

SEMINAR IN U.S. HISTORY (HIS 471)
America's First Ladies, Spring 2021
Dr. Katherine A. S. Sibley

Office: B/L 112L, but this semester I will be in my Zoom meeting room

E-Mail (preferred method to contact me): sibley@sju.edu

Phone: X1740 (History Dept.—leave message)

Class Meeting Times and Place: W, 6:30-9:15 PM on Zoom

<https://sju.zoom.us/j/99246345947?pwd=YnpaZWJYbE90NjJlRb1FQYUdIQT09>

Passcode: 1921

Office Hours: by appointment or T Th 12:30-1:45:

<https://sju.zoom.us/j/93477928559?pwd=YXRLSi8vaHJJU1pOZ0hPbERuNEltdz09>

Passcode: 1975

AND: W 5:15-6:15:

<https://sju.zoom.us/j/99668568028?pwd=NGFuNHY1V2ZYMHIaazNiektnlG4dz09>

Meeting ID: 996 6856 8028. Passcode: 1877

Required Reading for the Course:

- 1) Katherine A. S. Sibley, ed. *A Companion to First Ladies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016). Available by link here: <https://catalog.sju.edu/record=b1370835~S9>
- 2) Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *Nellie Taft: The Unconventional First Lady of the Ragtime Era* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006)
- 3) Katherine A. S. Sibley, *Southern First Ladies: Culture and Place in White House History* (University Press of Kansas, 2021)
- 4) Peter Slevin, *Michelle Obama: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 2015)
- 5) Supplemental Readings on Canvas (Listed in Modules online.)



Florence Harding greets a delegation of Filipino Women, 1923

This seminar will cover the history of first ladies from Martha Washington to Jill Biden, exploring how their political, activist, and ceremonial roles both reflected as well as expanded the opportunities available to women in their time. It counts towards the American Studies minor (among others), & GEP Overlays: Writing Intensive.

MODALITY

This course will be taught in the online teaching format, via Zoom (about 2/3 of our weekly class hours) and asynchronous learning (about 1/3). Each class period is important, not just to your success in the course, but everyone's chance to learn from each other—especially as we only meet once per week on Zoom. To make this long class most manageable on screen, we will meet for approximately one hour starting at 6:30 PM, break, and return for an additional hour; the balance of ½ hour weekly will be powerpoint/video lectures prerecorded for your convenience (perhaps 3 mini-lectures weekly, approximately 10 minutes each in duration, with questions to explore further in class). These powerpoints will be available on Monday by noon. Participation will be based on your presence in our Zoom classes and your active contributions, whether in the chat, in break-out sessions, or in our Canvas discussion boards (Rubric on participation is below). Assignments (papers, projects, etc.) will also be a significant share of your assessment. I look forward to seeing you as well in virtual office hours and by appointment.

HIS 471 Syllabus Course Objectives and Alignment Matrix

Course Objectives:

By the end of this semester, students will have demonstrated that they can:

1. Identify, articulate, and analyze the context, causes and consequences of the roles of U.S. First Ladies
2. Distinguish and evaluate the characteristics of multiple theoretical perspectives and methodological practices used to interpret this history.
3. Recognize the characteristics of different kinds of sources and understand how they are used to analyze this history.
4. Discover different kinds of sources and evaluate their credibility and utility in specific circumstances.
5. Practice the discipline's professional standards, including acknowledging and building on the work of others.
6. Apply a variety of tools, methods, and perspectives to investigate and interpret this history in independently developed, supervised research.

Alignment Matrix: Students will demonstrate their progress in meeting each course objective through the following activities:

Objective 1	Weekly Papers, Presentations, Participation, Research Paper
Objective 2	Weekly Papers, Presentations, Participation, Research Paper
Objective 3	Weekly Papers, Presentations, Research Paper
Objective 4	Weekly Papers, Presentations, Participation, Research Paper
Objective 5	Weekly Papers, Presentations, Participation, Research Paper
Objective 6	Research Paper

This course is a writing-intensive course. As such, students will learn invention strategies, consider and apply diverse organizational options, and reflect on stylistic choices in developing a series of writing projects.

