

The Founding Fathers
Political Science 401
Fall 2019
Wednesdays 7:45-9:40 AM
Ingraham 216

Professor Information:

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 or by apt.

Class Description: This course will explore the lives, legacies, mythologies, and constitutional views of some of the leading public figures of the Founding of the United States. We will read biographies by professional historians, writings by the Founders themselves, and compare historical fact with popular representations of the Founders in film, television, and other popular media.

A major goal of this course is to encourage students to think critically about how our Founding Fathers have been represented and misrepresented (both positively and negatively) by historians, the media, political pundits, politicians, and the entertainment industry. Students also will understand their various positions on the U.S. Constitution. We will explore what it meant to be a public leader in the late-eighteenth century, what characteristics people of the era assumed leaders should possess, and how these leaders comported themselves. We also will apply what we've learned to consider what it means to be a public leader today.

Students who are unfamiliar with the Founding era should inform themselves by reading brief general histories of the period. I include some options in the recommended readings list.

Course Requirements and Grading We will study each of the selected Founding Fathers over two classes. Across those two classes, we will read and discuss:

1. A biography about the Founder;
2. Writings by the Founder;
3. The constitutional and governmental views of the Founder.

We will spend the first week discussing a biography about the Founder by a credentialed historian. In the second week, we will discuss the Founder's writings, focusing on the constitutional views of the Founder. Students who are writing papers on these aspects will lead all discussions.

You will write **two papers** for this class:

The first is a book review of one of the biographies.

The second is a paper that examines, using primary sources, the Founder's constitutional views.

You must turn your paper in to me (hard copy) at the **beginning of the class on which it is due** (see below). If you have questions as to that date, you must let me know. Your paper must be properly formatted, proofread by you and at least one other person, and **written well**. I include writing tips at the end of the syllabus.

You will choose which Founder on which to write your papers, subject to two limitations: First, you must choose a different Founder for each paper. Second, you must write at least one paper in the first half of the semester. (This covers Washington, Adams, and Marshall.)

Also, although there are no group projects in this class, you should consider coordinating with other students who will research the same Founder. You will all be presenting your findings to the class.

1. Biography Review (40% of your grade)

You must write a scholarly review, between 10-15 pages, of one of the assigned biographies. You will lead the class discussion on that book. (Because the Washington book comes one week into the course, I will allow those of you who elect to write on Washington to submit your reviews one week late, if you desire. You are still responsible for leading class discussion on September 11th, however.) Your written book review and your accompanying class discussion about the Founder account for 40% of your grade.

2. Primary Source – Constitutional View Paper (35% of your grade)

You must write a scholarly analysis of a document in the *Course Reader* by your Founder. This paper should be 8-10 pages and should reflect how a particular Founder viewed the constitution and/or the American constitutional system. You will lead discussion on those materials. Your primary source paper and your accompanying class discussion about the Founder account for 35% of your grade.

3. Participation (25% of your grade)

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will result in a lower attendance grade. Participation is an important part of the dynamic of the course. If you do nothing more than come to class, you will receive a low grade for participation. (Your participation grade will suffer if you routinely do not bring the assigned readings to class.) Your grade will be determined by the quality of the contributions you make to the discussion based on the assigned readings.

NOTE: It is in your interest to err on the side of caution and make every effort to contribute something to the discussion every class period. If you are anxious about speaking or have trouble thinking of something to say, please speak with me about your concerns. I can help you!

Grade Scale. The grade scale is as follows:

93-100 (A)
88-92 (AB)
83-87 (B)
78-82 (BC)
70-77 (C)
60-69 (D)
< 60 (Fail)

Required Reading Material

***Note: you should bring only HARD COPIES to class. No kindles or electronic versions.**

1. Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency, George Washington* (Vintage, 2005).
2. Joseph Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).
3. Harlow Giles Unger, *John Marshall: The Chief Justice Who Saved the Nation* (Da Capo Press, 2014).
4. Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (Penguin Books, 2005).
5. Jeff Broadwater, *James Madison: A Son of Virginia and Founder of the Nation* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
6. Tim Sandefeur, *Frederick Douglass: Self-Made Man* (Cato Institute Press, 2018).
7. Jeff Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
8. Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Background Reading Material (if you think you need it)

1. Gordon Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (Modern Library, 2003)
2. Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (University of Kansas Press, 1985)

Strategies for Success When Reading:

Begin reading early. It is highly recommended that you pace yourself appropriately to finish the biographies on time. Begin each new book well before the week before we discuss it, read one or two chapters per day, and finish the *entire* book before class. If you begin the weekend before class, you likely won't have enough time.

