

Presidential Politics Syllabus 2026

Instructor: Dennis Jenkins

About Me:

Retired from Teaching High School AP U.S. History & U.S. History in 2023

AP U.S. History Teacher at South Warren High School in Bowling Green, Kentucky 2017-2023

Teacher at Warren Central High School in Bowling Green, Kentucky from 1994-2017

AP U.S. History Certification in 2003 & National Board Certified Teacher in 2006

Head Counselor at VAMPY from 1999 to 2001

Residential Counselor at VAMPY 1991-1995 & 1997

Instructor at VAMPY of Presidential Politics (2004, 2006, 2010-2019, 2021-2022 & 2024-2025)

Wife: Rebekah Jenkins

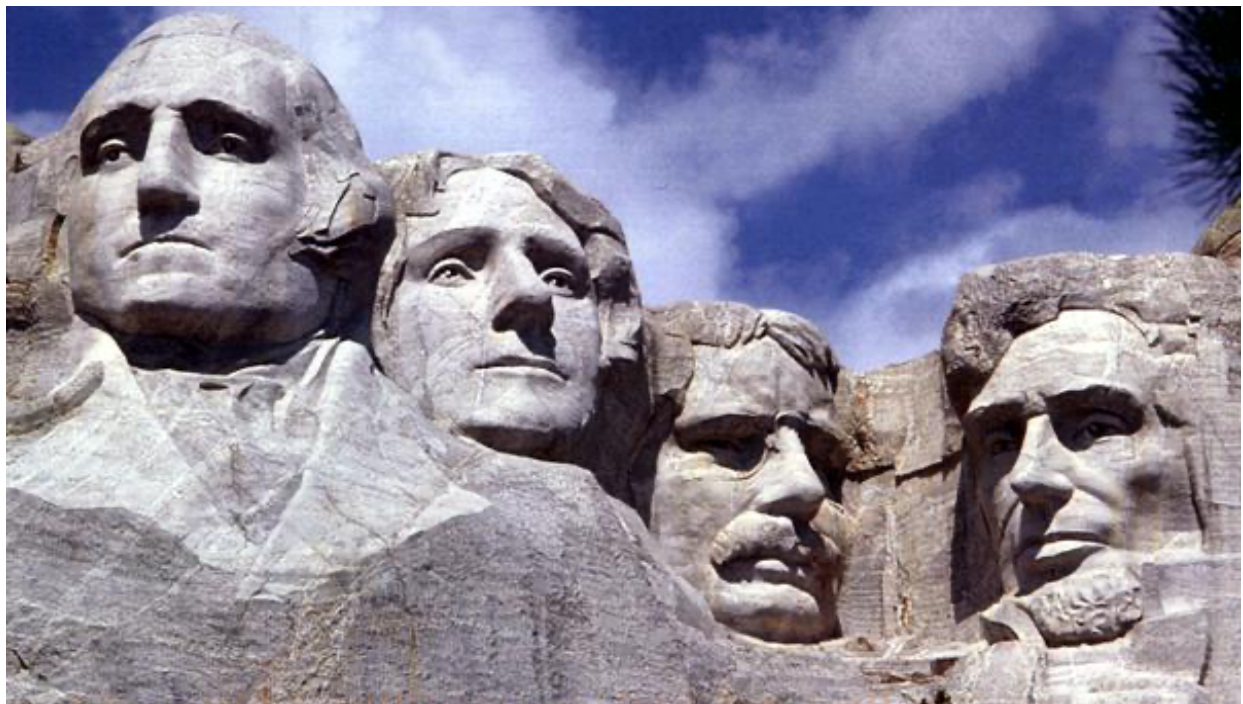
Kids: Savannah is a student at WKU & Keegan will be in 8th Grade

Current Job: Work at Paul Walker Golf Course & Hobson Grove Golf Course

Hobbies: Enjoy spending time with family, playing golf, hiking, watching my favorite sports teams (WKU, Preds, & Reds) & reading

