



HIS 250
Reading the Past: Method & Analysis
3 credits
MWF 2:30-3:25
HEG 209
Fall 2024

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: MWF 2:00-2:25; and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the ways historians think about the world and interpret the past. The course will highlight various methodologies that historians employ in their work, and train students in research and writing using primary and secondary sources. Each semester, special emphasis will be placed on the analysis of historical and literary texts that illustrate a specific theme.

This semester, the theme is “First Ladies of the United States, 1789-2024.” We will read, analyze, and write about the women who have served as first lady, with particular emphasis placed on how the role of first lady has evolved.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Diana B. Carlin, Anita B. McBride, and Nancy Kegan Smith, *U.S. First Ladies: Making History and Leaving Legacies* (Cognella Academic Publishing, 2024). Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-7935-4524-4. **Please make sure you have the correct book. There is a “trade press” edition of this book, but we will be using the “textbook” version. Make sure the ISBN number of your book matches what you see here. I will not accept buying the wrong book as an excuse for not completing assignments.**

Stacy Pratt McDermott, *Mary Lincoln: Southern Girl, Northern Woman* (Routledge, 2015). Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-138-78681-3.

Both of these books are available for sale or rent at the Keuka College Bookstore. Additionally, Lightner Library has a copy of both books. They are placed on Reserve under my name and course number at the Circulation Desk of the Library.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO LEARN IN THIS COURSE

Knowledge: This course aims to provide you with information you likely know very little about. We will cover the broad range of American history and place the first ladies into context, as well as investigate how each of them may have contributed to constantly refining the role and institution of first lady.

Analysis: This course will help you sharpen fundamental skills of critical and historical thinking, such as reading for the main point, asking good questions, drawing connections, assessing the reliability of sources, constructing sound arguments, assessing change over time, and determining the limits of what can be known. Equipped with such skills, you will learn to exercise analysis and discernment when confronting historical claims people make about the past. In addition to learning how to “think like a historian,” you’ll also learn why it makes sense to want to do so.

A Point of View on American History: As we work our way through the course material on first ladies, you will develop your own perspective on the nation’s past and learn to recognize, evaluate, and understand other viewpoints.

Rhetorical Skills: This course will help you improve your ability to speak and—especially—write persuasively. If you are concerned about how well you think, you should also be concerned with how well you write. Learning to write more effectively and logically is learning to think in the same manner. Concepts and thoughts exist in words. If you do not learn to communicate with words, you cannot formulate fully developed thoughts and will, instead, substitute vague impressions and poorly-conceived ideas. In this class, *how* you say something is just as important as *what* you say. So, even though this is not an English course, you will be graded on grammar, sentence construction, and style, as well as content. You cannot expect to craft a sound argument if you can’t get your points across clearly.

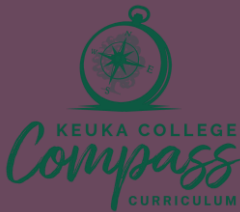
These four objectives will be measured by the exams and writing assignments in the course, and through participation in class discussions.

PROGRAM (POLITICAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY) OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following Program (Political Science and History) Learning Goals:

- (1) Understand how language shapes and influences our world in response to diverse social, cultural, historical, and technological factors.
- (2) Synthesize the terminology, history and major traditions, genres, ethics, theory, principles and methodologies of political science and history.
- (3) Apply research and conceptual skills and principles of political science and history for problem solving.

This course is part of Keuka College's new General Education curriculum—called **Compass**. The course fulfills the “Creativity” component of the Compass Curriculum.



CREATIVITY



Learning Outcome

Signature Assignments

How does creativity activate purpose, social change, and personal growth?

[HIS 250] is part of the Compass Curriculum which prepares all Keuka College students to advance solutions to complex challenges as citizens and leaders in their fields. This course supports your learning for the **Creativity** goal.

Explore and express original ideas, artifacts, and perspectives that demonstrate diverse, imaginative, and innovative approaches.

Signature Assignments are used to assess your learning in the **Creativity** goal. We will complete an assignment on Mary Todd Lincoln this semester that fulfills this goal by asking you to evaluate primary and secondary sources and create an argument-driven paper on the topic.

Read more about the Compass Curriculum in the Keuka College Record

STATEMENT ON MODE OF INSTRUCTION

This course is designed for in-person delivery. Although course materials are in an online learning management system (Moodle), the course is not designed to be delivered in a remote context. Students are expected to attend class in person. Many of the topics and content explored in the course will be taught and communicated via class demonstrations, activities, and discussions. Therefore, attendance and participation are crucial for students to acquire a complete understanding of the course material and for the course to achieve its learning goals. Switching to remote instruction could impose an undue burden given the amount of modification that would be required to alter the instructional method, and remote instruction could cause a fundamental alteration to the course in total. Should students find that they are unable to participate in class, they are required to notify the instructor immediately. Any student requests for remote accommodations require formal review and approval from the Office of Student Accessibility, as well as instructor approval. Absences will be managed per course policy as listed in this syllabus, and efforts will be made to help students who experience short-term absence, but the course will remain in an in-person delivery format in total. The modality of the instruction will be entirely at the discretion of the instructor.

