This course is designed for serious students who wish to be challenged in the classroom. In order to provide a suitable environment and maximize each student’s educational opportunities the following rules apply. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken by the grader. Students who cut three classes will have their grade in the course reduced to the next lower grade, for example from a B to a C. Five cuts will lead to a grade of F in the course. Arriving late to class will be counted as half a cut. Accordingly, students whose schedules prevent them from being on time consistently should not enroll in this course. No one will be allowed to leave early without my permission.

The assigned reading for the semester consists of four books. Students will not be able to pass the course without reading the books carefully as identification questions drawn solely from the reading will be a feature of each exam. On a typical day I will lecture for about 30 minutes, show a video clip for 20 or so minutes, and lecture again for the rest of the period.

The lectures will be largely devoted to political history, centering on the presidents. The assigned readings, however, cover a much broader range of subjects, women, minorities, immigration, and the changing faces of American society and culture. My aim is to offer a comprehensive overview of the period that contradicts certain preconceptions, encourages thought, and obliges students to work harder than they expected.