



The Long View

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SYLLABUS

"Politics, Persuasion, and the Presidency:
Governance in a Broken Age"

Fall 2013

Professor Barack Obama Lecture:
Tues/Thurs 11:30 AM Sections
TBD

CLASS OVERVIEW: What makes a successful president? And who defines "success" in our current era of political breakdown? Through a series of lectures, guest lectures, and section readings, students will explore the recent political past and critique the current political system.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Attendance at all lectures. These will be conducted by Professor Obama, and will be crucial for the completion of all coursework. Attendance at section meetings is also required. Students will be asked to complete a midterm examination focusing on the successes and triumphs of the Obama administration, and will be asked to write a final paper describing one aspect of the collapse of the American Experiment,

LECTURES

"Introduction to the Grand Vision." A president beyond labels, a presidency about renewal and redemption. The notion of a Broken America, Healed. Weaving personal narrative, film clips, and multimedia artifacts, Professor Obama describes his Grand Vision for an America finally worthy of its self-pride. From his triumphant march through the bitterly contested primary to his historic acceptance of the presidency, Professor Obama sets the stage for the lectures to come. Reading: "The Magnificence of Barack Obama and the Unworthiness of We Whom He Rules," Joe Klein, *Time* magazine. PLEASE NOTE: Media will be in

attendance. Please reserve the first six rows for press.

"The Machine Strikes Back." Real change always invites a dialectic. The Forces of the System respond. Professor Obama will share his insights and reactions to the ferocious backlash against his historic presidency. Special attention will be paid to the early signs of an angry, misled white population. Reading: "Who Are These People?" by Hertzberg *et al.* in *The New Yorker*. Re-reading: "The Magnificence of Barack Obama and the Unworthiness of We Whom He Rules," Joe Klein, *Time* magazine. Supplemental Reading: *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain.

"Michelle, Unbound." Professor Obama's dynamic spouse, Michelle Obama (Visiting Professor of Nutritional Instruction, Harvard University School of Education) talks about the soft power of the Office of the First Lady, and her battle against childhood obesity. Reading: *The Chez Panisse Vegetable Cookbook*, Alice Waters *et al.*

"The View from the Small Screen." Popular television broadcasters Rachel Maddow, Chris Matthews, and Joy Behar share their memories of the Obama administration, its triumphs, and its historic renewal and healing powers. Professor Obama and the panel also remember and mourn the loss of legendary broadcaster Keith Olbermann, who tragically self-immolated on the Mall following the taking of the oath of office by Pres. Sarah Palin.

"The Codes of Racism." The Republican-party platform is "deconstructed" to reveal its underlying foundation of racism and hate. Professor Obama leads a series of inquiries into the code words "tax relief and entitlement reform," and their special meaning to diverse peoples. Reading: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, various authors. *The Grizzly Mama's Guide to American History*, Sarah Palin.

"An Apology from the *New York Times*." Professor Obama leads the editors of the *New York Times* in a discussion of their failure to support and report on the successes and triumphs of the Obama admin-

istration. Reading: "An Apology," Sulzberger *et al.*, *The New York Times Magazine*. Re-reading: "The Magnificence of Barack Obama and the Unworthiness of We Whom He Rules," Joe Klein, *Time* magazine.

"The Rise of Palin." Professor Obama engages in an historical and historiographical tracing of Sarah Palin and "Palin-ism" as it took hold in the backward and ill-educated mostly white provinces of the United States of America. Palinism, at its root, is what psychologists call an "irrational reaction of the beast" to true-to-life phenomena. In a compassionate, understanding, and gently guiding way, Professor Obama attempts to explain how Palinism represents a form of mental illness. Reading: *Understanding Psychotic Behavior*, Stevenson *et al.* *What's the Matter with Kansas*, Thomas Frank (selected chapters).

"Forgive Mine Enemies." Renewal, healing, moving forward—all of these actions require, first, forgiveness. Professor Obama spends this hour listing and categorizing his many enemies and their specific betrayals of him and his Vision. His enemies on the right are well known and were covered in the midterm exam. But his enemies on the left will also be discussed and identified. Professor Obama will wind up this lecture by publicly forgiving his enemies. Please note: Due to space limitations, this session will be open to MEDIA ONLY. Students will be allowed to watch via closed-circuit television in an adjacent facility.

"Obama: A Celebration." Through the power of state-of-the-art communications and fiber-optic cable (sponsored by General Electric), Professor Obama leads a worldwide celebration of his achievements while in office; Children's choirs from around the globe will celebrate his historic presidency, and indigenous poets (origins TBA) will sing and compose declarative and heartfelt odes. Reading: *The Obama Songbook*.

FINAL PAPERS DUE during Finals Week. Please contact your section leader for more information.