

**Texas A&M University-Central Texas**  
**HIST 5322-115: The American Presidency**  
Summer 2018  
Online

**Instructor:** Luke A. Nichter, Ph.D.  
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**Office Hours:**

By appointment. Email is the easiest way to reach me. Your message will be returned promptly even during weekends, evenings, holidays, and university break periods.

**Mode of Instruction and Course Access:**

This course is 100% online and uses TAMUCT's Canvas system (<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>).

**Course Description** (from the TAMUCT course catalog):

HIST 5322. Select Topics in American History. 3 Semester Credit Hours. Research and writing on selected topics in American History. May be repeated when the topic varies.

**Course Overview:**

This course includes an overview of the presidency, including the office, its roles, and the development of the presidency and its office holders, their personalities, policies, achievements, and failures, and their impact on the evolution of the United States, from George Washington to the present. The course also includes an emphasis on the evolution of the presidency itself, with a focus on select presidents.

**Learning Objectives of Course:**

Knowledge:

- Students will improve their ability to identify connections between historical issues and life outside the classroom

Comprehension:

- Students will demonstrate how to think historically about the past by identifying and critiquing historical interpretation and analyzing issues in historical context

Application:

- Students will select and use evidence from a variety of sources, including primary sources

Analysis:

- Students will examine current issues from a historical perspective

Synthesis:

- Students will compare the historical development of their own and other cultures

Evaluation:

- Students will complete assignments that prompt them to argue effectively and critically

**Course Unit Learning Objectives:**

- Week 1: Identify actions by early presidents that set the standard for their successors
- Week 2: Examine which presidents healed the nation's growing divide and which exacerbated tensions
- Week 3: Debate which presidents did the most (or least) to help the nation recover from conflict
- Week 4: Assess why the U.S. became a world power at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Week 5: Evaluate the social and cultural changes that took place between world wars
- Week 6: Critique the reasons the presidency rose in power during the Cold War
- Week 7: Explain the state of the presidency in recent history
- Week 8: Distinguish the characteristics that make for an effective president

Instructor Responsibilities:

- Select and present course content;
- Identify themes to be emphasized;
- Evaluate student historical understanding and skills;
- Communicate evaluations to students in a timely manner;
- Assist students in improving their skills.

Student Responsibilities:

- Complete all required readings;
- Attend class regularly;
- Participate in all class activities and discussions;
- Communicate with instructor (using office hours, and email);
- Complete all assignments on time.

**Required Reading and Textbook(s):**

Alan Brinkley and Davis Dyer, eds. *The American Presidency: The Authoritative Reference*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

- ISBN: 978-0-618-38273-6

*Additional readings may be assigned and distributed at the discretion of the instructor.*

**Course Requirements:**

The course grade will be determined by Discussion Board Questions (DBQs) (35%), two Book Reviews (30% total), and a Research Paper (35%).

**Grading Criteria Rubric and Conversion:**

DBQs:	35%
Book Reviews	30%
<u>Research Paper:</u>	<u>35%</u>
	100%

Final grades will be computed according to the following scale:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = 59-0%

**Posting of Grades:**

All grades will be posted in the Canvas grade book. Students should regularly monitor their grades and address any questions or concerns promptly to the instructor. Throughout the course, the grade book will be updated at the end of each week to include all work completed up to that point in the course.

**Late Policy:**

Any assignment submitted after the due date and time will be subject to a penalty of ten percent per twenty-four hour period late. The only exception is the Literature Review assignment, which will not be accepted late because of the instructor's deadline to submit final grades. If a specific assignment carries its own late policy, the specific assignment's late policy takes precedence over this general late policy.

**Book Reviews:**

See page 10 for more information.

**Research Paper:**

See page 11 for more information.

**Social Media Policy:**

Due to the proliferation of social media and the need to keep professional distance between vocation and avocation, no Facebook friend requests will be accepted from current students. However, you are welcome to follow me on Twitter (@lukenic).

**Canvas Access and Course Participation:**

The most important prerequisite is that you have access to TAMUCT's Canvas portal, at <https://tamuct.instructure.com/>. If you are logging in the first time, your username is your MyCT username and password. If you have forgotten your username or password, follow the link provided on the login page.

If you do not have login credentials for Canvas (i.e. a username and password) you must resolve this immediately. No one—including your instructor—can do this for you. Failure to do so will result in failure of the course, since assignments are due beginning at the end of the first week of the course. While many of you are already familiar with Canvas, because such a large percentage of your final grade depends on Canvas participation these details bear repeating.

