

SEMINAR IN U.S. HISTORY (HIS 471)
America's First Ladies, Fall 2023
Dr. Katherine A. Sibley

Office: B/L 112K

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

Phone: 610-660-1741

Class Meeting Times and Place: T/Th 2-3:15 PM, Merion 246

Office Hours: by appointment and

Monday, on Zoom, 9:30-11:00 AM

<https://sju.zoom.us/j/98888958645?pwd=d1hwY0VHQ1RrMC9WVG9HRGQ1Z0FFUT09>

Thurs., 3:30 in my office and on Zoom:

<https://sju.zoom.us/j/98142704593?pwd=NDNleG1HRVAXNkdLUWJcVdtb0c2Zz09>

Passcode (for both): 1900

Required Reading for the Course:

- 1) Diana B. Carlin, Anita B. McBride, and Nancy Kegan Smith, *U.S. First Ladies: Making History and Leaving Legacies* (Cognella, 2024), e-book available through the bookstore or publisher
- 2) Katherine A. S. Sibley, ed. *A Companion to First Ladies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), link: https://sju.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USCIPH_INST/17rr6i9/alma99850521703916
- 3) Katherine A. S. Sibley, *Southern First Ladies: Culture and Place in White House History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2021) in bookstore and on reserve in the Library.
- 4) Rebecca Roberts, *Untold Power: The Fascinating Rise and Complex Legacy of First Lady Edith Wilson* (New York: Viking, 2023) **OR**
- 5) Karen Tumulty, *The Triumph of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2021)
- 6) 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, as well as their varying influence as presidential partners, both reflected as well as expanded the opportunities available to women in their time. It counts towards the American Studies minor, Gender Studies minor, and others, as well as the GEP Overlay of Writing Intensive.

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)**, and a **full-length research paper** (18-20 pages). The class will also offer regular opportunities for oral participation, as well as a peer workshop session to revise drafts of the research paper. Among other highlights, we will have a visit to the Pharmacy Museum on Oct. 5 to learn about First Ladies' illnesses, and a visit to class from the authors of our textbook in the last week of November.

Readings:

Part I: Weekly Written Assignments, 20%: There will be **four short written assignments** based on the readings (each worth 5 points). 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 can't write one after Week 10—so please plan accordingly!

The papers will be submitted on Canvas, and will be returned promptly with feedback. During Week 14, 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 (worth 3 points).

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 **posed throughout** the presentation, not just held to the end). Each presentation will be worth 5% of your grade, and will be graded for quality of analysis, comprehensiveness in use of the sources, liveliness and clarity. They should each be between **5-7 minutes** in duration, in total—not counting the discussion. If your presentation **should coincide with a day that you are writing a paper**, you should write your paper on a topic you are NOT presenting on. **A rubric for the presentations is at the end of the Syllabus.**

Part III: Class Participation: 20% (including Self-Evaluation): Your active presence and participation is essential for this class to work. In addition to your assignments and presentations, you are 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 assignments and updates are posted there, including links to the brand new Substack publication, East Wing Magazine!



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 **October 19**, after our Library orientation on **October 12**, which I will review. 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 or even 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 11/21**, 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, due 10/19 (10 points), your draft for the writing workshop/peer review due 11/21 (10 points), and the final paper itself 12/10 (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 October 12. The main list of guides for the department can be found here: http://guides.sju.edu/sb.php?subject_id=12954

Our readings will hopefully 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 5000 words in the actual narrative. **Plagiarism in this assignment (or any other) will not be tolerated and will result in an “F” grade; see section on Plagiarism below;** You will turn in your paper through our university’s anti-plagiarism service, Turn it In, via Canvas. Your paper is **on 12/8**; as it serves instead of a final, and papers handed in later will lose points.

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, 8/29-8/31

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 now emerged as a significant historical field

Readings for 8/31: *US First Ladies*, Introduction, Chs. 1, 3; *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, 9/5-9/7

2/3: Slave Holders and Frontierswomen

Readings for 9/5: *US First Ladies*, Chs. 2 (first section), 4; *Companion*, Chs. 5-9; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 3-4 (Presentation Tues).