Through analyzing texts and practicing their own writing, students will improve analytical and critical and/or creative writing skills.

Through classroom instruction and feedback on their work, students will learn the writing conventions of the discipline.

Through participating in the drafting process, students will learn the techniques of effective revision.

As a writing intensive class, the course will provide students with regular opportunities to practice writing effectively and persuasively, with an emphasis on appropriate form and style for the writing of history. This includes the development of focus-based arguments, backed up by primary and secondary source evidence, in a strong organizational framework, employing a readable and effective style, and correct grammar, spelling, punctuation and source citations. In addition, frequent discussion will offer students the chance to dissect readings with others, and present arguments and commentary orally to the class.

Assignments and Grades

In light of the writing-intensive nature of our seminar, the bulk of your assignments in this course will be writing-based. These will include **four short response papers** based on questions posted on Canvas drawing from our Readings, **regular opportunities for informal writing/sharing in response to prompts (on our Discussion Board or in Zoom)**, and **one full-length research paper** (18-20 pages). The class will also offer regular opportunities for oral participation and for revision and rewriting of select papers, based on the professor's feedback, as well as a peer-based workshop session to revise drafts of the research paper.

Readings:

Part I: Weekly Written Assignments, 20%: Beginning with our second week of class, and continuing through our tenth, there will be **weekly written assignments** based on the readings. A 2-3 page (350-600 words) response is required for each, and you should do **four** of these short papers during the first 10 weeks (no more than four will be accepted, and **no more than one per week**, as well). **You need to be present the day you hand in a paper; you also can't hand one on a week you are presenting.**

The papers will be submitted on Canvas, and will be returned promptly with feedback. At the end of Week 10, you should send in a two-page self-evaluation of your written work, your presentations, and class participation, including your strengths and weaknesses, and an assessment of how you see your progress in the class, both oral and written. You can't write any more after Week 10—so please plan accordingly!

Part II: Presentations on Readings (10% total)

You are expected to co-lead class discussion twice during the semester. This will require a close reading of each of the assigned readings to highlight key points and situate them in the context of our class, as well an effective effort to promote class discussion by including a set of questions and/or issues for the class to delve into in more detail (These questions should be on your powerpoint, readable by the class as you speak, and they should be **distributed throughout** the presentation, not just at the end). Each presentation will be each worth 5% of your grade, and will be graded for quality of analysis,

comprehensiveness, and clarity. They should each be between 5-7 minutes in duration, in total—not counting the discussion. As noted above, your presentation **should not coincide with a day that you are writing a paper**. Also, at least **ONE of the presentations must include an element of creative interpretation such as a play or interview (with your co-presenters), to bring our characters to life**. A rubric for the presentations is below.

Part III: Class Participation: 20%: Your active presence and participation is essential for this class to work. In addition to your assignments and presentations, you are always expected to participate actively—the course depends on it! This means not only being present, but being engaged in the discussion. To enhance your participation, please check Canvas regularly as Discussion Board assignments and updates may be posted there. That means before Wed. evenings, you should listen to the PPT lecture there and take notes on it, as well as read the other materials I have assigned. The PPT takes the place of one half hour of our class time.



