THE PRESIDENCY OF BARACK OBAMA

The focus of this class, as the title of the course suggests, is the presidency of Barack Obama. The course is divided roughly in half. The first half of the course focuses on Obama’s character, leadership style, rhetoric, and worldview. The second half of the course focuses on Obama’s domestic and foreign policies. Throughout we will be interested in placing Obama’s presidency in historical perspective, explaining and evaluating Obama’s political successes and failures, and weighing his promises against his performance.

Participation in class discussion is a vital component of this class and will be worth 40% of your grade. Active participation entails doing all the reading (and be forewarned, there will be a lot of reading), coming to class fully prepared to discuss the reading, and contributing constructively to class discussions. If you don’t want or have time to read a lot this is probably not the class for you. This participation grade may include short response papers and/or in-class writing assignments. The midterm essay, due on March 4, is worth 25% of your grade, and the final essay, due December 7, is worth 35%.

If you miss a class, whether excused or unexcused, you must write a 750 word paper analyzing the reading that was assigned for the day you miss. Your participation grade in the course will be lowered by half a letter grade for every make-up paper you do not turn in within a week of your return to class. More than one unexcused absence will result in a full grade deduction from your final course grade; more than two unexcused absences will result in two full grade deductions from your final grade; more than three unexcused absences will result in failing the class. Persistent lateness for class can also result in deductions from the final grade.

Required texts are available for purchase at the Willamette Bookstore. The other readings indicated in the syllabus are available on the class WISE page, except for two inaugural addresses that are available online at the UCSB American Presidency Project. Because the Obama presidency is still very much with us, you should expect that new readings will be added (and in some cases perhaps subtracted) to keep up with events, particularly in the 2nd half of the course when we focus on domestic and foreign policies. Texts to be purchased are: George Edwards, Overreach: Leadership in the Obama Presidency (Princeton University Press, 2012); Daniel Klaidman, Kill or Capture: The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency (Houghton Mifflin, 2012); Barack Obama, Dreams from my Father (Three Rivers Press, 2004; orig. pub 1995); Barack Obama, The Audacity of Hope (Three Rivers Press, 2006); and Theda Skocpol and Lawrence R. Jacobs, Reaching for a New Deal: Ambitious Governance, Economic Meltdown, and Polarized Politics in Obama’s First Two Years (Russell Sage, 2011). Readings available on WISE must be printed out and brought to class. In class you should always have the reading for that day on the desk in front of you. Sorry, but no laptops may be used during class.

Schedule of Class Topics and Readings
I. Obama’s Character, Style, and Worldview
1.1 (Jan 14) Becoming Obama
Obama, Dreams from My Father, vii-xvii, 3-129
1.2 (Jan. 16) The Promise: Obama as Joshua

2.1 (Jan. 21) MLK Day (no class) and Inauguration Day

2.2 (Jan. 23) Obama’s Inaugural Address in Historical Perspective

3.1 (Jan. 28) Obama the Community Organizer
Obama, *Dreams from My Father*, 133-295

3.2 (Jan. 30) No class (sorry, I will be speaking at Univ. of Oregon on “Governing after the 2012 Election”)

4.1 (Feb. 4) Obama Explained?

4.2 (Feb. 6) Obama's Rhetorical Style
Obama, Keynote address at Democratic National Convention, July 27, 2004

5.1 (Feb. 11) Obama's Leadership Style in Comparative Perspective
Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama (Princeton, 2009), 1-26, 75-90, 127-144, 173-190
5.2 (Feb. 13) Obama’s Decision Making and White House Structure

6.1 (Feb. 18) Obama’s Place in Political Time

6.2 (Feb. 20) Obama and Lincoln
Joe Klein, "A New Birth of Politics?" TIME, December 10, 2012
Doyle McManus, "What Would Lincoln Do?" Los Angeles Times, November 28, 2012

7.1 (Feb. 25) The Burden of Obama’s Race
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Fear of a Black President,” Atlantic, August 22, 2012
Obama, The Audacity of Hope, 227-270

7.2 (Feb. 27) Obama’s Worldview
Obama, The Audacity of Hope, 13-69, 137-194

8.1 (March 4) No class

8.2 (March 6) Midterm essay due

II. Obama’s Domestic Policies
9.1 (March 11) Obama’s Public Leadership
Edwards, Overreach, 1-115

9.2 (March 13) Obama’s Congressional Leadership
Edwards, Overreach, 116-188
10.1 (March 18) “Obamacare”
Lawrence Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, “Hard-Fought Legacy: Obama, Congressional Democrats, and the Struggle for Comprehensive Health Care Reform,” in Skocpol and Jacobs, eds., Reaching for a New Deal, 53-104
Jeffrey Toobin, The Oath: The Obama White House and the Supreme Court (Doubleday, 2012), 230-256, 263-298

10.2 (March 20) Student Loans and Education Policy
Suzanne Mettler, “Eliminating the Market Middle-Man: Redirecting and Expanding Support for College Students,” in Skocpol and Jacobs, eds., Reaching for a New Deal, 105-138
Lorraine M. McDonnell, “Surprising Momentum: Spurring Education Reform in States and Localities,” in Skocpol and Jacobs, eds., Reaching for a New Deal, 230-269

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 25, 27

11.1 (April 1) Budgetary Politics and Fiscal Cliffs
Andrea Louise Campbell, “Paying America’s Way: The Fraught Politics of Taxes, Investments, and Budgetary Responsibility,” in Skocpol and Jacobs, eds., Reaching for a New Deal, 386-421

11.2 (April 3) Immigration Reform

12.1 (April 8) Labor Law Reform
Dorrian T. Warren, "The Unsurprising Failure of Labor Law Reform and the Turn to Administrative Action," in Skocpol and Jacobs, eds., Reaching for a New Deal, 191-229

12.2 (April 10) Presidential Policymaking: Visit by Courtney Gregoire

III. Obama's War on Terror
13.1 (April 15) The Promise: Breaking from Bush
Klaidman, Kill or Capture, 1-39, 44-92
Barack Obama’s Q&A with Charlie Savage, Boston Globe, December 20, 2007
13.2 (April 17) Student Scholarship Recognition Day

14.1 (April 22) Detaining and Trying Terrorists
Klaidman, *Kill or Capture*, 93-116, 127-97
Remarks by the President on National Security, May 21, 2009

14.2 (April 24) Targeted Killings
Klaidman, *Kill or Capture*, 39-44 117-127, 199-265
Jo Becker and Scott Shane, “Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will,”

IV. Evaluating Obama
15.1 (April 29) Will Obama Become a Great President?
Jack Balkin, “What It Will Take for Barack Obama to Become the Next FDR,” *Atlantic*,
November 1, 2012

Final essay due Friday, May 3, at 5pm