No class 9/7

Week 3, 9/12-9/14

Testing the Bounds, Tragedies, Illnesses, and Civil War

Readings for 9/14: *US First Ladies*, Ch. 17, *Companion*, Chs 10-14; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 5-10; *First Paper Due*

Week 4, 9/19-9/21

Victorian Women, Assassination Widows, and Southern Influences

Readings for 9/19: *US First Ladies*, Ch. 9; *Companion*, Chs. 15- 18; *Southern First Ladies*, Ch. 11; Start Roberts, *Untold Power*, Introduction, Chs. 1-3

9/19, Global Smarts Visit to Class

9/21, Career Services Visit to Class

Week 5, 9/26-9/28

The Age of Reform (and Reaction)

Readings for 9/28: *US First Ladies*, Ch 5; *Companion*, Chs. 19-21; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 12-13; Continue Roberts, *Untold Power*, Chs. 4-6

Second Paper Due

Week 6, 10/3-10/5

Republican Women of the New Era

Oct 3—Pharmacy Museum Site Visit

Readings for 10/5: *US First Ladies*, Chs. 13, 15; *Companion*, Chs. 22-24; Finish *Untold Power*, Chs. 7-10, Epilogue; Start *Triumph of NR*, Introduction, Chs. 1-5

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

Third Paper Due

Week 7, 10/10-10/12

First Ladies in Crisis: From the Depression to Dallas

Readings for 10/10: *US First Ladies*, Chs. 6-7; *Companion*, Chs. 25-29; Continue Tumulty, *Triumph of NR*, Introduction, Chs. 6-10

Library Orientation with Mr. Dan Holden, 10/12

Week 8, 10/19

Ambassadors of Activism, Shapers of the White House

Readings for 10/19: *US First Ladies*, Ch 10, 16, 18; *Companion*, Chs. 30-32; *Southern First Ladies*, Ch. 14; Tumulty, *Triumph of NR*, Chs., 11-15

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

Proposals for Papers Due, 10/19: Bibliography and Thesis

Week 9: 10/24-10/26

First Ladies as First Partners

Readings for 10/26: *US First Ladies*, Ch. 8, 9, 11; *Companion*, Chs. 33-37; *Southern First Ladies*, Ch. 15-17; Tumulty, *Triumph of NR*, 16-20

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

Week 10, 10/31-11/2

Contemporary First Ladies: Redefining the Job

Readings for 11/2: *US First Ladies*, Ch 12, 13, 14; *Companion*, Chs. 38-40; *Southern First Ladies*, Chs. 18-19; articles about three most recent first ladies on Canvas.; Tumulty, *Triumph of NR*, 21-25

Review *US First Ladies* Ch. 17 on researching.

Fourth Paper Due

We will not meet as a class from Weeks 11-12 (11/7-11/16) 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. This is also a good time to complete your Self-Evaluation (no later than 11/21 11:59 PM).

Week 13, 11/21, Workshop: 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.

Week 14, First Ladies as Communicators

11/28: Visit with Professor to go over Drafts/Questions; **turn in Self-Evaluation, 11/28**

11/30: Visit with *U.S. First Ladies* Authors for Questions and Comments on the Book

Week 15, 12/5-12/7: Presentations

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

Precises of presentations should also be circulated before your presentation. **Your final papers are due 12/8 11:59 PM. There is no final exam.**



The Obama Family

CLASS POLICIES AND INFORMATION:

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. If students have need of assistance or questions with this issue, they are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) at sds@sju.edu or by phone at 610.660.1774. The Office of SDS also provides an appeal/grievance procedure for complaints regarding requested or offered reasonable accommodations. More information can be found at: www.sju.edu/sds.

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. To make an appointment using the online scheduler, use the following link: <https://sju.mywconline.com/>

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. 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. Counselors are also 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/>

PLAGIARISM AND AI POLICY: Plagiarism is never acceptable. Using another’s work or ideas without proper attribution is theft; so too, is passing off the work of a chatbot as your own an act of dishonesty in our class, not to mention an obstacle to your own intellectual growth and learning. Make sure you always cite your research properly, from whatever source; there are numerous guides to proper citation, and I will be happy to refer you to them, and answer any questions you may have.