Read actively. Engage with the material to retain the information—highlight the text, make notes in the margin, use sticky tabs, and take notes in a notebook or on your computer. (But NEVER mark in a library book.)

Structure the information. It is also highly recommended that you begin a timeline of each Founder's life and add to it as you learn more.

Contacting Me

If you need to contact me, please email me. Do not try to message me through Canvas; I often don't receive notices and I might not get your message. Please treat emails with me as professional correspondence. Do not send emails without content or without a subject line. Please use proper salutations.

Class Behavior. We all want to learn while in class, so do not cause disruptions in class. Be respectful to your fellow students. If you fail to do so, university guidelines require me to take action. Expect to argue both sides of every issue, whether it is something with which you agree personally or not. Bottom line, I want you to participate in class—but not inappropriately. For more information, please see <http://www.students.wisc.edu/rights/>.

Arrive on time. Arriving late is rude and disrupts the class. I make announcements and hand out materials in the first few minutes of class. If you are late, you will miss them. Being chronically late will hurt your attendance grade. *If you are marked late five times, it will count as an unexcused absence.* If there is some reason you cannot be on time regularly (such as a class on the other side of campus that ends just before this one), you must let me know in advance. If you are late, *it is your responsibility to find out what you missed in the way of information or materials.*

Electronic Devices. I do not allow laptops or other electronic devices in class. They are distracting to other students and entice you to read non-class related material during lecture. If you have a documented medical need that requires you to use a laptop, let me know. Otherwise, please put them away. And studies show that taking notes by hand rather than computer facilitates greater learning. If you use a device in class, you will be warned and asked to put it away once. If you persist in using them, you will forfeit your attendance credit for that day and you may be asked to leave the classroom. If you are asked to leave, it will be counted as an unexcused absence.

Academic Integrity. I hold all students to the university's academic integrity standards. For more information on those, please see: <http://students.wisc.edu/saja/integrity.html>.

Students Requiring Need-Based Accommodations. Students who need accommodations on the basis of disability should schedule an office appointment with me within the first three weeks of the semester. Please schedule this office appointment by email. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach me before or after class to discuss your accommodation needs. The McBurney Disability Resource Center (263-2741) provides resources for students with disabilities (<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>). You will need to provide documentation of disability to them in order to receive official university services and accommodations.

Course Learning Outcomes. At the conclusion of the semester, students will be experts on some of the most important figures in American history. More broadly:

- Each student will be able to converse freely and without assistance about some of the country's Founders.
- Each student will learn how to read and critically analyze historical information.
- Each student will learn how to write effectively.
- Each student will learn how to discuss historical information in a civil and logical manner.

- Each student will apply historical examples of leadership to leadership in contemporary America.

Credit Hours. This class is a three-credit course. Students achieve credit for this course by investing 45 hours of learning activities per credit. Students spend roughly 30 hours of learning in class. They will spend roughly 70 hours of work outside of class. (This involves reading all the materials and writing papers.)

Schedule

September 4:

Introduction and discuss of syllabus

George Washington

September 11:

Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington*

September 18:

Primary Documents in *Course Reader*

John Adams

September 25:

Joseph Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams*

October 2:

Primary Documents in *Course Reader*

John Marshall

October 9:

Harlow Unger, *John Marshall: The Chief Justice Who Saved the Nation*

October 16:

Primary Documents in *Course Reader*

Alexander Hamilton

October 23:

Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*—Prologue-ch. 2, chs. 7, 12-13, 18-43, Epilogue

October 30:

Primary Documents in *Course Reader*

James Madison

November 6:

Broadwater, *James Madison: A Son of Virginia and Founder of the Nation*

November 13:

Primary Documents in *Course Reader*

Frederick Douglass

November 20:

Timothy Sandefeur, *Frederick Douglass: Self-Made Man*

The Anti-Federalists

November 27:

Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution*

December 4:

Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder*

December 11:

TBD