Ida and William McKinley

Research Paper, 50%: Each of you will also write a research paper on a First Lady (or a group of them) or some aspect of the institution of First Lady. You will need to come up with a research proposal by the seventh week in our course, or by **March 17**, after our Library orientation on **March 3**, which I will review (as will one of your classmates). This will involve not only a topic but a carefully considered agenda for research, including a **problem** you want to explore (as well as a justification for why it deserves further attention), a **bibliography** for books and other scholarship you have or will consult, and potential **primary source collections** you will use in your research (the entire bibliographical list should include at least 10 items at this point, primary and secondary). You should also prepare two to three pages developing your introduction and especially an **argument** you want to pursue, underlining the significance of your topic and what you will argue about it. I will provide a more detailed handout closer to the deadline for this assignment. Later in the semester, on **April 21**, we will have a writing workshop on the longer papers. This is a scaffolded assignment, and you will be graded on the different parts of it as you proceed; your proposal (10 points), your draft for the writing workshop (10 points), and the final paper (30 points).

You should come to office hours regularly to consult with me about your topic, your research plans, and potential sources. Our library has wonderful guides to assist you with your research, and an expert staff,

including Mr. Dan Holden, who leads our Orientation on March 3. The main list of guides for the department can be found here: http://guides.sju.edu/sb.php?subject_id=12954

Our readings should spur you to think about promising avenues for research. Is there a historic problem, event, crisis, trend, or cultural phenomenon concerning American First Ladies that has you curious? Do American First Ladies stand as pathbreakers in any way? Or may they be best perceived as upholders of tradition? There are many questions you can pursue, but if you need help, please see me.

In its final version, your paper should be 18-20 pages, double spaced, and typed in 12-point font, including footnotes in the style of historical books and journals like *The Journal of American History*. The footnotes and bibliography may extend the paper beyond 20 pages, which is fine, but in either case I will accept no more than 20 pages (5000 words) in the actual narrative. **Plagiarism in this assignment (or any other) will not be tolerated and will result in an “F” grade;** you will turn in your paper both by hand as well as through our university’s anti-plagiarism service, Turn it In, via Canvas. Your paper is **due May 7, at 11:59PM**; no late papers will be accepted.

Grading Scale and Grading Rubric

Grading Scale:

A = 93 and above
A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86
B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76
C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69
D = 63-66
D- = 60-62
F = 59 and below

The A-range Paper has a thesis that is ambitious, going beyond the range of class discussions and showing mastery over the material. Each paragraph pertains to the thesis, speaks to a key point, and moves logically to the one that follows. Textual evidence is pertinent and cited appropriately. The writer has a strong command of language, varies sentence style and length, and speaks with a distinctive voice. There are generally few, if any, mechanical errors. It displays strong critical thinking and imagination.

The B-range Paper can be similar to an A-range paper in some aspects in its thesis and its use of sources, but even if the overall argument coheres, points may not quite pull together. For instance, it may offer an uninteresting, or inconsistently argued thesis; employ a generally logical but somewhat disorganized or undeveloped structure that may stagnate or become repetitive; include well-chosen but sometimes unanalyzed, unexplained, or undigested evidence; use sources in a correct but limited fashion; and/or be written in an unsophisticated style with some mechanical errors.

A C-range paper minimally fulfills the assignment. The thesis is plausible although it may be somewhat self-evident. The development doesn’t live up to the promise of the thesis. The writer may not demonstrate a clear understanding of the text and may rely on unsupported generalizations or simply leave parts of the assignment unaddressed. Sources may be added without proper contextualization. The paper may have quite a few mechanical errors.

The D-range Paper has no clear thesis; it may ramble in an unfocused and repetitive way. Because of the lack of a clear thesis, points don’t cohere. Even with an attempt to bring in supporting evidence, that evidence is too little and not sufficiently relevant. Paragraphs may show little relation to one another; there may well be significant gaps in coverage of the assignment, as well. The writer displays a lack of understanding of the text. The paper has many mechanical errors.

The F Paper: This could be a paper that has been plagiarized or a paper that is on another subject than the one assigned. But even a paper on the required assignment may earn this grade, either because of an

inordinate lack of evidence, mechanical errors, convoluted writing, sharply abbreviated coverage, or other stylistic problems, making the writer's points unrecognizable.