Plagiarism (either of books or other publications, of websites, journals, and of AI) will result in an automatic “F” on the assignment involved, and the strong possibility of your immediately failing the course as well, necessitating your referral to the Academic Honesty Board to explain your actions. To guard against plagiarism, I use the Turn-it-in service, as well as have you sign the Profiles form. The SJU Academic Honesty Policy is here: <https://sites.sju.edu/registrar/academic-honesty-policy/>

Today we are all becoming aware that AI technology is on its way to transforming human interactions with education, work, and life in the same way the industrial revolution did (among other as yet unknown capabilities), and a most excellent article on it is in September *Atlantic*, should you wish to learn more.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/09/sam-altman-openai-chatgpt-gpt-4/674764/>

Since the use of AI will undoubtedly be part of your lives in the future, it is important to learn how to use it responsibly and ethically while protecting the originality of your own work. For these reasons, I do not ban it, but put clear restrictions around its use in this class, which also require that content in your assignments created with AI should not exceed 10% of the work submitted (e.g., a 350-word paper should not have more than 35 words from AI, which, of course, should all be clearly quoted with citations

To clarify further, and in consultation with the History Department, use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) is permitted in this course only for the following activities:

- Finding information on your topic (assuming you have already read our readings);
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of Generative AI tools is **NOT** permitted in this course for the following activities, which of course are plagiarism:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose Reaction papers or other assignments.
- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
- Writing entire sentences and/or paragraphs to complete class assignments.

Moreover, anything you take or use from a Generative AI program **must be cited**. As noted above, any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways will receive an F. When in doubt, please ask.

It's also important to note that AI programs like ChatGPT can be replete with inaccuracies, limitations, and biases; reliance on AI can thus spread false information or problematic claims (including fake citations!). Just like the practice of plagiarism of another historian's argument in a journal article, AI may stifle your own independent thinking and creativity, the careful consideration of your own conclusions from the evidence we examine. Use of AI is essentially mimicking a computer's neural pathways of generating information—instead of developing and refining your own ideas.



Lady Bird Johnson in Grand Tetons National Park, 1964

SEMINAR IN FIRST LADIES, FALL 2023

Readings Presentation Assignment Rubric for the two, each worth 5 percent of your grade

Presenter Name _____ Total Time 6-7 minutes per person

Argument & Use of Sources	Powerpoint	Liveliness of Delivery/Clarity	Q and A	Total Grade
(_/30)	(_/25)	(_/25)	(_/20)	(_/100)

Argument and Organization

(Excellent) A compelling interpretation of the readings’ significance delivered in a clear concise manner that gives context, conclusions, and uses evidence from the readings (27-30)
 (Good) An interpretation of the readings delivered in a largely clear manner that gives context and conclusions (24-27)
 (Average) An interpretation that is adequately presented, but its context, conclusions, and source materials may be limited in scope (21-24)
 (Poor) An interpretation that is not persuasive or well developed, likely because it is missing key elements of this assignment (under 21)

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 (22.5-25)
 (Good) The A-V component/creative framework supports or reinforces the presenter’s argument to some degree (20-22.5)
 (Average)The A-V component/creative framework supports or reinforces the argument but in a more limited fashion; some elements are missing from it (17.5-20)
 (Poor) A-V/Powerpoint is read and little else is offered in the presentation OR creative element lacks a coherent framework (under 17.5)

Clarity and Quality of Delivery; Group “Team” 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 (22.5-25)
 (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 (20-22.5)
 (Average) The presentation’s delivery was not always engaging, clear, or timely, and/or did not seem to connect with others’ work (17.5-20)
 (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 (under 17.5)

Questions

(Excellent) Compelling, thoughtful questions that are open-ended (18-20)
 (Good) Strong questions handed that are open-ended (16-18)
 (Average) Questions were adequate (14-16)
 (Poor) Questions were not provided and/or were merely factual or otherwise lacked care (under 14)

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