This seminar explores American first ladies as political and social actors. Our primary question is: what does American history and politics look like when told through the stories of women with great access to power but with little formal power of their own. We will both trace the evolution of the role of first lady and explore how individual women who have held this role have understood it and adapted it. This is an upper level course. Every student is required to read all assignments and be prepared for a class discussion each week. You will be expected to write, read, and analyze regularly. There will be no lectures. This is a seminar and reading course based on a graduate education model.

Assessment

Class leadership during one week and regular class participation (15%)

Each week one (in a few cases two) students are responsible for formulating discussion questions, posting them to Blackboard by 7pm on Tuesday evening before class, and leading the class in discussion. Students are encouraged, but not required, to use power point, video, and other online resources during the class presentation.

Students are expected to be active participants every week in class.

Three Short Papers (60%)

You MUST complete THREE (3) short papers. Each paper is to be 4-6 pages long. Each one must be about a different first lady. The paper should not be simply a summary of what we have read in class. Instead each paper should critically and analytically engage the story of the first lady it explores. The short paper should tell a bit about the first lady's biography, her historical epoch and the tone and quality of her role as first lady. You *must* develop an original thesis of some kind in each paper and provide evidence from the readings to support your thesis. Each paper is worth 20% of your grade for a total of 60%

Final Exam (25%)

The final exam is a take-home essay exam. The exam will be comprehensive and will ask you to compare and contrast several of the first ladies we have studied.

Required Texts

Readings marked with a * are available as links from the course Blackboard website. Books are all available through the university bookstore.
Watson and Esterowicz (editors) *The Presidential Companion: Readings on the First Ladies*
Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies: From Martha Washington to Michelle Obama*
James Benze, *Nancy Reagan on the White House Stage*
Allida Black, *Casting her own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism*
Jason Emerson, *The Madness of Mary Lincoln*
Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*
Woody Holton, *Abigail Adams*
Katherine Sibley, *First Lady Florence Harding: Behind the Tragedy*
INTRODUCTION

Week 1: Introduction
January 18

Readings:
The Presidential Companion (TPC), Introduction

Week 2: Abigail Adams, 1797-1801
January 25

Readings
Woody Holton. Abigail Adams. This is a huge book. Don’t be afraid of it. You only need to read a few of the early chapters then focus on the end.
Chapters 4, 9, 12, 25-end

Week 3: Sally Hemings, 1801-1809
February 1

Readings:
Annette Gordon-Reed, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings
Chapters TBA

Week 4: Mary Todd Lincoln, 1861-1865
February 8

Readings
First Ladies, Chapter 3
Jason Emerson, The Madness of Mary Lincoln

Week 5: Edith Wilson, 1915-1921
February 15

Readings
TPC, Chapter 5
First Ladies, Chapter 5
*Edith Wilson, Chapter 27 of The First Ladies Fact Book
*Edith Bolling Galt Wilson Actions Speak Louder than Words, Chapter 6 of Inventing a Voice: the Rhetoric of American First Ladies
**WEEK 6:**
February 22

This is the day after Mardi Gras. Why do I think class attendance will be low? I am cancelling class. See you next week.

**Week 7: Florence Harding, 1921-1923**
February 29

Readings
*First Ladies*, Chapter 6
Katherine Sibley. *First Lady Florence Harding: Behind the Tragedy*

**Week 8: Eleanor Roosevelt, 1933-1945**
March 7

Readings
*TPC*, Chapter 7
*First Ladies*, Chapter 7
Allida Black, *Casting her own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism*

**SPRING BREAK**

**WEEK 9: Theories of Modern First Ladies**
March 21

*TPC*, Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12
*Wives in the White House: The Political Influence of First Ladies*
Karen O’Connor, Bernadette Nye and Laura Van Assendelft
*Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 26, No. 3, Reassessments of Presidents and First Ladies (Summer, 1996), pp. 835-853

**WEEK 10: Jacqueline Kennedy and Lady Bird Johnson**
March 28

*First Ladies*, Chapter 8
*Chapters 34 and 35 of The First Ladies Factbook:
*First Lady as Catalyst: Lady Bird Johnson and Highway Beautification in the 1960s*
*Jacqueline Kennedy: The Rhetorical Construction of Camelot* by Elizabeth J. Natalle from *Inventing a Voice*
Week 11: Betty Ford
April 4

*TPC, Chapter 14
*First Ladies, Chapter 9
*Chapter 37, First Ladies Fact Book
*Betty Ford: A Certain Comfort from a Candid First Lady by Nichola D. Gutgold, Linda B. Hobgood, from Inventing a Voice

Week 12: Nancy Reagan
April 11

James Benze. Nancy Reagan on the White House Stage

Week 13: Hillary Clinton
April 18

*First Ladies, Chapter 10
*TPC, Chapter 13

*Women's Rights Are Human Rights. Hillary Rodham Clinton
*Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-First Century. Hillary Rodham Clinton
Foreign Affairs, Vol. 86, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2007), pp. 2-18
*Hillary Rodham Clinton's Orient: Cosmopolitan Travel and Global Feminist Subjects
*Chapter 20 of Inventing a Voice. Hillary Rodham Clinton: Using Her Voice. By Anne F. Mattina
*Chapters 1, 2, 3 Big Girls Don't Cry

Week 14: Michelle Obama
April 25

*First Ladies, Chapter 11
*Chapter 43, First Ladies Fact Book
*Chapter 7, Michelle in Sister Citizen, Melissa Harris-Perry
*She Ain't Oprah, Angela, or Your Baby Mama: The Michelle O Enigma

**Week 15: Conclusion**

May 2

TPC, Conclusion