Be sure to look around the Canvas course shell. Perhaps you have used Canvas before, but not this version. If this is your first time using Canvas, or if you need a refresher, visit the Help section. There, you will find a variety of tutorials and other types of assistance.

The following are the Canvas modules used:

- “Announcements” is where you will find instructor announcements, which will also be emailed to you when they are posted.
- “My Media” is where you will find the weekly podcasts and other information you may need for each week of class (not applicable for face-to-face courses).
- “Discussions” is where you will post your answers to the Discussion Board Questions (DBQs). As a reminder, when you post your answers to the DBQs, for each question you are required to submit three posts. The first should be a longer post—in a new “thread”—that thoroughly answers the question and demonstrates that you mastered the reading for that week. The second and third posts are shorter comments on your classmates’ posts.
- “Grades” is where you can monitor your course grades.
- “Assignments” is where you will find information about upcoming assignments.

At any point during the semester, if you need technical assistance related to Canvas, contact:

Help Desk Central  
 Online Chat: <https://www.tamuct.edu/help>  
 Phone: (254) 519-4266

While you in no way are expected to be a “computer expert” in order to succeed in this course, you should be aware of the types of documents most commonly posted on Canvas. These include \*.pdf, and \*.doc(x) files. To be successful in this course, you must be able to access both types of files. The following is a short description of each:

**\*.pdf:** commonly known as “pdf files,” for this course these may include primary source documents, readings, or excerpts of books or articles. Be sure you have Adobe Reader installed on the computer you use to access Canvas. If you need to download the current version of Adobe Reader, you may do so here for free:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/otherversions/>

\*.**doc(x)**: commonly known as “Word documents,” I will post these files often, including the syllabus and other course documents from time to time. The latest version of Microsoft Word is recommended, but older versions should work fine even if they do not have every feature.

\*.**mp3**: on a weekly basis, I will post an audio file/podcast to review the previous week’s work, as well as preview the week ahead and provide other timely information and announcements at that stage of the course. *It is very important that you are able to listen to these files.* While they are optional, and do not include content you cannot obtain elsewhere, they summarize course announcements, feedback on previous assignments, additional explanation of future assignments, or information about the course readings.

If you have trouble accessing these files via Canvas, it may be easier if you first download them to your computer (or, perhaps a flash drive if you are using a shared computer) before attempting to open them. If you still need help, contact or visit a TAMUCT computer lab, which contains computers equipped with software that can open all of the above file types. On duty technicians will also be able to assist you on the phone or in person if you have questions:

<http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/informationtechnology/computerlabs.php>

The “normal” structure of this course that you should follow each week is:

1. Listen to the audio file for the week
2. Complete weekly reading
3. Complete Discussion Board Questions (DBQs)

At the start of each week, review your previous week’s work and grades in the Canvas grade book. All weekly assignments such as the Discussion Board Questions will be graded before the next weekly assignments are due. More substantial assignments, such as reviews, essays, and research papers, are typically returned electronically with comments and grade to the email address from which you submitted the assignment in approximately one week from the due date.

The inherent flexibility of this course is that you are able to complete the weekly assignments at your leisure. The drawback is that you have to be disciplined and self-motivated to such an extent that you are able to complete all assignments in a timely manner. No one will be staring over your shoulder to ensure you have done so.

### **Complete Course Calendar**

#### **Week One: The Origin of the Presidency**

Objective: Identify actions by early presidents that set the standard for their successors

6/4: Listen to Week 1 Podcast

Read: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe

6/9: **DBQs 1 due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Week Two: From Republic to Constitutional Crisis**

Objective: Examine which presidents healed the nation's growing divide and which exacerbated tensions

6/11: Listen to Week 2 Podcast

Read: John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, William Henry Harrison, John Taylor, James K. Polk, Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan

6/16: **DBQs 2 due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Week Three: The Civil War and Its Legacy**

Objective: Debate which presidents did the most (or least) to help the nation recover from conflict

6/18: Listen to Week 3 Podcast

Read: Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester Arthur, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison

6/23: **DBQs 3 due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Book Review 1 due by 11:59 p.m.** (by Microsoft Word email attachment to [luke\\_nichter@tamuct.edu](mailto:luke_nichter@tamuct.edu))

**Week Four: The Dawn of an International Era**

Objective: Assess why the U.S. became a world power at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

