asked to attend two classes each week, to participate actively in the periodic discussion of the readings, to take an in-class examination, and to complete three writing assignments.

**Required readings** for the course include the following:

David McCullough, *Truman*
Theodore White, *The Making of the President 1960*
David Remnick, *The Bridge*
Amity Shlaes, *Coolidge*
Ronald Reagan, *The Diaries of Ronald Reagan*
A. Scott Berg, *Wilson*

**Grades** will be computed in the following manner

- hourly exam, 25%--March 4
- paper on Truman, 25%--March 6
- paper on Reagan, 25%--April 17
- paper comparing Kennedy and Obama, 25%—April 29

Special positive consideration will also be given, at the instructor’s discretion, for exemplary class participation.

No late work will be accepted unless the instructor specifically grants an extension to a particular student. In a similar sense, the exam must be taken on the date it is scheduled (March 4). Exceptions can be made only at the discretion of the instructor.
Learning Objectives

The student who successfully completes this course will

- gain a basic sense of the major themes that have animated twentieth century American politics;
- acquire a knowledge of changing trends in the qualifications for the presidency;
- and gain a historical perspective on the president’s role in the American political system.

Schedule of Lectures, Discussions, Reading Assignments, and Papers

January 14—Organizational Class.

January 16—Some Background on the Presidency

January 21—The Extraordinary Life of Theodore Roosevelt

January 23—Theodore Roosevelt and the Expansion of Executive Power

January 28—The Election of 1912

**January 30—Class discussion of the Berg book on Wilson.** Please have this entire book read by the start of class. Take note of its length and plan accordingly.

February 5—Woodrow Wilson and the Democrats

February 6—Woodrow Wilson and the Problem of Minority Rule

February 11—The Presidency in the Twenties

**February 13—Class discussion of the Shlaes book on Coolidge.** Please have this entire book read by the start of class.

February 18—The Unanticipated Challenge for Franklin Roosevelt

February 21—FDR and the New Deal

February 25—FDR and the Modern World

**February 27—Class Discussion of the McCullough book on Truman. Please have this entire book read by the start of class.**
**March 4—In class examination covering all material through February 27.**

**March 6—Writing assignment due on this date at the start of class—**Use the McCullough book to write a five page essay that answers one of these questions:

*What was the key election in Truman’s pre-presidential career?*

*What accounted for the decline in Truman’s popularity during his second term?*

March 11—Spring Break

March 13—Spring Break

March 18—John F. Kennedy and the Politics of the 1950s

March 20—The Presidency of John F. Kennedy.

**March 25—Class discussion of the White book on the 1960 Election**

Please have the book read by the start of class and be ready to discuss it.

March 27—Lyndon Johnson and the Democratic Congress.

April 1—Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society.

April 3—Richard Nixon and the Politics of the 1950s.

April 8—Watergate and the Presidency

April 10—Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and the Seventies

April 15—Ronald Reagan and the Republican Restoration

April 17—Bill Clinton and the Restatement of Liberalism, **Writing assignment due at the start of this class**—Using the Reagan diaries, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Chicago Tribune write a five page essay on a major policy problem of the Reagan presidency.

April 22—The Bush Presidencies

April 24--**Class discussion of the Remnick book.** Please have the book read by the start of class and be ready to discuss it.

**Writing assignment due on April 29.** In a paper of no more than ten pages compare and contrast the routes that Barack Obama and John F. Kennedy took to the presidency.
The Columbian College also requests that the following information be included in this syllabus:

NOTE: IN ACCORD WITH UNIVERSITY POLICY, THE FINAL EXAM WILL BE GIVEN DURING THE FINAL EXAM PERIOD AND NOT BEFOREHAND.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states:: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html)

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC)  202-994-5300
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
  - crisis and emergency mental health consultations
  - confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
    [http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices)