

BOWDOIN COLLEGE
GOVERNMENT & LEGAL STUDIES 2001
WATERGATE AND AMERICAN POLITICS
SPRING 2019

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 2:30-4:00, or by appointment

The “third-rate burglary” at the Watergate complex in 1972 ultimately revealed broad abuses of presidential power, led to the resignation of the president, and lent its suffix to a wide range of scandals yet to be born. This course examines both Watergate itself and what it wrought in American politics. We’ll look at the history of the 1960s and 1970s but also, more broadly, at the relationship between the executive and legislative branches; at the war powers; the role of the press; campaign finance reform; governmental ethics, investigations, and impeachment; and the uses of Watergate in political and popular culture – not least in today’s headlines.

We will read all or nearly all of each of the following assigned books. They are available on reserve at the library and from various online sellers, including Bowdoin’s: you are encouraged to shop around. Other materials will be made available on-line via the class Blackboard site.

- Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, *All the President’s Men* (Simon & Schuster, 2014)
[other editions may be used]
- Stanley Kutler, *The Wars of Watergate* (Norton, 1992)
- Andrew Rudalevige, *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power after Watergate* (University of Michigan Press, 2006)
[available electronically via Bowdoin Library]

Not required, but very useful for further reference:

John A. Farrell, *Richard Nixon: The Life* (Doubleday, 2017). Perhaps the best one volume treatment of Nixon, placing Watergate in context of ongoing events in his administration.

John W. Dean, *The Nixon Defense: What He Knew and When He Knew It* (Viking, 2014). A comprehensive account of the scandal by a key player, based on assiduous analysis of a much wider range of the Nixon tapes than is usually utilized.

Elizabeth Drew, *Washington Journal: The Events of 1973-74* (Random House, 1975). An as-it-happened reaction to and accounting of the scandal by a sharp-eyed political reporter.

Note too Slate.com’s *Slow Burn* podcast, which deals with both crucial and quirky aspects of Watergate in season one: http://www.slate.com/articles/slate_plus/watergate.html

Course requirements. Final grades will be based on the following components. Due dates are subject to change, with notice, except for the final paper:

- A *short paper* (15%) and *brief in-class presentation* (5%) based on your research into an individual associated with Watergate – as conspirator, investigator, etc. -- and his or her role and legacy. Your subject will be assigned in the first week or so of the semester. Presentations will begin shortly thereafter, following a roughly chronological order based on your subject's involvement in the scandal. Papers will be **due March 4**.
- A *review* of a popular treatment of Richard Nixon and/or Watergate (20%), grounded in your now-expansive knowledge of the man and the era. **Due April 12**.
- *In-class reading exam* (25%), an identification test covering course materials: **May 6**.
- A *policy case study paper* (30% total), researching the development of presidential-congressional relationships after Watergate in a subject area of your choice (within reason). **Due Tuesday, May 14, at 5 p.m.** [in lieu of final exam.]
- *Course attendance and participation* will also factor into your final grade (5%). I expect regular attendance and vigorous in-class participation. The latter, obviously, cannot happen without the former.

And keep in mind...

If you are taking this course on a Credit/D/Fail basis, a 'credit' grade requires completion of all work for the course (exams, papers, etc.).

Late papers or other assignments will not receive full credit without an extension; extensions will be granted only in advance and in exigent circumstances.

Recent research universally finds that the use of computers as notetaking devices is counterproductive: the physical act of writing enables far more recall than does typing, and foregoing a computer provides far fewer potential distractions to yourself and others sitting near you. Further, my Powerpoint slides are made available to the class at regular intervals during the semester. **Thus I ask you not to use electronic devices of any kind during class.** Obviously there are valid reasons for exceptions to this rule (for instance, see the next paragraph) and you should certainly approach me if one is warranted.

I encourage you to address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. Students requiring learning or testing accommodations also need to be in contact with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

I expect all students to be aware of and abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code. It goes without saying – and yet I will say it! – that you are responsible for your own work. This means following the most stringent rules of quotation and citation in your written assignments. **Plagiarism is never acceptable** within a community of scholars (or, frankly, anywhere else); it is grounds not only for a failing grade on a given assignment or in the course but also, potentially, for dismissal from the College.

In this course we will use footnotes in the Chicago Manual of Style format, unless otherwise specified -- see http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html, or a reference librarian, for guidance. Obviously, if you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of your writing or research, or citation, please be in touch with me.

Schedule of Topics and Readings (subject to change, with notice)

(*) reserve reading, on Blackboard unless otherwise specified

January 23. Introductory session

- (*) Michael Barbaro and Alexander Burns, "In Trump's Voice, It's a New New Nixon," *New York Times* (July 18, 2016), A1.

Prelude: American Politics in the "Long 1960s"

January 28, 30. Nixon Rising

Kutler, *Wars of Watergate*, Ch. 1-3

- (*) Evan Thomas, "The Lives of Great Men Remind Us," from *Being Nixon*
- (*) Richard Nixon, "Alger Hiss," from *Six Crises*
- (*) Richard Nixon, "Checkers" speech (September 23, 1952)
- (*) Robert Dallek, "Lyndon Johnson's War," from *Flawed Giant*

February 4. The Politics of 1968

- (*) Jacey Fortin and Maggie Astor, "50 Years Later, It Feels Familiar: How America Fractured in 1968," *New York Times* interactive feature (January 15, 2018)

(*) Michael Nelson, *Resilient America: The Election of 1968*, excerpts

(*) Rick Pearlstein, *Nixonland*, Ch. 9, 12, 14-15

NOTE: renowned civil rights historian Taylor Branch will be speaking at Bowdoin on **February 13** (7:00 pm in the VAC's Kresge Auditorium). Please plan to attend.

Presidency and President

February 6. The Basics of Presidential Power.

- (*) The Constitution of the United States, as amended
- (*) *The Federalist*, papers #51, 65, 68-70
- Rudalevige, *New Imperial Presidency*, Ch. 1-2

February 11, 13. Nixon in the White House, and on Capitol Hill

Kutler, Ch. 4, 6-7

- (*) Joan Hoff, "Bold Attempts at Welfare, Health, & Economic Reform," in *Nixon Reconsidered*
- (*) William Safire, "Us and Them," in *Before the Fall*
- (*) Joel Aberbach and Bert Rockman, "Clashing Beliefs in the Executive Branch: The Nixon Administration Bureaucracy," *American Political Science Review* (1976)

Watergate

February 18, 20. *Dirty Tricks and Police Powers*

Rudalevige, Ch. 3

Bernstein and Woodward, *President's Men*, begin (Ch. 1-7)

Kutler, Ch. 5 & 8

(*) James Rosen, "Nixon and the Chiefs," *The Atlantic* (April 2002)

(*) selected White House tapes

February 25, 27. *The Cover-Up*

Kutler, Ch. 9-12

(*) selected White House tapes

[Note: You will need to watch the film version of *All the President's Men* during this part of the semester, either on your own or in a scheduled group viewing.]

March 4, 6. *The Cover-Up Unravels: The Media*.

Bernstein & Woodward, remainder

(*) Edward Epstein, "Did the Press Discover Watergate?" from *Between Fact and Fiction*

(*) James Mann, "Deep Throat: An Institutional Analysis," *The Atlantic* (May 1992)

[Note: No classes March 11-20. Enjoy spring break!]

March 25, 27. *The Cover-Up Unravels: Congress Investigates*

Kutler, Ch. 13-17

(*) selected White House tapes

(*) Richard Nixon, selected speeches on Watergate

April 1, 3. *The Cover-Up Unravels: The Tapes, and the Court*

Kutler, Ch. 18-19

(*) H.L. Pohlman, "U.S. v. Nixon," from *Constitutional Debate in Action*

April 8. "Our Long National Nightmare is Over"?