Grading Rubric for Participation

To earn an "A" in participation you have to demonstrate consistently that you have engaged the readings and the class materials. Always coming to class but never participating will not exceed a grade of "C." Occasional participation that shows you are trying/learning earns a B- or B, depending on how well your comments reflect an understanding of course materials. Realize that this grading scheme assumes that you are always in class. If you miss classes, your participation grade goes down accordingly. So, not participating through the semester and missing classes will have you earning less than a C grade for participation. Please understand, though, that I award half of your participation grade in the first half of the semester and the other half in the second. So, if you have not been very active participating by mid-semester, realize you have a "clean slate" for the second half and can earn a higher grade for that portion of the course.



Frankie Cleveland

WEEKLY TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1, 1/27

1/27: Introduction and "Republican Mothers, Paragons, Confidantes, Unifiers"

Come to class prepared to discuss your favorite first lady and something compelling about her; Discuss why you think First Ladies have emerged as a historical field

Readings for 1/27: *Companion*, Introduction (in the Link to Companion E-Volume on the first page of this Syllabus, as well as in Canvas), Chs. 1-4; *Southern First Ladies*, Introduction and Chs. 1-2

Week 2, 2/3

2/3: Builders of Court Culture and Frontierwomen

Readings for 2/3: *Companion*, Chs. 5-9; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 3-4

Week 3, 2/10

2/10: Testing the Bounds, Tragedies, Illnesses, and Civil War

Readings for 2/10: *Companion*, Chs 10-14; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 5-10; *Start Nellie Taft*

Week 4, 2/17

2/17: Victorian Women, Assassination Widows, and Southern Influences

Readings for 2/17: *Companion*, Chs. 15- 18; *Southern First Ladies*, Ch. 11; Continue *Nellie Taft*

Week 5, 2/24**2/24: The Age of Reform (and Reaction)**

Readings for 2/24: *Companion*, Chs. 19-21; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 12-13; Finish *Nellie Taft*

Week 6, 3/3**3/3: Republican Women of the New Era**

Readings for 3/3 *Companion*, Chs. 22-24

Library Orientation with Mr. Dan Holden

Podcast, <https://journalismhistorypodcast.podbean.com/e/episode-64-the-hardings-the-media-savvy-first-lady/>

Week 7, 3/10**First Ladies in Crisis: From the Depression to Dallas**

Readings for 3/10: *Companion*, Chs. 25-29

Week 8, 3/17**3/17 Ambassadors of Activism**

Readings for 3/17: *Companion*, Chs. 30-32; *Southern First Ladies*, Ch. 14

<https://journalismhistorypodcast.podbean.com/e/episode-67-media-relations-first-ladies/>

Proposals for Papers Due, 3/5: Bibliography and Thesis & Peer Review; Start *Michelle Obama*

Week 9: 3/24**3/24: First Ladies as First Partners**

Readings for 3/24: *Companion*, Chs. 33-37; *Southern First Ladies*, Ch. 15-17

Continue *Michelle Obama*

Podcast, <https://journalismhistorypodcast.podbean.com/e/remembering-the-bushes-the-power-of-obituaries-memory/>

Week 10, 3/31**3/31: Contemporary First Ladies: Redefining the Job**

Readings for 3/31: *Companion*, Chs. 38-40; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 18-19; Finish *Michelle Obama* and discuss

Read “The Inscrutable Melania Trump” (on Canvas)

Read Monica Hesse “The *Wall Street Journal* Column about Jill Biden is Worse than you Thought,”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/dr-jill-biden-wall-street-journal/2020/12/13/e43883a4-3d45-11eb-8db8-395dedaaa036_story.html

Assessment Due**We will not meet as a class from Weeks 11 & 12 (4/7 and 4/14) to provide time for your research and writing.**

Each of you should meet with me at least **once** within that period, during the class’s time slot, to discuss your progress, based on drafts you will submit to me ahead of our meeting. Appointments for these writing conferences will be set up later in the semester.

