

Truman Library Teachers Conference
“Presidential Elections: Washington to Obama”
July 18 – 22, 2016

Monday, July 18

8:00 – 8:30 Breakfast

8:30 – 9:00 Introductions

9:00 – 10:30 Presidential Election Exhibits viewing and activity

Teachers will have the opportunity to view the Truman Library’s special exhibition, “A More Perfect Union: How Critical Presidential Elections Reshaped the Constitution”. There will also be time to view the permanent displays relating to the 1948 Election.

10:30 – 10:45 Break

10:45 – 12:00 The First Culture War: The Presidential Election of 1796 and the Origins of American Politics
Jeffrey Pasley, University of Missouri-Columbia

The first U.S. presidential campaign was a completely unintentional affair conducted entirely by surrogates: Thomas Jefferson and especially John Adams disapproved of parties and stayed well clear of any public or private politicking, and there was nothing approaching a full party organization on either side. Yet the first contest still set a number of permanent patterns and recurring themes in American politics. One of the most striking was the beginnings of the characteristic way that American political opponents attack each other, originating with the French Revolution, as did the very terms “Left” and “Right.” Both parties strove to convince American voters that the opposing presidential candidate did not share their most fundamental values, be they conservative Christians in New England or radical workers on the streets of Philadelphia and New York. Liberals painted John Adams as an imperious aristocrat who disdained the common people and longed for monarchy. They tore apart his voluminous writings for out-of-context quotations celebrating social hierarchy, and then spread the word of these Adams "gaffes" far and wide. The "Right" in the meantime, attacked Thomas Jefferson as a nutty professor with a terminal case of radical chic. Federalists lampooned Jefferson's interest in science and technology and derided his progressive views as dangerous, naive theories, and called him a diplomatic lightweight.

Noon – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 3:00 President Harry Truman & President George Washington...Hellos, Goodbyes & Middle Names
Stacia Bystrowski Smith, Mount Vernon, Master Educator

Teachers attending this workshop will briefly explore the backgrounds and virtues held in common by both President Washington and President Truman, utilizing this knowledge as a lens to reexamine the elections of 1789, 1792 and 1948 in light of the visions both men had for the United States and the way in which each man viewed the role of its President. Participants will also revisit the farewell addresses of both Presidents with an emphasis on the cautions both laid out for a future America... leading to a group evaluation assessing how the wisdom imparted by Truman and Washington has been embraced (or abandoned) by Americans and the candidates running in the 2016 presidential election.

3:00 – 3:15 Break

3:15 – 4:30 America’s First Presidential Election

Edward J. Larson

In this session, Ed Larson will discuss how the first federal election (1788-89) operated with particular attention to the contests for president, vice president, and congress. He will briefly cover how this process matured over the next eight years.

4:30 - 4:45 Wrap up and discussion of lesson plan and research sessions

Tuesday, July 19

8:30 – 9:00 Breakfast

9:00 – 10:15

The Catastrophic Election of 1800

Edward J. Larson

In this session, Ed Larson will discuss how the fourth presidential election (held in 1800-01) derailed so catastrophically and was ultimately resolved in the House of Representatives. He will briefly cover how this election led to the 12th Amendment.

10:15 – 10:30 Break

10:30 – 11:45

Corrupt Bargain or Democratic Choice? Adams, Jackson, and 1824's Five Horse Race

Donald Ratcliffe

A new look at the controversial election in which the House of Representatives, exercising a power it still possesses, made John Quincy Adams president instead of the popular hero Andrew Jackson.

11:45 – 12:30 Lunch

12:30 – 1:45

Rethinking the Election of 1860

A. James Fuller, University of Indianapolis

The election that brought on the Civil War featured four major candidates for president, each with unique motivations and campaign styles. A reexamination of Abraham Lincoln, John C. Breckinridge, Stephen Douglas, and John Bell demonstrates just how complex the 1860 election actually was, while also showing us what was at stake in that pivotal contest.

1:45 – 2:00 Break

2:00 – 3:30

Debating the 1860 Election

Genevieve Kaplan, Lincoln Presidential Library

During the 1860 election, the four candidates represented a wide variety of opinions on the status of slavery in the United States. The outcome of the election proved to be a turning point the history of the United States with people and states feeling so passionate about their personal viewpoints that the country literally divided itself in half. This presentation will divide participants into groups, each representing one candidate. The groups will work with resources to learn more about their candidate's viewpoints before participating in a live moderated debate.

3:30 - 4:30 Teacher research

4:30 Wrap up

Wednesday, July 20

8:30 – 9:00 Breakfast

9:00 – 10:15

Fraud of the Century: Rutherford B. Hayes, Samuel Tilden, and the Stolen Election of 1876

Roy Morris Jr

This session will examine the most corrupt and controversial presidential election in American history, the 1876 contest between Republican nominee Rutherford B. Hayes and Democratic standard-bearer Samuel Tilden. It will describe the sinuous process by which Tilden was deprived of the presidency by fast-thinking Republican operatives in New York and three contested Southern states.

10:15 – 10:30 Break

10:30 – 11:45

1920: The Year of the Six Presidents

David Pietrusza

In 1920, a record six past, present, or future chief executives eye the great prize of the Presidency, each with a unique style and vision of the office and the nation: Theodore Roosevelt; Woodrow Wilson; Warren G. Harding; Calvin Coolidge; Herbert Hoover; and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch

12:45 – 2:00

From "Most Popular Man in the World" to "Hoovervilles," Herbert Hoover's Campaigns of 1928 and 1932.

Elizabeth Dinschel, Hoover Library.

