This course is a survey of United States political history and domestic policy that puts the evolution of the American presidency at its center. It begins in 1964 with the defeat of radical right-wing Republican Barry Goldwater by Democratic President Lyndon Johnson, a campaign that was a turning point for the modern conservative movement. Over the next fifteen years, and three presidencies, conservatism consolidated in the Republican Party, while the Democratic Party became the home for a liberal reform coalition (feminists, gay rights, unions, and veterans of the civil rights movement, among others.)

With the election of Republican Ronald Reagan 1980, conservatives claimed the mantle of government reform, while Democrats launched a long defense of the liberal state. Over the next three decades, this defense included Democrats adopting some principles of conservatism, principally the belief in individualism and prosperity through principles of market freedom now known as “neoliberalism.”
Increasingly, during the 1990s and 2000’s, conservative political principles tended to favor small government, low taxes, religious freedom and “family values;” while liberal politics tended to favor strategies of democratic inclusion, multiculturalism, and human rights associated with the legacy of the New Deal and the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Some of these political elements coalesced, first around the militant "Tea Party" movement, and then around the candidacy of Donald J. Trump. By 2016, politics – and the competition for the presidency -- reformulated itself around an electorate increasingly divided over wedge issues that seemed to pit the rights of some Americans against the rights of others: abortion, gun ownership, immigration, racism and civil rights, sexual and gender rights, and jobs.

Through a close focus on presidential politics, highlighting changes in media, technology and communication as they evolved over half a century, this course hopes to answer the question: how did we get here?

Readings and Films:

We will be using a few chapters of a textbook, *The American Yawp*, which is online and free. The purpose is to give you a general, narrative overview of the period under question, so that we are all on the same page. The Yawp is a collaborative effort of a group of professional historians that strives for a neutral point of view -- all the same, you may wish to think critically about the arguments made there, and bring those questions up in weekly discussions.

I will link directly to appropriate sections of the resource when it is time for you to read them; however, if there are issues into which you would like to delve more deeply, please feel free to explore other parts of the book.

All articles/chapters listed on the syllabus will be available in this Canvas, listed in the modules where you should read them.

All films are available in electronic reserves (hint: these films *always* play better in Chrome when watched via The New School site.) This semester we will be watching:

- *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976)
- *Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story* (Stefan Forbes, 2008)
- *The War Room* (Chris Hegedus and D.A. Pennebaker, 1993)
- *Get Me Roger Stone* (Dylan Bank and Daniel DeMauro, 2017)

Learning Outcomes:

Our semester will focus on developing the following capacities associated with the study of history and politics:
• **Critical reading of scholarly articles and primary documents.** Whether we agree or disagree with a secondary or primary source, our first question should be: what is the writer trying to convey and how will it help us do our work? Is our view of the text fair? Might another reasonable reader have a different view? Even, or especially, if we disagree we then want to ask: how does what I have just read, watched or listened to contribute to my work?

• **Generating useful questions.** Historical scholarship depends on asking a good question as much as it depends on being able to answer a question.

• **Researching answers to our questions.** Each writing assignment will have a research component. Portions of some classes will be devoted to exploring the possibilities that different primary sources have for writing history.

• **Developing our ideas in respectful discussion with others.** No historian is expected to know everything. Making oral arguments for your own point of view, and listening/responding creatively to the point of view of others is how we develop a deeper critical understanding of a topic.

**University Resources:**

There are numerous resources at The New School to help you succeed: they include your professor (me), your academic advisor, and the offices listed below.

Your resources Include:

• Meeting with the professor. Please email me to set up an appointment. I prefer to do this during business hours, but if your schedule precludes this, I can be flexible. Please don’t wait until you are desperate! Part of my job is to help students outside of class, consult about the broader mission of your education, or just go have coffee!

• **The library.** Librarians can be particularly helpful in guiding you through any research required for this course, how to use a data base, and how to search for the exact source you need -- and in fact, they are paid to do this for faculty and students alike! As a New School student, you may also access all library services at New York University’s Bobst Library. Remember that Internet research is not always the best way to get what you need: Google and other search engines tend to give you what you already know, not what you don’t know, or specialized research that best suits your needs.

• **The University Learning Center.** Like librarians, learning center professionals are there to help you do your work. Again, you don’t have to be struggling, only the desire to improve some aspect of your work: taking better notes, writing more lucidly, and reading faster would be a few of the basic skills you might want to improve.

• **Disability Services.** In keeping with the university’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS).
SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to me. At that point, I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. If you have already been diagnosed with cognitive or physical disability, this is where you go to ensure that you have equal access to an education. If you have ever struggled with school, seen a pattern in those struggles, or are frustrated in your attempts to plan, work effectively, or stay organized, you might want to consult with this office to see if they can support you. Equal access to education for all disabilities may include: extra time for graded work, an assistant to help you, or other accommodations.

Week 1 | August 28 – September 3 | Introduction

Week 2 | September 5 – September 10 | Conservative Visions for Change

Major Readings:

- Steven Fraser, “The Limousine Liberal’s Family Tree.”

Week 3 | September 11 – September 18 | A Rights Revolution

Major Readings:


Guest:

- Leah M. Wright Rigueur, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Week 4 | September 18 - September 24 | Realignment

Major Readings:


Film:

- “Chisholm ‘72: Unbought and Unbossed”
Week 5 | September 25 - October 1 | Urban Decline

Major Readings:

- “The Unraveling,” parts 4-6, *The American Yawp*.
- Michael Javen Fortner, “The Reign of Criminal Terror Must Be Stopped Now”

Film:

- “Taxi Driver”

Week 6 | October 2 – October 8 | The Rise of the Right

Major Readings:

- David Horowitz, “A Radical’s Disenchantment” (1979)

Guest:

- Dennis DesLippe, Associate Professor of American Studies, Franklin and Marshall College

Video:


Week 7 | October 9 – October 15 | The Reagan Revolution

Major Readings:

- Nancy MacLean, “Large Things Can Start from Small Beginnings” and “Never Compromise”
- “The Triumph of the Right,” parts 4-6, *The American Yawp*.

Guest:

- Jennifer Brier, Associate Professor of History, University of Illinois – Chicago.
**Week 8 | October 16-October 22 | Midterm Quiz**

**Week 9 | October 23 – October 29 | Dog Whistle Politics**

**Major Readings:**


**Film:**

- “Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story”

**Week 10 | October 30 – November 5 | It’s the Economy, Stupid**

**Major Readings:**


**Film:**

- “The War Room”

**Week 11 | November 6 – November 12 | Compassionate Conservatism**

**Major Readings:**

- Marvin Olansky, “Compassionate Conservatism”
- Emily Nussbaum, "The TV That Created Donald Trump"

**Video:**


**Week 12 | November 13-November 19 | A Click Bait Nation?**

**Major Readings:**

- Eli Pariser, *The User is the Content*
- Matthew Gross, "Blogging for America"
- David Greenberg, "George W. Bush and the Truthiness Problem"
THANKSGIVING

Week 13 | November 27 – December 3 | Hope, Change and Tea Parties

Major Readings:

- Josh Green, “Nobody Builds a Wall Like Trump”
- Jill Lepore, "How to Commit Revolution"

Week 14 | December 4 - December 10 | The 2016 Campaign – What Happened?

Major Readings:

- Jeff Flake, "Conscience of a Conservative"

Film:

- “Get Me Roger Stone”

Week 15 | Final Exam Due No Later Than December 17