Week 13, 4/21, Workshop Day; we will go over rough drafts.

Students will circulate papers ahead of time and discuss in class. You will be assigned to a group of fellow students, whose papers you will critique in a shared class session.

Drafts should be 10-12 pages in length at this point. I will read them as well and provide feedback by the following week.

Weeks 14, 4/28: Health and Wellness Day. No class.

Week 15, 5/5: Presentations Day

Presentations (6-7 min each, plus time for discussion).

Precises of presentations should also be circulated before your presentation. **Your final papers are due May 7 at 11:59 PM.**



The Obama Family

CLASS POLICIES AND INFORMATION:

CLASS COMMUNICATION ETIQUETTE

Our small class works better and is more engaging when you are all visible. I also ask that when you are not speaking you remain muted (to keep out extraneous noise) and use the handraising function when you wish to speak (or just raise your hand), in order to ensure that everyone gets a chance to weigh in on Zoom. Of course, I understand there may be times when, for any number of reasons, you wish to have your camera off. In those cases, I would ask that you let me know ahead of time that you will not be on screen that day or for some portion of it (you do not need to tell me why, of course). Thank you for your cooperation.

ABSENCE POLICY

In this course, you need to attend regularly. Much of the learning experience comes within the classroom, where you, your classmates, and the instructor work together to generate knowledge. Such a process may not be something that can be quantified, yet it is essential to your success in this class. More than two absences will cause your participation grade to be lowered one increment per absence and will impact on your in-class writing assignments. More than five absences will be grounds for an FA. And please get to class on time; latecomers are disruptive. All absences and tardies must be accounted for in writing. (E-mail is okay.) It is up to you to make up any work that you miss.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Reasonable academic accommodations may be provided to students who submit appropriate documentation of their disability. Students are encouraged to contact Dr. Christine Mecke in the Office of Student Disability Services, Bellarmine, B-10, at cmecke@sju.edu; or at 610.660.1774 for assistance with this issue. The university also provides an appeal/grievance procedure regarding requested or

offered reasonable accommodations through Dr. Mecke's office. More information can be found at: www.sju.edu/sds.

THE SJU POLICY PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND RETALIATION

“As a Catholic, Jesuit University, Saint Joseph’s is committed to the just and respectful treatment of students, faculty, and staff. To this end, Saint Joseph’s prohibits unlawful discrimination against, and harassment of, its employees, students, or applicants for employment or admission on the basis of any characteristic protected by state or federal law. The prohibition extends to discrimination, harassment and retaliation by third parties visiting campus or participating in University-sponsored activities” (excerpted from the document). For the full policy, which includes information about available resources and confidentiality, please go to the following site: <http://www.sju.edu/int/studentlife/support/index.html>

TITLE IX AND THE SJU SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

“Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc.” (from Nadia Dawisha and Karen Dawisha’s Conversation column in the September 3, 2014, edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*). If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here <http://www.sju.edu/int/studentlife/support/index.html>

The SJU Sexual Misconduct Policy is available on this site.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Saint Joseph's University recognizes that physical and mental health strongly impact one's ability to do well in school and in life. As a result, there are many helpful campus resources designed to help students to care for their physical, mental, and spiritual health. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle and challenges. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking assistance sooner rather than later is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. The resources below can help you to cope with stress and to achieve your academic and personal goals.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides free confidential mental health counseling for all Saint Joseph’s University students. Currently, CAPS therapists are conducting tele-mental health counseling for students via a secure version of Zoom. In addition, counselors are available after office hours and over weekends to attend to urgent mental health concerns. To access 24/7 mental health counseling, students can call the CAPS office at 610-660-1090. <https://sites.sju.edu/counseling/>

Additional Resources:

- Fitness & Recreation- <https://www.sju.edu/health-well-being/fitness-recreation>
- Student Success - <https://sites.sju.edu/thesuccesscenter/student-success/>
- Center for Inclusion and Diversity: <https://sites.sju.edu/oid/>
- Campus Ministry - <https://sites.sju.edu/campusministry/>

