

# School for New Learning DePaul University HC 191

## “American Presidents” Summer 2009 Naperville

**Faculty:** R. Craig Sautter  
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**Location:** Naperville Campus

**Dates:** Wednesday, June 17 – August 19, 2009

**Hours:** 6:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

**Credit:** 4 Quarter Hours

### Course Description

Since 1787, when the U.S. Constitution was drafted in convention at Philadelphia, no elected office has more represented the aspirations and achievements of the American people than that of President of the United States. Starting with the election of George Washington in 1789 and continuing through the election of Barack Obama, 44 men have been elevated to the highest office in the land. The 2008 Presidential election marked the 56th time the people of the United States have chosen a national leader. Over the course of these last 220 years, the office of the Presidency has changed and expanded to reflect the character of the office holder and the magnitude of the challenges and controversies facing the nation during each era.

This course will trace the development of the American Presidency by concentrating on the lives of some of the leaders who have been elected to the Presidency over the past two centuries. We will seek to find out their histories, what motivated them, what ideals they held sacred, what programs they proposed, how they reacted to crisis, and how they protected and improved the nation during times of war and peace. We will examine the key issues and problems that confronted these Presidents and shaped the history of our nation. We will also follow the unfolding events of the current presidency. And we will look at the history or presidential campaigns, advertisements and commercials.

Each student in this class will read biographies of two Presidents, one from the 18th or 19th century and one from the 20th or 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each week they will report their findings to the rest of the class for discussion and comparison of the various Presidents. In this way we will be able to learn more about several of the Presidents. At the same time, the class will follow and debate the current issues affecting the office, topics such as the role of the media, of money, of foreign affairs, and so forth. Some people say that the “most powerful man in the world” is the President of the United States, others, such as Illinois current Governor Pat Quinn, say the highest office in the land is that of informed Citizen. This SNL course will help us evaluate the roles and duties of both in an increasingly complex world.

## Competences

### Competences:

**H-4** Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural, or economic groups in the United States.

**H-1-F** Can describe and explain the roles of individuals, groups, societies or states in history.

**H-2-F** Can explain the development, roles, and maintenance of social institutions.

**H-2-G** Can evaluate the role and impact of mass media and/or information technology on society.

## Faculty

R. Craig Sautter is author of 10 books, including *Inside the Wigwam, Chicago Presidential Conventions 1860-1996* (with Edward M. Burke); *New York Presidential Conventions: The Pre-TV Era 1839-1924*; *Philadelphia Presidential Conventions (1856-2000)* and. (See [www.presidentialconventions.com](http://www.presidentialconventions.com) .) He is a past president of the Society of Midland Authors. He has also appeared on C-Span, and was featured in a PBS documentary, “The Picking of the President: The Parties are Over.” With his brother (a Washington D. C. Attorney), he writes and produces T.V. and radio ads, and consults on political campaigns for Sautter Communications; Political Strategy and Media (See [www.sauttercommunications.com](http://www.sauttercommunications.com) .) (He wrote and produced ads for Barack Obama’s 2000 congressional race.) For the past 28 years, he has taught courses in philosophy, politics, history, literature, and creative writing at SNL. He was spent recent winters teaching “Ethics and Critical Thinking” at Miami Dade College. He has won several DePaul awards for “teaching excellence.”

## **Learning Experience**

Upon successful completion of this course, students should have:

1. An overview and appreciation of the American Presidency from its origins to the present;
2. An in-depth appreciation and understanding of the lives of two Presidents;
3. An ability to analyze the problems confronting the United States at critical moments in history and the contributions of Presidents in resolving those issues;
4. An ability to analyze the role of the media, money, and voter participation in U. S. Presidential elections.

## **Learning Strategies**

1. Reading, analyzing, informal lectures, and class discussion and debate;
2. Each student will read two biographies of U. S. Presidents; one from the 18th or 19th century, one from the 20th or 21<sup>st</sup> century; and report to the class each week on the content of their reading;
3. The Internet, tapes and films;
4. Keeping a scrapbook of issues in the news affecting the current President;
5. Writing a book review of one of the Presidential biographies that they read.
6. Keep a vocabulary list of new words you learn this quarter related to our topics.

## **Learning Tools**

Required reading:

1. Two presidential biographies selected by the student and obtained from a library or a bookstore. Try your community library and find a biographical history if you can. It will be up to you to find and start reading a presidential biography. We want a real biography, not a short summary or issue oriented book.

Recommended reading for lifelong learning:

1. [www.Americanpresidents.org](http://www.Americanpresidents.org)
2. [C-Span.org/campaign2008](http://C-Span.org/campaign2008)

3. Campaign media examples since 1860, including famous 30-second political spots.

### **Evidence Students Will Submit**

1. On week 10, all students will submit a book review and spiral notebook containing the news clippings of issues in the news that they have collected.

2. One presidential biography book review.

3. One 30-second political TV ad script that you write to promote either of the presidents you studied. You put a past president running for election or reelection in a 21<sup>st</sup> century TV context appealing to the voters of his/our time.

### **Criteria for Assessment**

Student grades will be based on:

1. Completion of reading assignments ... two biographies, hand-outs, news clippings or Internet sources;

2. The quality of your book review of one of the presidential biographies, the quality of your ad;

3. The quality of your class contributions to large and small discussion groups;

5. Your development as an intelligent reader and person who can discuss what you are reading.

### **Summer 2009 Schedule**

Session 1: June 17, 2009 .....Introduction, book assignments, discussion of the American Presidency and current events

Session 2: June 24, 2009 .....Discussion of presidential biographies and current events

Session 3: July 1, 2009 .....Discussion of presidential biographies, campaign commercials and current events

Session 4: July 8, 2009 .....Discussion of presidential biographies, campaign commercials and current events

Session 5: July 15, 200 .....Discussion of presidential biographies, campaign commercials and current events

Session 6: July 22, 2009 .....Discussion of presidential biographies, campaign commercials and current events

Session 7: July 29, 2009 .....Discussion of presidential biographies and current events

Session 8: August 5, 2009 .....Discussion of presidential biographies and current events

Session 9: August 12, 2009 .....Discussion of presidential biographies and current events, presentation of historical presidential ad scripts

Session 10: August 19, 2009 .....Last formal class ... Final book review and 2008 campaign scrapbooks due, final discussion of presidential biographies and ad scripts.

*I will return your notebooks, after I submit your grades, to the DePaul Naperville Campus main desk two Wednesdays after our last class (September 2). Don't try to pick it up before that date. If you don't pick them up, they likely will get tossed.*

### **Student Consultation**

Feel free to contact the instructor to clarify work, discuss problems, or ask for guidance.

Try email first. [rcsautter@aol.com](mailto:rcsautter@aol.com)

Call (before 9 p.m.) or e-mail to explain absences or get assignments or discuss other issues. (First try to get assignments from classmates.)