

“O’Captain! My Captain!”: Dynamics of Political Leadership

MPH Fall 2016

Mr. Twomey-Smith

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman

We all recognize leaders when we see them: regardless of the situation, leaders possess something about them that make them irresistible, make you want to follow, make you take up their cause and transform it into your own.

Whitman’s passionate lament for the death of his treasured leader - Abraham Lincoln - provides an insight into the human condition and how leaders can inspire, mobilize, compel and enchant us. Whitman refers to Lincoln not as his president but as his “Captain” - the person that steers the ship during turbulent storms, in this case the Civil War. Never having met the President, Whitman was inspired by Lincoln’s leadership during the war to write a passionate elegy upon hearing of his death.

But exactly is it about great leaders that excite us and instill in us a desire to follow? What are the characteristics of great leadership? What styles of leadership are more effective than others? What attributes are required for effective leadership? How does the political system affect the choices that leaders make? How do leaders manage under crisis situations?

This course takes an academic approach to understanding what makes great leaders. While the course will look at leadership across history, it will also take a more theoretical approach similar to political science courses. The goal is to not only learn about great leaders that have transcended history, but to think more critically about the function of leadership in modern society. Beginning with a broad examination of leadership qualities, styles and the affect of political constraints, the course will then focus on the American presidency. Considering we will be studying leadership during a presidential election, this is a fantastic opportunity to examine the American presidency in “real time,” taking the analytical lenses we will develop to assess and evaluate the presidential candidates as they compete for the White House. After the excitement of the election, we will look at other leaders in other political systems around the world, before finally doing our own qualitative leadership analysis of a leader of your choice.

This course models many classes taught at college level now - interdisciplinary in nature, thematic in direction, and learning holistically about the intersection of leadership, political culture, and political systems in both the United States and around the world. It will give you a taste of how collegiate courses are organized and conducted. Due to this interdisciplinary, college-type approach, the target student demographic is juniors and seniors (although Sophomores will be considered who demonstrate a strong interest in the subject).

The readings for the course are diverse - from political science journal articles to contemporary reflections on modern political leadership. All readings will challenge you to think about leadership from a variety of perspectives, and encourage you to think deeper about the attributes that support effective leadership. These readings will be available on my website and/or handed out in class.

Assessments are varied (both presentations and papers), including four college-style seminars, a group project that will collect election polling data, and will culminate with a leadership analysis project.

Grades Breakdown

Seminar participation (four seminars)	20%
Leadership Paper	15%
Presidential Election paper	15%
Election Polling Project	15%
Leadership Analysis Project	20%
Class Participation	15%

Course Units

Unit 1 - Defining Leadership: Qualities, Styles and Constraints

Assignments: *Seminar*
Paper on Leadership Style

- 9/6 - Introduction: Course Expectations, Assignments and Activities
- 9/8 - What Makes a Good Leader? Leadership Effectiveness
- 9/12 - Leadership Qualities: The DNA of Good Leadership
- 9/14 - Leadership Styles: Pragmatist, Visionary or Ideologue?
- 9/16 - Constraints on Leadership: Working With (or Against?) the Political System
- 9/20 - ****SEMINAR #1****
- 9/22 - Leadership Paper Workshop

Unit 2 - The American Presidency: Transformations in Political Leadership

Assignments: *Seminar*
Paper on U.S. Presidency
Election Polling Project

- 9/26 - Understanding the American Presidential Character/Guide to Watching Presidential Debates
****Leadership Paper Due****
- **First Presidential Debate 9/26 @ 9pm****
- 9/28 - Presidents in the American Political System: Intersection of Executive Power & Legislative Power
****Discussion of Presidential Debate****
- 9/30 - Crafting the Presidency: Washington, Jackson, Lincoln
- 10/5 - The Modern American Presidency: Using the Bully Pulpit and Driving the American Vision
- 10/7 - "In The Shadow of FDR": FDR's Legacy & How Subsequent Presidents Embraced the 20th Century
- **Second Presidential Debate 10/9 @ 9pm****
- 10/14 - The Imperial Presidency: Extremes of Executive Power
****Discussion of Presidential Debate****

