U.S. PRESIDENTS AND PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES

SPRING, 2016
INSTRUCTOR: YUANMIN LEI
SHU-UK CENTER FOR AMERICAN STUDIES, SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY
About the Instructor

Yuanmin LEI was trained for his Ph. D degree in American Studies. One of the most popular professors at Shanghai University, he has been teaching such courses as “Foreign Relations of China (to international students)”, “U.S. Presidents and Presidential Speeches”, “Language and Society—race, gender, class, nationality and their linguistic representation” and a few language courses. He was a visiting scholar at the University of Kentucky from Aug. 2013 to Aug. 2014.
Offered as a separate one, this course is an elective for domestic students. It is given in a series of lectures spanning 10 weeks, with each lecture being roughly 1.5 hours long. Four office hours are available to the students every week. Designed for 20 contact hours, this course offers 2 credits. This course has been offered for more than 4 years now.
- **Instructor info**: Yuanmin LEI, English Dept., Shanghai University  
  Email: leiyuanmin@126.com; Office Hours: 16:00—20:00, Monday

- **Teaching goals**: help the students improve their English; help them understand U.S. history generally; help them understand the critical issues and moments faced by the few U.S. presidents chosen for this course; help them learn from the political wisdom of those U.S. leaders;

- **Materials**: presidential speeches, inauguration ceremony videos, biographical works, introductory works to U.S. history and presidency, related films, and online resources will all be employed; new stuff will be added anytime if it’s appropriate;

- **Course description**: This course tries to examine the unprecedented situations facing some U.S. Presidents and how these great leaders employed their political wisdom in dealing with the crises or cases. It also aims to explore if we can learn anything from the American experience. In addition some speeches by these presidents will be studied so that the students can understand the political ideas in the very words of the presidents themselves. Students are strongly urged to read about those presidents and report to the class the one single most interesting thing about those U.S. leaders.
Grading
1. Attendance and participation: 20%
2. Two in-class mini-exams: 20%
3. Final exam: 60%

Attendance
Attendance will be taken. Valid excuses are accepted only in cases of medical or personal emergencies. If any student is absent without the instructor’s permission for more than 3 times during the semester, he will not be allowed to take the final exam.

Academic Integrity and Classroom Policies
Cheating or plagiarism in presentations or papers will result in immediate expulsion from the course. Among others things, set your mobile phone on the vibration mode; be seated on time; ask for permission in case you have to leave class early.
- This course will be given in English in the form of lectures; PPT files, multimedia files will be employed;

- Students are required to give an oral presentation at least once every semester; it can be storytelling about the U.S. president under discussion or critical comments on his performance, policies, or even private life;

- Students are encouraged to support or oppose a certain U.S. president’s policies, a certain historical event so as to engage in in-class debates;

- Students are encouraged to explore if the chosen U.S. presidents are related to China in any way;
Evaluation of students will be based chiefly on the final written test and oral presentations; secondary evaluation tools include attendance and performance in class;

Evaluation of the course and professor will be organized by the university, usually in the form of ratings and suggestions; individual comments will be elicited occasionally.
DETAILED CLASS PLANS FOLLOWING
1. Intro to George Washington

**Virginia**, birthplace of George Washington—named after Queen Elizabeth I;

**American Revolution**—Why the U.S. Federal Government was formed 6 years after the war was won

**President**—How was the word/title first translated into Chinese

**Electoral College**—How the U.S. President is elected; How to relate the historical reality at the end of the 18th century to the fact that the U.S. president is not directly elected;

**Two-term precedence**—How meaningful is that, esp. against the political landscape around the globe back in George Washington’s day;
Respect for GW—myth (cherry tree) and truth (surveys of presidential popularity; how Cincinnati is named)
What is the unprecedented situation facing George Washington?
2. GW’s second inaugural address: the presidential oath and George W. Bush’s Inaugural Ceremony (video)

3. Students telling whatever they know about GW

   
1. Intro to Abraham Lincoln
   - Self-made Man, log cabin
   - Westward movement, Removal of Indians and four poverty centers in today’s America
   - Gifts exchanged between the New World and Old World: smallpox, syphilis (French disease), corns, peppers….(cases of anachronism)
• One moral argument by the South: slaves lived a better life than wage slaves, who would get kicked out when old or sick. Convinced?

