

First Seminar 101, Section 3: “America’s First Mates”

Professor Paula A. Treckel

Fall, 2008

TTH 9:30-10:45

Arter 212

Course Description & Learning Outcomes:

From Martha Washington to Laura Bush, Presidents’ wives have played an important role in American life. Objects of both public adoration and vilification, their lives have reflected the conflict and controversy that surrounds the undefined, unofficial job of America’s “First Lady.” While some have embodied the American public’s views about women’s proper role, others have served as role models for change. This seminar explores the history of the presidential couple and its evolution as an “ideal” in American life. Special attention will be paid to modern presidential couples from Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt to George and Laura Bush. Methods of evaluation will include the writing of two short papers, an annotated bibliography on a First Lady of your choice, leadership of two class discussions and participation in all other class discussions, and a research paper on a First Lady of your choice. (See **Course Requirements**, below).

In this course, students will:

- Study how First Ladies have reflected and transformed women’s roles and the American Presidency.
- Learn how to participate in and facilitate class discussion.
- Conduct library research on their First Lady.
- Write two short papers exploring their views on the role of the First Lady in American life.
- Compile an annotated bibliography on their chosen First Lady.
- Write a research paper outlining the importance of their First Lady in American history.

Required Readings:

Caroli, Betty Boyd. *First Ladies*.

Gould, Lewis. *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy*. (**coursepack**)

Troy, Gil. *Mr. & Mrs. President: From the Trumans to the Clintons*.

Reference Work:

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer’s Reference* (6th Edition).

Additional Sources:

First Ladies’ Library: www.firstladies.org

The White House: www.whitehouse.gov

Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments:

	<u>Caroli</u>	<u>Gould</u>	<u>Troy</u>
8/28	First Ladies: An Introduction		
9/2	Women’s History and Presidents’ Wives		
9/4	Library Tour		
9/9	Presidential Couples (Ass. #1 due)		
9/11	“Dearest Friend”: Abigail Adams	Ch. 1	2-68
9/16	First Lady of Controversy: Mary Todd Lincoln	Ch. 2, 3	174-190
9/18	Time Management and Study Skills Workshop		
9/23	“Teddy’s Wife” & “New Women” in the White House	Ch. 4, 5	294-320
9/25	Edith Wilson (Academic Goals statement due)	Ch. 6, 7	341-367
9/30	Lou Hoover		409-421
10/2	First Lady of the Century: ER (Ass. #2 due)		423-448
10/7	“Darling Bess” & “Mamie		449-475
			1-90

10/9	No Class			
10/14	No Class			
10/16	The Media & the Kennedys	Ch. 8	476-495	91-132
10/21	“Jackie”			
10/23	“Lady Bird”		496-519	133-167
10/28	Career Services Workshop			
10/30	“Plastic Pat”		520-535	168-206
11/4	And the next First Lady is....?			
11/6	Election Day! (Library Form due.)			
11/11	A Feminist First Lady: Betty Ford	Ch. 9	535-555	207-235
11/13	The Steel Magnolia: Rosalyn Carter (Annotated bibliography due.)		556-582	236-272
11/18	Nancy Reagan: “The Power Behind the Throne?”	Ch 10	583-607	273-310
11/20	Barbara Bush: First : Lady and First Mother		609-629	311-343
11/25	Scheduling--Individual Meetings			
11/27	Thanksgiving Break—No Class			
12/2	The Clintons: Presidential Partners?	Ch. 11	6:30-6:50	344-396
12/4	Laura Bush (Research Papers due)			
12/9	Our Next First Lady....			

Course Requirements:

You must attend all classes (attendance **will** be taken), read all assigned works by the date indicated, participate in all class discussions, and attend all scheduled workshops. You are required to write **two** short papers (each worth **1/7** of your final grade), an annotated Bibliography (worth **1/7** of your final grade), a research paper on a First Lady (worth **2/7** of your final grade), and assist in leading **two** class discussions with a classmate (each worth **1/7** of your final grade). There is no final exam in this class.

Office Hours:

Arter 203

M 10:00-12:00, 1:00-3:00

T 8:00-9:30, 1:00-3:00

W 1:00-3:00

& by appointment

Office Phone: 332-4309

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First Seminar 101, Section 3: “America’s First Mates” Assignments

Below are the writing assignments for this course. Each assignment must be completed by the date indicated on the syllabus. **No late papers will be accepted.** All assignments should be submitted in hard copy with your signature indicating compliance with the College’s Honor Code

Assignment #1: due in class on **9/9** .