6/25: Listen to Week 4 Podcast

Read: William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson

6/30: **DBQs 4 due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Week Five: The Roaring 20s and Depression**

Objective: Evaluate the social and cultural changes that took place between world wars

7/2: Listen to Week 5 Podcast

Read: Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt

7/7: **DBQs 5 due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Book Review 2 due by 11:59 p.m.** (by Microsoft Word email attachment to [luke\\_nichter@tamuct.edu](mailto:luke_nichter@tamuct.edu))

**Week Six: The Rise of the U.S. as a Postwar Superpower**

Objective: Critique the reasons the presidency rose in power during the Cold War

7/9: Listen to Week 6 Podcast

Read: Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon

7/14: **DBQs 6 due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Week Seven: Beyond the Cold War**

Objective: Explain the state of the presidency in recent history

- 7/16: Listen to Week 7 Podcast  
Read: Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush,  
Bill Clinton, George W. Bush
- 7/21: **DBQs 7 due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Week Eight: Assessing the Presidency and Its Office-holders**

Objective: Distinguish the characteristics that make for an effective president

- 7/23: Listen to Week 8 Podcast
- 7/28: **Research Paper due by 11:59 p.m.** (by Microsoft Word email attachment to [luke\\_nichter@tamuct.edu](mailto:luke_nichter@tamuct.edu))

**911 Cellular:**

Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas  
911Cellular is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in 911 Cellular through their myCT email account.

Connect at [911Cellular](https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management) [https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in 911Cellular, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

**Drop Policy:**

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a [Drop Request Form](https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf) [https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop\_Request\_Form.pdf]. Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the University Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

**Academic Integrity:**

Texas A&M University -Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student's academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another

student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university's Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

**Academic Accommodations:**

At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier free education. The Department of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the University's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Department of Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. For more information please visit our [Access & Inclusion](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html) webpage [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html].

Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. For more information, please visit <https://www.tamuct.departments/index.php>. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines online](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf), please visit the website [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf].

**Tutoring:**

Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both on-campus and online. On-campus subjects tutored include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111. If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at 254-519-5796, or by emailing Larry Davis at [imdavis@tamuct.edu](mailto:imdavis@tamuct.edu).

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log-in and receive FREE online tutoring and writing support. This tool provides tutoring in over forty subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

**University Writing Center:**

Located in 416 Warrior Hall, the University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students with satellite hours in the University Library. Students may arrange a one-on-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by visiting the UWC during normal operating hours

(both half-hour and hour sessions are available) or by making an appointment via [WCOOnline](https://tamuct.mywconline.com/) [https://tamuct.mywconline.com/]. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) to schedule an online tutoring session. Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process.

While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the University Writing Center is here to help! If you have any questions about the University Writing Center, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu).

### **Library Services:**

The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 72,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On-campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available twenty-four hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](https://tamuct.libguides.com/) [https://tamuct.libguides.com/].

***Instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus at any time.***

## Book Review Instructions

You are required to complete **two** scholarly book reviews in this course. Pay careful attention to the due dates contained in this syllabus. Part of being a historian involves keeping abreast of new books and research in your field. Some of you have written book reviews for other courses, while for some of you this will be a new type of writing assignment. Regardless of whether you have written book reviews before or not, the following are some guidelines for success in *this* course.

Reading historical monographs is not like reading a textbook. Historians write with a purpose. It is how historians communicate new knowledge and perspectives on both old and new questions. You should focus on the author's arguments and the evidence used to support them. Read the preface/introduction and conclusion especially carefully. Often, these sections are where the author articulates the book's thesis and key points.

1. **Choosing Your Books:** You must receive permission from the instructor for your two book selections before proceeding. The first review should cover an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century president, and the second review should cover a 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century president. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask.
  
2. **Content of the Review:** The purpose of a scholarly review is: **1)** to explain briefly what the book is about (scope), **2)** to analyze its argument and evidence (thesis), **3)** to offer a critical assessment of the book's strengths and weaknesses, and **4)** to appraise its historical value. If you would like to see examples of scholarly book reviews, consult an academic journal such as The American Historical Review and The Journal of American History, each of which can be found on the library website.
  
3. **Keys to a Successful Scholarly Review:**
  - Read the book thoroughly and reflect upon it.
  - Identify the author, including credentials and major publications.
  - Identify the major theme or thesis of the book.
  - Summarize the author's supporting arguments and evidence.
  - Give the reader a flavor of the book by quoting from it or describing the layout or other features of the book.
  - Offer both praise as well as constructive criticism, as appropriate.
  - Incorporate your own insights.
  - You are not permitted to review any required course reading.
  
4. **Format of the Review:** The review should be double-spaced, and approximately 1,500 words in length (+/- 10%). It should be written clearly and free of grammatical errors. Clear writing indicates clear thinking. This kind of formal writing takes effort, so be prepared to put in the time and the brainpower. Put your name and the date at the top of the first page, followed by the book's full citation (see Chicago/Turabian for assistance).

## Research Paper Instructions

In lieu of a final examination, you are required to write a 4,000-word Research Paper. The purpose of the Research Paper is to explore some aspect of the evolution of the presidency. As we have read in this course, there are many different ways to interpret this phenomenon. This assignment allows you an opportunity to explore some aspect of the presidency that interests you most.

1. **Select a topic.** Your task is to select some aspect of the institution of the presidency and explain its evolution over time. Sample topics could include the evolution of the role of the president in the policymaking process, the growth in (and checks on) presidential power, the president's role in foreign policy or wartime, or the president and the "bully pulpit." There is almost no limit to the number of possibilities. Your focus could be broad, cover a long period of years, or be tightly focused. Your paper might pick up on a theme introduced elsewhere in the course or be an entirely new pursuit. Your Research Paper will ultimately be driven by your own interests.
  
2. **Find your materials.** Since these are very broad parameters, you are encouraged to communicate with your instructor on your proposed topic and how you plan to execute it. You are required to utilize a minimum of ten sources, which can be some combination of books or articles. Our required course reading can be counted as one of these sources, as can the books you review in the Book Review assignment, if it is appropriate to do so. Spend some time doing some searches using a major database such as J-Stor (<http://www.jstor.org>), and Worldcat (<http://www.worldcat.org>). Another particularly good resource for this assignment is the scholarly journal *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, which can be accessed through the library website.
  
3. **Acquire your materials.** Most scholarly journals can be accessed through the library website, in addition to a growing collection of e-books. If the library does not have a book you need, do not panic. Consider using the inter-library loan (ILL) system, whereby you can borrow them through TAMUCT from other libraries. More information can be found here: <http://tamuct.libguides.com/ILL>. Simply complete an ILL request and your books will arrive within a few days to a week depending on how far they have to travel. The ILL staff will email you to let you know when they have arrived at the circulation desk. Yet another option is TexShare, which permits you to travel to any public or university library in the state and borrow them directly: <http://tamuct.libguides.com/c.php?g=179023&p=1176654>. A final option is simply to make a day trip to a large research library like UT-Austin, Baylor, or Texas A&M, and access the books there without checking them out.
  
4. **Analyze your materials.** Before you start writing, think about the type of story you want to tell. Consider the topic and the basic arc of history for that topic, in addition to the specific argument (thesis) you plan to make. Who are the major characters? What are the major themes? Where are the points of tension? What was the problem that was addressed, what kind of decision making process was used, which options were considered, which one won out, and how does that decision look in hindsight? All of

these questions might not apply to your topic, but they are designed to help you think about the different possible sections of your Research Paper.

5. **Constructing your Research Paper.** Following an introduction in which you should introduce your topic and state your argument (thesis), use whichever technique to tell your story as makes sense to you. A chronological approach might be best, or perhaps a thematic one. It might make sense to use section headings, or not. A conclusion should summarize your key findings.

Miscellany

- If you would like to see examples of Research Papers, consult <http://www.jstor.org> or a scholarly journal such as *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.
- This assignment should conform to the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Superior Research Papers will demonstrate a mastery of the topic, be logically structured, well-written, and free of typos and routine mistakes.
- No cover page is needed, and a standard font type, size, and margins should be used.
- This is a history course, not an English course. Still, you cannot engage and persuade your reader that a particular proposition is true unless you write well. A paper has to be written well to make effective communication possible. If your reader cannot decipher what you mean, it does not matter whether you have good ideas or not. Even poor arguments are more convincing when they are articulated well, while even good arguments fail when they are constructed poorly.
- Proofread your essay before you submit it, and make sure you have caught the most glaring mistakes.
- Drafts of essays are always welcome for advance review **for informal comments only**, i.e. not for a projection of a grade.
- If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask.
- *No internet sources are permitted. Any assignments based on internet sources will receive a zero.*

Good luck!