10/18 - Presidents in Crisis: Presidential Crisis Management Styles
Watch *Thirteen Days*

Third Presidential Debate 10/19

10/20 - **Discussion of Presidential Debate**
Watch *Thirteen Days*
Visit Margaret Thompson's "Modern American Presidency" Course @ Syracuse University

10/24 - Presidency Paper Workshop

10/26 - Election Polling Project Workshop - Survey Creation
****Presidency Paper Due****

10/28 - Election Polling Project Workshop - Data Analysis

11/1 - ****SEMINAR #2****

11/3 - The Infallibility of The Presidency?: Impact of Presidential Scandals on Leadership I

****End of Q1****

11/7 - The Infallibility of The Presidency?: Impact of Presidential Scandals on Leadership II

** Presidential Election 11/8**

11/9 - Presidential Election Discussion

Section 3 - Leadership Around the World: Impact of Political Systems on Leadership Assignments: *Seminar*

11/14 - Leadership in Other Political Systems - How Different Constraints Affect Style
****Polling Group Project Write Up Due****

11/16 - Authoritarianism - How Effective as a Leadership Style?

11/18 - President, Commander-in-Chief, Head of State and Prime Minister: What's the Difference?

11/29 - "The Accidental American" - Tony Blair and Using Presidential Style in Britain

12/1 - Leadership in Non-Democratic Systems

12/5 - ****SEMINAR #3****

12/7 - Non-Political Leadership: Differences and Similarities

Section 4 - Leadership Analysis: Qualitative Research on Leadership Assignments: *Seminar* *Leadership Analysis Project*

12/9 - Leadership Analysis - How to Analyze Leadership

12/13 - Theories of Leadership: Political Science Approaches to Studying Leadership

12/15 - Theories of Leadership: Political Science Approaches to Studying Leadership

12/19 - Project Workshop Research

1/4 - Project Workshop - Research

1/6 - ****SEMINAR #4****

1/10 - Project Workshop - Analysis

1/12 - Project Workshop - Writing

1/17 - Project Presentations

****Leadership Analysis Project Due****

1/19 - Project Presentations

Classroom Expectations

I have found that the best way for students to learn effectively is to talk, listen and study in an environment that is vibrant, intellectually stimulating, and safe to express your ideas and opinions. To better facilitate this, you should **always** come to class prepared (which means having done the reading and homework), with the required materials for studying - this will help with the flow of the class, enhance discussions and improve your notes. To facilitate this further, please do not bring food with you into class (be proactive and snack **before** class, especially if class is right before lunch). However, water is welcome.

You should always be considerate and respectful of others while in class - use these occasions to improve your skills as both a listener and a respondent. My role is to navigate us through the historical narrative, facilitate discussions and create a welcoming environment from which we can all learn and enjoy. Although I have largely taught at the college level for most of my career, I have thoroughly enjoyed teaching at MPH and have been very impressed with the level of student achievement. As you are now high school students at MPH, I imagine you can easily meet my high expectations.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated in this class. Academic honesty is vital to any scholarly writing, and plagiarizing someone's work is the biggest academic crime. You must always correctly cite all materials that are not your own. You must always credit others for their work; any author's ideas or conclusions (even if they are not directly quoted) must be cited. Students caught plagiarizing in their assignments will receive serious penalties. Please refer to this web link for further information on plagiarism:

<http://students.sunyocc.edu/central.aspx?menu=768&id=24576>

If you have any questions or concerns regarding plagiarism and academic honesty, please come and see me. We will also discuss in class how to correctly cite a source, and further questions about plagiarism can be raised then.

I am very excited and thrilled to be working with you this year!