This First Seminar is devoted to studying the lives of America’s First Ladies. The First Lady’s public and private life are under tremendous scrutiny by the media and the American public. What do you believe is the role of the First Lady in America today? What duties do you think she should perform? What responsibilities should she assume? Do you think the First Lady should play a partisan role in the White House? Influence public policy? Why? /Why not? Who do you believe has been the most significant First Lady in American history? Why?

This paper should be approximately **3 to 5** pages long.

Assignment #2: due in class on **10/2**.

You have read about the lives of First Ladies from Martha Washington to Eleanor Roosevelt. Analyze how these women embodied the ideals of “American womanhood” during their times, addressing the following questions: How has America’s image of the “ideal” woman changed from the 18th to the 20th century? Which First Ladies do you believe best reflected those ideals? Which of these early First Ladies created the greatest legacy? Why?

This paper should be approximately **5 to 8** pages long.

Assignment #3: due in class on **11/13**.

You are to develop a selective bibliography of the sources available on “your” First Lady. It must include primary as well as secondary sources, articles in historical journals as well as books. List them using appropriate bibliographical form (*The Chicago Manual of Style*), and include a short description of the contents or thesis of the work. You should also note whether the Pelletier Library has these materials or if they are only available through interlibrary loan.

The length of this bibliography will be determined by the availability of resources on your subject.

Assignment #4: due in class on **12/4**.

The research paper on “your” First Lady should be more than a biographical sketch. It should contain a thesis—an argument about her motivation, a thoughtful critique of her behavior or her beliefs, for example—as well as an assessment of her importance in American history. It must utilize accepted methods of historical citation (footnotes or endnotes) and include a bibliography.

This research paper should be approximately **10 to 15** pages long.

Academic Goals: 2008-2009

This assignment is to help you identify your academic goals for the years ahead and assist you in developing your **Academic Planning Portfolio**. This Portfolio is a collection of documents in which you will explore your academic and career options, and develop a curriculum that will meet your personal goals as well as the College's graduation requirements. It is also a planning tool for developing your schedule in the semesters ahead, and it will follow you to your new advisor when you declare your major at the end of your sophomore year.

The first step in creating your Academic Planning Portfolio is for you to outline your **Academic Goals** in a short essay. In this essay please discuss what you hope to accomplish academically during the next four years at Allegheny College and explain how you plan to utilize the learning opportunities available at the College. These learning opportunities may include departmental majors and minors, interdisciplinary programs, off-campus study, experiential learning and internships, and service learning. Finally, you should discuss how you think your academic program at college will contribute to your plans after you graduate. It is understood that your academic goals and plans for the future will change and evolve over the course of your career here at Allegheny College.

To facilitate discussion of your academic goals, you might read over campus and departmental publications, visit campus offices, talk with faculty in your field(s) of interest, interview upperclassmen and women, and even talk with your advisor. In short—you should explore the many resources available at the college and identify how they can be utilized to help you achieve your goals.

To help you develop your ideas for this essay I have created a list of questions you might consider answering:

1. Why did you choose to come to a liberal arts College rather than attend a University? How might that decision reflect upon your academic goals here at Allegheny College?
2. What department or academic program do you think you might major in? Why? What interests you about this field? How do you think you might utilize this major after you graduate?
3. What department or academic program do you think you might minor in? Why? How might you utilize this minor after you graduate?
4. Are you interested in pursuing an experiential learning program, a service learning project or an internship here? What programs would you like to explore? How might they compliment your coursework here at the College?
5. Do you plan to study abroad? Where would you like to study? Why? How will foreign study enhance your education here at Allegheny? Your life after graduation?
6. What campus co-curricular activities would you like to explore here? Why?
7. What do you believe will be the greatest academic challenge you will face during the next four years at Allegheny College? How do you plan to address this challenge?

This essay should be **3 to 4** pages in length and is due on **9/25**. Please submit **two** copies. One will be placed in my copy of your Academic Planning Portfolio. The other will be returned to you with my suggestions. It should be placed in your personal Academic Planning Portfolio.

Please note: This is **not** a graded assignment.