STATEMENT ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: TITLE IX

Keuka College is committed to promoting the goals of fairness and equity in all aspects of the educational enterprise. We do this to ensure a learning, living, and working environment that is safe for all people, where the dignity of all is respected, and that is free of sex discrimination, gender and sex-based harassment, and retaliation. To ensure compliance with federal and state civil rights laws and regulations, Keuka College affirms its commitment to promoting the goals of fairness and equity in its education programs and activities. If information is shared with a faculty member on such behavior, they are responsible to share information to the Title IX Coordinator immediately.

Statement on Gender and Sex-Based Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

For more information on reporting options, resources, supportive measures for sex discrimination, gender and sex-based harassment and sexual misconduct, and resolutions at Keuka College, please go to: <https://www.keuka.edu/titleix>.

Policy for Pregnancy and Parenting Students

Keuka College establishes guidelines to ensure the protection and equal treatment of pregnant individuals, persons with pregnancy-related conditions, and new parents. For more information on the policy go to: <https://www.keuka.edu/pregnancy-and-parenting-student>

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Keuka College is committed to ensuring equal access to its curricular opportunities for students with disabilities. Offering a range of accessibility services, the Office of Student Accessibility facilitates reasonable accommodations to support our students with disabilities. Keuka College's Policy on Accessibility and Disability is implemented in the context of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as amended and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The term “disability” may include learning, physical, sensory, psychological, medical, and certain temporary impairments. The college provides students with reasonable accommodations in accordance with these and other applicable federal and state laws.

To request academic accommodations, students should log in to the Student Health Portal at <https://keuka.studenthealthportal.com>. Students requesting accommodations should review the guidance provided by the Office of Student Accessibility for documentation, but generally must submit documentation clearly demonstrating that (1) the student has a physical, sensory, psychological, or mental impairment, and (2) the impairment limits or impedes the exercise of any bodily or mental functions (or can be shown to exist through accepted clinical or laboratory diagnostic tests), as compared to most people in the general population. A diagnosis of a disorder, or submission of an evaluation, does not automatically qualify an individual for accommodations. Appropriate documentation must be provided by a qualified professional, meet reasonable currency expectations, include diagnosis information as well as information about the functional limitations caused by the impairment, and support the request of specific accommodations. Accommodations are determined through an interactive process that may include, but is not limited to, an intake interview with the student, verbal exchanges with the student’s medical professional(s) as appropriate, and conversations with college administrators and the student’s instructors. Students with questions may contact the Office of Student Accessibility by email at student-accessibility@keuka.edu or in person at 301 Hegeman Hall.

DESIGN OF THE COURSE

This is a course with a heavy discussion component that will ask you to analyze the interpretations of historians, political scientists, and other experts who have written about U.S. first ladies. Much of our analysis will occur during class discussions but the foundation for the analysis will come through the reading assignments and your writing.

This is a course with a fair amount of reading, and it is expected that you will read each assignment for the class period for which it is assigned. I am unsympathetic to students who believe that a college course should not require a lot of reading. Budget your time, plan accordingly, and just do it. You may even like it. It will require you to get out of your comfort zone of tweets, Instagram posts, text messages, and e-mails to fully appreciate what is being said. Do not let that daunt you, however.

This is also a **writing-intensive** course that will challenge you to construct thesis statements, organize the structure of arguments, and write succinctly and clearly.

One additional note: This course does not aim to advance a particular political or ideological viewpoint. All viewpoints, respectfully offered, are welcome in this class. My belief is that engagement of this sort provides the essential academic freedom that allows students (and the instructor) to learn.

REQUIREMENTS

Moodle Discussion Forums: Every Wednesday evening, I will post the following week’s reading assignment in Moodle (in the Announcements section of the course website), as well as the writing assignment that you will answer and post in a Moodle Discussion Forum. Both the

reading and writing assignment for the week will almost always come from the textbook—*U.S. First Ladies*. Your answer to the weekly writing assignment should be posted in the Discussion Forum **no later than 11:59 PM every MONDAY** so that you can earn full credit for completing the assignment. Late posts will be accepted, but will be penalized 5 points for every day they are late. **NO LATE FORUM POSTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THURSDAY AT 11:59 PM. A forum post is considered one day late beginning at 12:00 midnight on Monday/Tuesday.**

The Discussion Forum posts will be worth a total possible 20 points apiece. You should use complete sentences and proper grammar and style when composing your posts. Each answer should consist of one well-constructed paragraph of between 6-10 sentences. The grading scale is as follows:

- A—20 points (answers every question with full detail and evidence of serious thought/analysis).
- B—17 points (answers every question but lacks some small amount of detail; evidence of serious thought/analysis).
- C—15 points (answers every question but is lacking in significant detail or missing some serious thought/analysis).
- D—13 points (answers every question but lacks significant detail in two or more answers; or does not answer all of the questions; lacking in serious thought/analysis).
- F with demonstrated effort—10 points.
- F with no demonstrated effort—0 points.
- F with no turn-in of notebook—0 points.

