

HST 3902

A Lens on History: Presidential Elections that Changed American Politics

Course Description and Objectives:

Presidential elections are a quadrennial political ritual that both reflect and shape American society. As the 2012 election unfolds, we are inundated by media coverage, super pac advertising, and candidate posturing that leads to a seemingly endless cycle of speculation, spin, and, finally, decision. The process did not always unfold in this manner, but different electoral practices were not necessarily better than our current system. In this class, we will explore the methods used to select American presidents in 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896, 1912, and 1968. We will consider how and why these methods have changed over time and attempt to historicize what these changes may reveal about what American citizens value in and fear from our democratic system, its leaders, and the electoral process used to choose our nation's Chief Executive.

Texts:

Copies of the following books are available for purchase in the University bookstore and on reserve at Smith Library. You will be expected to complete all the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them in class.

James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*

Donald Cole, *Vindicating Andrew Jackson: The 1828 Election and the Rise of the Two Party System*

Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought On the Civil War*

Paul W. Glad, *McKinley, Bryan and the People*

Lewis Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring: The 1912 Election and the Birth of Modern American Politics*

Lewis Gould, *1968: The Election That Changed America*

In addition, for each class I will post documents on Blackboard to supplement our discussion of these main texts.

Course Requirements

1. Participation and Reading: All students are expected to be active participants in this course. This means you must attend class regularly and on time (students will not be allowed into class if they arrive more than five minutes late), complete all reading assignments in a timely fashion, and come to class prepared to engage your fellow classmates in a lively discussion. In addition, on a rotating basis students will be required to provide questions for class discussion and assist me in leading class on those days.

Additionally, this course is one of the formally participating courses in the HPU Democracy USA Project. That means all students in this class **must** attend the October 11th colloquium for the project (at which our class will be making presentations and leading discussions) and either the November 13th or December 3rd colloquium (or both). All colloquia will run from 5-8 pm in the UC Theater. Your performance in the classroom and the colloquia will serve as the primary bases for your class participation grade.

2. Attendance and Classroom Behavior: In order to succeed in this class, you must be present at nearly all of the class sessions. Habitual absenteeism negatively impacts both you and your classmates. Consequently, I have a strict attendance policy in my class. You are allowed two absences over the course of the semester. The university makes no distinction between excused and unexcused absences, and leaving class early counts as an absence. After these two absences, you will receive a 1/3 of a grade penalty on your class participation grade for every additional absence. If this attendance policy will be a problem for you, come see me **IN ADVANCE**. I will not consider explanations or requests for leniency after the fact.

In addition to attending class, you must also behave in a mature and respectful manner in the classroom. To help facilitate this process, please turn off all handheld electronic devices at the beginning of class and drop them at the front of the room; you may pick them up again at the end of class. As a general rule, I will not allow the use of laptops in class; if you have a particular reason why you need to use your laptop, you may ask for permission. Holding private conversations during the class is also unacceptable. Students who violate these standards of behavior will receive a significant penalty in their class participation grade.

3. Graded Assignments: Students will have a variety of opportunities to investigate and interpret the American electoral experience in this class. Each student will conduct an oral history interview with a local electoral participant, transcribe that interview, and then write a 1000-1250 word essay analyzing and historicizing this experience. Each student will also conduct research into a presidential election of his or her choice (choices must be approved by me) that will serve as the basis of two written assignments. First, students will collaborate in groups of two to write a short (2-3 page) narration that will serve as the basis for a short film animated by students from Professor Brad Lambert's class (think Schoolhouse Rock, for those of you who know those shorts). Second, students will write a 12-15 page research paper answering an analytical question about their chosen election. These research papers will be completed through a series of assignments, including an annotated bibliography, a paper proposal, a complete rough draft and a final revised draft. There will be no exams in this class.

4. Grading and Assessment:

The final grade will be computed from a weighted average of the individual grades you earn for your class participation (including your questions submitted to the class website), written assignments, and exams. Your class participation will be determined both from the quality and quantity of contributions to the class.

The course requirements will be weighted as follows in determining your final grade for the course:

Oral History Interview/Transcript/Paper

20%

Collaborative Short Film Project	25%
Research Paper	30%
(10% Bibliography, 10% Paper Proposal, 30% Rough Draft, 50% Final Draft)	
Class/ Democracy USA Participation	25%