This session will start with a bell ringer that can be used in the classroom, followed by a look at Hoover's campaign bids. In 1928, Hoover won by the largest Presidential election landslide in history. When he lost to FDR in 1932, his followers dwindled down to menial numbers. We will evaluate what the circumstances were leading up to the 1928 and 1932 elections and discuss how history books interpret the man revered as "the great humanitarian" and simultaneously, and erroneously, blamed for the Great Depression.

2:00 - 2:15 Break

2:15 – 3:30

Franklin D. Roosevelt: President Again, and Again, and Again

Jeff Urbin, FDR Library

Franklin D. Roosevelt is the only person to have ever launched, endured and won four national Presidential elections. Each campaign cycle had its own unique set of issues and challenges. The first took place in darkest year of the Great Depression, when many in the country had lost all hope in our elected officials. The second was a landslide that left FDR with a mandate that caused him to over reach in some of his objectives. The third was held on the eve of the Second World War and broke a tradition that had been set by none other than George Washington himself. His final campaign, which many think he was too sick to have undertaken, was carried out as the Allies were nearing victory over the Axis Powers and were set to begin planning for the peace that would follow. This session explores the key motivations, issues and circumstances that surrounded each campaign and led to a constitutional amendment that now caps the Presidency at just two terms.

3:30 - 4:30 Teacher Research

4:30 Wrap up

5:00 Reception and dinner

6:30 Evening program

1948: Harry Truman's Improbable Victory and the Year that Transformed America

David Pietrusza

History recalls the iconic headline of the Chicago Tribune proclaiming "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN." But far, far more exists to 1948's election than a single inglorious headline and a stunning upset victory. Award-winning author David Pietrusza goes beyond the headlines to reveal backstage events and to place in context a down-to-the-wire donnybrook fought against the background of an erupting Cold War, the Berlin Airlift, and the birth of Israel, a post-war America facing exploding storms over civil rights, and domestic communism.

Thursday, July 21

830 – 9 Breakfast

9:00 – 10:15

1960: LBJ vs JFK vs Nixon: The Epic Campaign that Forged Three Presidencies

David Pietrusza

Round One of 1960s electrifying presidential contest pits charismatic upstart John Kennedy's blend of Harvard eloquence, social register style, and dashing vigor against molasses-drawl Senate power broker Lyndon's Johnson mercurial mix of overbearing Texas bluster and maddening indecision. Kennedy versus Johnson—the cool patrician versus the manic cowboy. Round Two pits JFK—dashing yet flawed in ways kept carefully hidden for an adoring public— head-to-head, down-to-the wire, against lone-wolf Richard Nixon's brooding, ultimately-damned, quest for political power and personal validation. Nixon versus Kennedy—Uriah Heep versus Dorian Gray. And, when the ultimate cliff-hanger ending of twentieth century politics hurtles to its exhausted conclusion, its warring tickets find themselves separated by only two tenths of a single percentage point of the popular vote—and the Mayor of Chicago.

10:15 Break

10:30 – 11:45

'Welcome Back, Voter!' Ford vs. Carter: A Campaign that Should be Remembered

William T. Horner, University of Missouri

The campaign of 1976 is politically and historically significant for many reasons. First, it took place with the backdrop of America's Bicentennial and in the wake of two of America's greatest political scandals. It was the first campaign in which the new rules for nomination adopted by both parties in the early 1970s had an impact on a primary season and, therefore, on the outcome of the election. It was also the first time an incumbent who was elected neither president, nor vice president, was running for office. It was the last time a party convention was even close to being contested. It was only the second time in history, and the first time in 16 years, that televised debates were held in a presidential election and they had a profound impact on the race. It was the first political campaign to be regular fodder for a television show in its first season, Saturday Night Live. All of these reasons, and more, make Campaign '76 one to know!

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch

12:45 – 2:00

Presidential Elections of 1980 and 1984

Jennifer Mandel, Reagan Library

Using the archives and records of the Reagan Library, this session will examine the Presidential Election victories by Ronald Reagan over Jimmy Carter (1980) and Walter Mondale (1984). Teachers will have the opportunity to study primary source materials from the Reagan archives during this session.

2:00 – 2:15 Break

2:15 – 3:30

The Comeback Kid versus the Embattled Incumbent: Comparing the Clinton Campaigns

Kathleen Pate, Clinton Library

Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign for the presidency took him from relative obscurity to the White House in a less than a year and a half. His victory came in spite of early set backs on the campaign trail, lending new validity to his nickname – "The Comeback Kid." While running for re-election in 1996, Clinton faced a new challenge – balancing his presidential duties with campaigning. Workshop participants will examine primary sources to compare the two campaigns and review schedules from 1996 to better understand how a sitting president runs for re-election.

3:30 – 4:30 Teacher research

4:30 Wrap up

Friday, July 22

8:30 – 9:00 Breakfast

9:00 – 10:15

The Obama Elections, 2008 and 2012: An African American Wins the Presidency

William Crotty, Northeastern University

The 2008 nomination battle with Hillary Clinton and the general election campaign against the Republican nominee Senator John McCain (AZ) in particular will be a focus of attention. Obama's election was truly extraordinary. A minority candidate with relatively little national experience managed to beat the candidate, Hillary Clinton, generally conceded the nomination. It was an epic battle that reset the tone of American politics. The 2012 campaign built on the earlier effort. The election of an African American to the presidency was both unanticipated and truly historic.

10:15 – 10:30 Break

10:30 – 11:30 Teachers share lesson ideas

11:30 – Noon

Wrap up and teacher evaluations