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center is an invaluable resource for beginning to professional writers. We strongly encourage you to visit the Center—as you begin brainstorming your paper topic, as you work on the various drafts of your paper, and as you do rewrites of already completed work. The Center is 100% online this semester, and available for appointments Monday through Thursday 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m, Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m and Sunday from 6:00 p.m. to 10 p.m. To make an appointment using the online scheduler, use the following link: <https://sju.mywconline.com/>

PLAGIARISM POLICY: Plagiarism is never acceptable. Using another's work or ideas without proper attribution is theft. Make sure you always cite your research properly; there are numerous guides to proper citation, including the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and I will be happy to refer you to them, and answer any questions you may have. Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" on the assignment involved, necessitating your referral to the Academic Honesty Board to explain your actions. To guard against plagiarism, I use Turn-it-in. The SJU Academic Honesty Policy may be found here: <http://hawkcentral.sju.edu/link/portal/16125/16171/Article/95/Academic-Honesty-Policy>



Lady Bird Johnson in Grand Tetons National Park, 1964

SEMINAR IN FIRST LADIES, SPRING 2021**Presentation Assignment Rubric for the two, each worth 5 percent of your grade**

Presenter Name _____ Total Time 6-7 minutes per person

Argument & Organization	Use of Sources	Powerpoint	Delivery/Clarity	Q and A	Total Grade
(_/25)	(_/25)	(_/15)	(_20)	(_/15)	(_/100)

Argument and Organization

(Excellent) A compelling presentation of the readings' significance delivered/creatively interpreted in a clear concise manner that gives context, conclusions, and uses evidence from the readings (22.5-25)

(Good) A presentation on the readings delivered/creatively interpreted in a largely clear manner that gives context and conclusions (20-22.5)

(Average) A presentation that is adequately presented/creatively interpreted, but its context, conclusions, and source materials may be limited in scope (17.5-20)

(Poor) An interpretation that is not persuasive or well developed, likely because it is missing key elements of this assignment (under 17.5)

Weekly readings

(Excellent) Primary and/or secondary sources from the class readings are well utilized in the presentation to make the argument clear (22.5-25)

(Good) Primary and/or secondary sources are utilized effectively in the presentation (20-22.5)

(Average) Sources are mentioned, but not fully developed in the discussion (17.5-20)

(Poor) Limited or no use of sources in the presentation (under 17.5)

Powerpoint/Audio Visual/Creativity

(Excellent) The A-V component/creative framework strongly supports and even adds to the issues presented in the readings, reinforcing the presenter's argument (13.5-15)

(Good) The A-V component/creative framework supports or reinforces the presenter's argument to some degree (12-13.5)

(Average) The A-V component/creative framework supports or reinforces the argument but in a more limited fashion; some elements are missing from it (10.5-12)

(Poor) A-V/Powerpoint is read and little else is offered in the presentation OR creative element lacks a coherent framework

Clarity and Quality of Delivery; Group Cohesion

(Excellent) The presenter's points on the topic were delivered in an engaging, clear, and timely manner that complemented the others in the group (18-20)

(Good) The presentation was delivered in a generally effective way, and showed awareness of others' contributions in the group as well as the time allotted for all (16-18)

(Average) The presentation's delivery was not always engaging, clear, or timely, and/or did not seem to connect with others' work (14-16)

(Poor) The presentation lacked engagement with the audience and/or eye contact, did not leave enough time for others (or was otherwise unbalanced with their work), and/or was read (less than less than 14)

Questions

(Excellent) Compelling, thoughtful questions that are open-ended (13.5-15)

(Good) Strong questions handed that are open-ended (12-13.5)

(Average) Questions were adequate (10.5-12)

(Poor) Questions were not provided and/or were merely factual or otherwise lacked care (under 10.5)