• Why did blacks stay after the American Civil War? Mobilization of youths to the remote villages and border areas in the 1960s in China

• What is the unprecedented situation facing Abraham Lincoln? What is he most remembered for?
At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.
3. Students telling whatever they know about Abraham Lincoln


Part II, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the American Presidency*
1. Intro to Theodore Roosevelt

- Industrialization, Social Darwinism, Marxism/Socialism, Progressivism, Gradual Income Tax..., Is China still a socialist country? What is wrong with socialism and Social Darwinism? (Mr. Deng Xiaoping urged some people to get rich ahead of others.)

- New York—How it was named (Wall Street, New Zealand, Fort Zeelandia...);

- Spanish-American War, the Philippines (How it was named, what it was called in ancient Chinese literature)

- When does the Vice President take over?
What is the unprecedented situation facing Theodore Roosevelt? Why is called the Father of the Second Founding of America? What has China learned from the American experience in Theodore Roosevelt’s day?
2. THEODORE ROOSEVELT’S NOBEL PEACE PRIZE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

- Why was he awarded this prize?

  - Sandwich structure for certain letters (write to your manager asking for a salary raise; write back to a friend that has written to borrow money from you…)

  - Sample: 1) tell your friend you are happy that he is now starting his own business; 2) tell him why you can’t lend him any money now; 3) tell him not to hesitate in future when needing your help.
3. Students telling whatever they know about Theodore Roosevelt
   Part IV, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the American Presidency*
1. In-class exam

2. Intro to Franklin D. Roosevelt

- On which day is the U.S. President sworn in? Why moved to the next day sometimes?
- Two-term presidency: tradition or law?
- Senate and Capitol: Their Roman roots; handshaking....
- Great Depression, Keynes, welfare system first established; healthcare in America: myth and reality; medical accidents
- America and China: Was Japanese anger at America understandable? Do you support America when it sends troops to some African country where a civil war is claiming hundreds of thousands lives? What do you think of the U.S. involvement in China’s Civil War in the 1940s? U.S. policy in regard to Taiwan: moral or ideological in nature? Or both?
What is the unprecedented situation facing Franklin D. Roosevelt?
3. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Fourth Inaugural Address
4. Students sharing knowledge of Franklin D. Roosevelt
5. Film: Seabiscuit (奔騰年代)
1. Intro to Lyndon B. Johnson
   - Civil Rights Movement; Counterculture Movement; Anti Vietnamese War Movement; China, France...--World turning left
   - Rosa Parks, sit-ins, freedom summer...Toilets for whites only, for colored:
     - War on Poverty
   - Immigration and Civil Rights legislations; Chinese Exclusion:
     - Class and Race in America
   - Ugly Americans; Ugly Chinese; Tourist manners
What is the unprecedented situation facing Lyndon B. Johnson?
2. Lyndon B. Johnson’s Michigan University Commencement Address
3. Students sharing knowledge of Lyndon B. Johnson
4. Film: *Glory Road* (光荣之路)
   Part VI, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the American Presidency*
1. Intro to Ronald Reagan
   - Economic crisis, stagflation, tax cuts, less generous welfare
   - Sino-U.S. relations at this time
   - Why could city youths in China (now mostly middle-aged) return to the cities in the 1980s? migrant workers—second class citizens;
   - Breakup of former USSR: new world order in the making?
   - Reagan quotes regarding government, communism
   - Six core American values:
WHAT IS THE UNPRECEDENTED SITUATION FACING RONALD REAGAN?
2. Ronald Reagan's First Inaugural Address
3. Students telling whatever they know about Ronald Reagan
1. Intro to George W. Bush
   - Mid-air collision between a U.S. spy plane and a Chinese fighter jet in 2001
   - 9/11 terrorist attacks
   - Changed U.S. policy towards China, particularly in regard to Xinjiang;
   - Enemies for whom no country could be held accountable: terrorists
   - George W. Bush’s Qinghua University speech, the Statue of Liberty, Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program
   - Jeb Bush and 2016 U.S. Presidential race
What is the unprecedented situation facing George W. Bush?
2. George W. Bush’s First Inaugural Address
3. Students telling whatever they know about George W. Bush
Recommended websites:
www.history.com, topic: presidents
www.millercenter.org
Thank you for your attention. All comments and suggestions are welcome. Please write to leiyuanmin@126.com.