Kutler, Ch. 20-21

(*) statements by Presidents Nixon and Ford

Rudalevige, Ch. 4

The World after Watergate: An Imperial, or Imperiled, Presidency?

April 10. *Watergate and the Media, redux*

(*) Larry Sabato, *Feeding Frenzy* (excerpt)

(*) Steven E. Clayman et al., "A Watershed in White House Journalism: Explaining the Post-1968 Rise of Aggressive Presidential News," *Political Communication* 27 (2010): 227-43.

(*) Marvin Kalb, *One Scandalous Story* (excerpt)

(*) Matthew Ingram, "The 140-Character President," *Columbia Journalism Review* (Fall 2017)

(*) Jim Rutenberg, "Trump's Attacks on the Media are Working," *New York Times* (October 28, 2018)

April 15, 17. *Opening the –Gates: Ethics and Campaign Finance*

(*) selected White House tapes

Kutler, *Wars*, pp. 574-85

Rudalevige, pp. 155-66, 253-55

(*) *Morrison v. Olson* (1988)

(*) Victoria Farrar-Myers, "The Ripple Effect of Scandal and Reform," *Watergate Remembered*

(*) Kenneth Vogel, "How the Koch Network Rivals the GOP," *Politico* (December 30, 2015)

(*) Richard Briffault, "From SuperPACs to Dark Money," Columbia University Law School video interview from *Talks on Law* (2 parts).

April 22. *Scandal and Impeachment*

(*) Presidential articles of impeachment (Johnson, Nixon, Clinton); review *Federalist* #65

(*) Nancy Kassop, "The Clinton Impeachment: Untangling the Web of Conflicting Considerations," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30 (June 2000): 359-73.

(*) Yoni Applebaum, "Impeach Donald Trump," *The Atlantic* (March 2019)

April 24. *The Imperial Presidency at Home?*

Kutler, *Wars*, pp. 585-95

Rudalevige, pp. 139-55, 167-92, 233-53

(*) Eric Cantor, "The Imperial Presidency," Office of the House Majority Leader (2014)

(*) Juliet Eilperin and Darla Cameron, "How Trump is Rolling Back Obama's Legacy," *Washington Post* (January 20, 2018)

(*) Charlie Savage, "Trump Says He Alone Can Do It: His Attorney General Nominee Usually Agrees," *New York Times* (January 14, 2019)

April 29, May 1. *Foreign Relations, the War Power, and Covert Operations*

Kutler, *Wars*, pp. 595-607

(*) War Powers Resolution (1973) & veto message

(*) Authorization for the Use of Military Force (2001)

Rudalevige, pp. 192-233

(*) Executive Summary, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Programs* (December 2014)

(*) Christopher Pyle, "Barack Obama and Civil Liberties," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (December 2012)

(*) Charlie Savage, *Power Wars*, excerpt

(*) Andrew Rudalevige, "Attacking Syria Wasn't Legal a Year Ago – It's Still Not," *Washington Post* (April 13, 2018)

(*) *Trump v. Hawaii* (2018)

May 6. **In-class exam.**

(*) "Richard M. Nixon: End of a Remarkable Career," *CQ Weekly Report* (August 10, 1974)

Concluding Thoughts

May 8. The World After Watergate: Did the System Fail, or Succeed?

(*) Bernstein and Woodward, "40 Years after Watergate," *Washington Post* (June 8, 2012)

Note: this is included as the afterword to the 2014 edition of ATPM

Kutler, pp. 607-11 and Ch. 23

(*) Hunter S. Thompson, "He Was a Crook," *Rolling Stone* (June 16, 1994)

(*) President Bill Clinton, "Remarks at the Funeral of Richard Nixon," (April 27, 1994)

Rudalevige, pp. 255-59 and Ch. 8

May 14, 5 p.m.: Final paper due