There will be a total of **10** Discussion Forums for the semester. The point total for these assignments is 200.

I will read the Forum posts every Tuesday and organize the answers for use in our class discussions on Wednesday and Friday. You should be prepared to participate in class discussions on those days using your answers to the week's questions that you posted in the Discussion Forum.

Monday Primary Source Analysis: During Monday class periods, I will provide you with a primary source connected to first ladies that we will analyze in class through discussion. Usually, you will be given time at the beginning of class to read the source. At times, I may post the source in Moodle for you to have the opportunity to look at it before class.

Participation/Class Discussions: Your participation in class discussions is essential to the success of the class as well as a key component of your final grade in the course.

Many students hate to talk in class. I understand because I was once one of you. But someone has to talk. If you don't talk, I will call on you. If you are not prepared, I will call on you even more. It's better to battle on the ground of your own choosing. My goal is not to humiliate or shame you but to help you learn. Learning takes preparation and effort.

I will track your attendance and will incorporate it into your participation grade. You **will be allowed to miss THREE classes without penalty**. After the third absence, your participation grade will be lowered **10 points for each absence after three**. For example, if your participation grade is determined to be a 75, you will receive a 65 if you have missed four classes; a 55 if you have missed five, and so on.

The only exception to this policy: if you are a student athlete, or represent Keuka College in another officially-sanctioned activity that requires you to be away from campus during class time. In this circumstance, you must provide me with a copy of your game/event schedule early in the semester so that I do not count your absences against you. It is expected that athletes and others who fall into this category will use the 3 “free” absences for contests or events that require them to be away from campus, and that they will be in class at all other times their game or event schedule permits. I also reserve the right to make reasonable accommodations for students with a long-term medical situation that might require them to miss more than three class periods.

Participation will be worth a total of 100 points for the semester and will be graded roughly as follows: A (90-100)= Always contributes, in a spontaneous and substantive fashion. Responds to other students’ remarks and follows up when necessary. B (80-89)= Almost always contributes, but not always spontaneously or substantively. C (70-79)= Usually contributes, but not as often or as fully, or participates well but very infrequently. D (60-69)= Rarely participates, never fully or responsively. F (59 and below)= Never participates.

Exams: There will be two exams given in this course: a mid-term exam and a final exam. They will both be worth 100 points. The format for both will be essay. I will provide you with study guides one week before both exams to help you prepare. The exam content for both will include material from the reading assignments and substance from our class discussions. The final exam may also include a cumulative component. There will be no makeups for the mid-term exam except for emergency situations. There will be absolutely no makeups granted for the final exam.

Paper on Mary Lincoln: One of the assignments in this course is a paper that will ask you to analyze the material contained in the McDermott biography of Mary Lincoln. The paper will consist of your analysis of the book as a source, in addition to your analysis of the primary sources located at the end of the book. The paper will be worth a total of 150 points. More details on this assignment will come at the appropriate time of the semester.

GRADES

Each assignment/assessment will be given a point value, with your total points earned then divided by the total number of points possible for the class (650) to determine your percentage grade. Grades and comments will also be posted on the Moodle website for the course.

Attendance/Participation	100
Moodle Forum Posts 10@20 points	200
Midterm Exam	100
Paper on Mary Lincoln	150
<u>Final exam</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	650

When I come up with your percentage grade, it will then be converted to a letter grade. The grading scale is as follows:

A: 93-above	D+: 66-69
A-: 90-92	D: 60-65
B+: 87-89	F: 59-below
B: 83-86	
B-: 80-82	
C+: 77-79	
C: 73-76	
C-: 70-72	

POLICY FOR WRITTEN WORK/PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to fulfill assignments and assessments independently and honestly. This includes, but is not limited to: unauthorized use of aids or assistance on exams and assignments; re-submission of assignments in different classes; falsification of documents; and plagiarism. Consequences of academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the assignment or course and include notification of Keuka College administration. It can also result in dismissal from the College. Keuka College subscribes to Turnitin.com, an academic plagiarism software tool. Please ensure you cite your sources as your instructor may submit your paper to check for plagiarism. Please ask if you have any questions and/or refer to the Policy on Academic Integrity found in the most recent Keuka College Record.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Regarding how advanced forms of Generative AI Technology (commonly called “Artificial Intelligence”) relate to the academic integrity of classroom work and course assignments at Keuka College, unless otherwise articulated by the course syllabus or instructor, it is assumed that all graded student work is the product of the student’s mind, and not produced or aided by

any forms of Generative AI Technology. This assumption of originality includes not only the ideas but the actual words, images, or artistic expression of all assignments. Improper and unauthorized use of AI will be addressed by the instructor's syllabus policy and institutional Policy on Academic Integrity.

THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

The Keuka College Academic Success Center is a free service available to the entire KC community, including online and graduate students. We offer:

- **writing help** – in person, virtual, or via email
- **subject tutoring** – any subject
- **technology help** – for things that don't require IT assistance such as saving and organizing different types of files and using Moodle
- **Field Period tutors** – for help brainstorming Field Periods or Handshake proposal submission support
- **study skills mentors**
- Supplemental Instruction **study sessions** for selected classes

We are located in the new shared study-work space on the first floor of Lightner Library. Go to our appointment system at keuka.mywconline.com, our [Moodle page](#), email Academic Success Center Director Catherine Agar, cagar@keuka.edu, or stop in and say hello!

SELF-GUIDED MOODLE COURSES

The Writing & Tutoring Center has self-guided Moodle courses that students may take at their convenience. These courses are:

- [APA Basics](#)
- [Study Skills](#)
- [Time Management and Organization](#)
- [Avoiding Plagiarism](#)

Each course takes around 45 minutes and students will receive a certificate of completion when done.

READ AND WRITE SOFTWARE

The Office of Student Accessibility has purchased a software package called Read & Write that is available to all members of the campus community. This downloadable, customizable, and easy-to-use software will read web pages, books, PDFs and other documents out loud, highlighting the words as it reads to help you follow along. You can create notes and flashcards for later study, translate text into other languages, look up unfamiliar vocabulary, and much more. You can even keep the software when you leave Keuka College. For more information, contact Student Accessibility Specialist student-accessibility@keuka.edu or stop in to Hegeman 301. To download the software to your computer, contact IT.

ACHIEVING SUCCESS @KEUKA COLLEGE (ASK) DESK

The ASK Desk, located in the Lightner Library, will be open from 9:00 - 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. You can also message the ASK Desk on the Student Portal or email studentsuccess@keuka.edu any time. ASK stands for **Achieving Success @ Keuka** and the desk features specially trained faculty, staff, students, and administrators, called ASK Experts, who can help you with many problems you are facing or direct you to the right resource. ASK supports all students who want to become better students. We can help you with writing, reading, assignment interpretation, time management, and organization; connect you with peer tutors in academic subjects; help you find a location; or help you problem-solve how to do something you need to do. Not sure even what your question is? ASK! We can help.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

This course requires a substantial commitment on your part. To do well, you must keep up with the reading assignments and do your best on the Moodle Discussion Forum assignments. If you find writing difficult, you may want to consult the writing tutors at the college, so that they can help you before you turn in your Mary Lincoln paper. Preparation is the key. The benefit is that your diligent preparation will allow you to learn a great deal.

CLASS MANAGEMENT

Free discussion, inquiry, and expression are encouraged in this class. Classroom behavior that interferes with either my ability to conduct the class or the ability of students to benefit from the instruction is not acceptable. Examples of such behavior may include: routinely entering class late or departing early; getting up in the middle of the class to use the bathroom (*go before* coming to class); use of electronic devices; repeatedly talking in class without being recognized; talking while others (including the instructor) are speaking; or arguing in a way that is perceived as “crossing the civility line.” In the event of a situation where a student legitimately needs their cell phone during class, prior notice and my approval are required; students who have such approval must use a device that vibrates instead of rings.

Laptops, tablets, and phones are only allowed if you are using them to access the textbook or take notes. If you are found to be using electronic devices for reasons other than accessing the textbook or taking notes, you will cause the entire class to lose the privilege of using electronic devices while in class. A student who uses electronic devices for reasons other than acceptable class reasons will also lose 5 points off their final average for the course. This includes texting.

Important Dates

M Sep. 2: Labor Day—No Class

M Oct. 14: Indigenous Peoples’ Day—No Class

F Oct. 18: Midterm Exam

M Nov. 11: Veterans Day—No Class

M Nov. 25-F Nov. 29: Thanksgiving Holiday—No Class

W Dec. 11: FINAL EXAM GIVEN DURING REGULAR CLASS TIME

NOTE: Depending on how we progress through the course material, the midterm exam date is subject to change. If the exam date changes, however, it will only be moved *later*, not earlier than what is scheduled here.