6. The Fine Print

1. This syllabus is a road map for this class but it is not set in stone. I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus with proper advance notice given to you.
2. You must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade.
3. All papers are due at the times stated below. You should submit papers electronically. All responsibility for technical problems such as e-mails not received by me lies with you. Late papers will automatically be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late (the first day begins at the time they are due and weekend days count) unless you have written documentation from your advisor, an academic Dean, or from University medical services. Computer problems are **never** an acceptable excuse for late work.
4. Students are responsible for checking their High Point University e-mail addresses regularly for information regarding this course. Failure to check this e-mail address is not an acceptable excuse for missing notifications about changes in assignments or deadlines for this class.
5. If you have a question about a grade you receive on a paper, test, or for the course, please come to my office hours or make an appointment. I will not discuss grades over the phone or e-mail. However, I am happy to discuss questions about the course material via e-mail.
6. Academic Honesty: The work you submit for this course should be completely and solely your own. This means that any and all quotations from the words and thoughts of others must be appropriately acknowledged in your assignments. To do anything less is stealing. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please talk to me about them in advance. I will be happy to help you sort through any confusion. Any evidence that you have failed to follow these rules will be immediately and thoroughly investigated, and any violations of the honor code will be submitted to the Honor Court. Be forewarned: I consider cheating to be a very serious and utterly avoidable offense. Expect no leniency from me in cases of suspected cheating/plagiarism.
7. Students with Disabilities: Students seeking classroom accommodations due to a diagnosed disability should contact Rita Sullivant, 407 Smith Library, 336-841-9061, rsulliva@highpoint.edu, Office of Academic Development- Disability Support and provide appropriate documentation. It is recommended that accommodation requests be made at the beginning of the semester, but may be made at any time. **Accommodations are not retroactive.**

CLASS SCHEDULE

T Aug 21 Introduction

The Election of 1800

Th Aug 23 Sharp, Chapters 1-4; Primary Sources (Bb)

T Aug 28 Sharp, Chapters 5-8

Th Aug 30 Sharp, Chapters 9-11, Epilogue

F Aug 31 Select Election for Research Paper and Script by 5 pm

T Sept 4 1800 Wrap-up

Thurs Sept 6 DNC

The Election of 1828

M Sept 10 Annotated Bibliography for Research Paper and Script Due by 5 pm

T Sept 11 Cole, Chapters 1-3

Th Sept 13 Cole, Chapters 4-6

T Sept 18 Cole, Chapters 7-8 & Appendices

Th Sept 20 1828 Wrap-up

F Sept 21 Research for Short Film Due by 5 pm

The Election of 1860

Sept 24-28 Meet this week with your animation team to review research

T Sept 25 Egerton, Prologue, Chapters 1-2

Th Sept 27 Egerton, Chapters 3-5

T Oct 2 Egerton, Chapters 6-7

Th Oct 4 Egerton, Chapters 8-9 & Epilogue

F Oct 5 Oral History Interview Subject Should be Arranged by 5 pm

T Oct 9 1860 Wrap-up

Th Oct 11 Prep For Colloquium

Th Oct 11 Colloquium 1: 5-8 pm, UC Theater (attendance and participation required)

F Oct 12 Script for short film due by 5 pm

TTh Oct 16,18 NO CLASS Fall Break

The Election of 1896

Oct 22-26 **Meet this week with your animation team to review script**

T Oct 23 Glad, Chapters 1-3

Th Oct 25 Glad, Chapters 4-6

F Oct 26 **Paper proposal due by 5 pm**

T Oct 30 Glad, Chapters 7-9

Th Nov 1 1896 Wrap-Up

F Nov 2 **Oral History Interview Should be Completed by 5 pm**

The Election of 1912

Nov 5-9 **Meet this week with your animation team to review storyboards**

T Nov 6 *Four Hats*, Prologue and Chapters 1-3

Th Nov 8 *Four Hats*, Chapters 4-5

F Nov 9 **Oral History Paper Due by 5 pm**

T Nov 13 *Four Hats*, Chapters 6-7 & Epilogue

T Nov 13 **Colloquium 2: 5-8 pm, UC Theater (attendance optional, but you must attend either this event or the one on December 3rd)**

W Nov 14 **American Discoveries w/ Dr. John Milton Cooper, “The Election of 1912” Phillips 120, 5:30-7 (attendance required)**

Th Nov 15 Election of 1912 Wrap-up w/ Dr. Cooper

The Election of 1968

T Nov 20 *1968*, Intro & Chapters 1-2

Th Nov 22 NO CLASS Thanksgiving

M Nov 26 **Complete Rough Draft of Research Paper Due by 5 pm**

- T Nov 27 *1968*, Chapters 3-4
- Th Nov 29 *1968*, Chapters 5-6
- M Dec 3 Colloquium 3: 5-8 pm, UC Theater (attendance optional, but you must attend either this event or the one on November 13th)**
- T Dec 4 Election of 1968 Wrap-up
- W Dec 5 **Oral History Transcript Due by 5 pm**
- T Dec 11 Final Exam Period (12-3 pm, UC Theater): Screening of *The Candidate*
Final Version of Research Papers Due at Beginning of Exam Period (12 pm on Dec 11)