Presidential Politics Class Overview for 2026:

This class will explore a variety of issues and decisions that American presidents have faced during our nation's history. After spending the first two days examining how the presidency evolved from 1789 through 1960 we will spend the remaining 13 days studying the more pivotal decisions, events, and elections that have impacted our nation's history during the past 65 years from the presidency of John Kennedy through Donald Trump. We will also examine current events involving modern presidential politics to the present. Students will examine major issues involving the executive, legislative, & judicial branch during the last 65 years & they will examine political campaign strategies, platforms, commercials, debates, satire in presidential elections, & Supreme Court cases that have shaped politics from 1960 to the present. Students will participate in debates, discussions, role-plays, and projects that enhance their knowledge of presidential politics with the goal of improving students' analytical & critical thinking skills.



June 22-23

- Introduction to Presidential Politics, Syllabus, Class Introductions, and Activities
- Examine presidential decisions that changed our country's history from 1789-1960
- Discuss major events & issues that shaped presidential elections during the 1800s & early-mid-20th century
- Analyze criteria used to evaluate presidential leadership & watch clips over the American Presidents up to 1960

June 24

- Analyze the major issues, campaign commercials, & debates between John Kennedy & Richard Nixon in 1960
- Watch a role-play of the first televised debate in 1960 between JFK & Nixon
- Examine the major issues & decisions JFK dealt with during his presidency & watch the documentary of 1961-1963
- Read & Evaluate some of John Kennedy's most famous speeches from 1961 to 1963

June 25

- Examine the major issues & events that shaped the presidency of Lyndon Johnson
- Analyze the Civil Rights Movement, LBJ's Great Society & the Vietnam War from 1963-1968
- Watch campaign commercials & discuss issues that shaped the 1964 election
- Research major Supreme Court Cases from 1963 to 1968

June 26

- Analyze the major events & issues of the Nixon / Ford years
- Contrast campaign commercials during the 1968 & 1972 presidential elections
- Round-table discussion of Supreme Court cases from 1969 to 1976
- Role-play the Nixon v. United States Supreme Court case during the Watergate scandal

June 29

- Examine the major events that shaped the Jimmy Carter Presidency
- Watch part of 1976 debate between Jimmy Carter & Gerald Ford & contrast campaign commercials
- Research Supreme Court Cases from 1976-1980
- Begin Research for Mount Rushmore Project

June 30

- Role-play the 1980 debate between Carter & Reagan & examine events / issues that shaped the 1980 election
- Examine the major events & issues that shaped the Ronald Reagan Presidency
- Contrast campaign commercials during the 1980 & 1984 election
- Round-table discussion of Supreme Court cases from 1981 to 1988

July 1

- Examine the major issues & events that shaped the presidency of George H.W. Bush
- Analyze the campaign strategies, commercials, & debates during the 1988 election
- Research major Supreme Court cases from 1989 to 1992
- Assign roles for next week's Presidential Face-Off Tournament & Computer Lab time to research your president

July 2

- Role-Play the 1992 debate between Bill Clinton, Ross Perot & George H.W. Bush
- Examine the major issues & events that shaped the presidency of Bill Clinton's Presidency
- Contrast the campaign commercials & strategies of each political party during the 1992 & 1996 elections
- Round-table discussion of Supreme Court cases from 1993 to 2000 & Clinton's impeachment trial

July 3

- Examine major events & issues that shaped the presidency of George W. Bush & role-play the 2000 election
- Analyze the campaign commercials, debates & political satire during the 2000 & 2004 presidential elections
- Research & role-play Supreme Court cases from 2001 to 2008
- Assessment over Presidential Politics from 1960 to 2000

July 6

- Analyze the major events & issues that shaped the Barack Obama Presidency
- Role-play the 2008 election between Barack Obama & John McCain
- Contrast the presidential candidates' platforms, commercials, & debate performances in 2008 & 2012
- 1st Round of the Presidential Face-Off Tournament & Research Supreme Court cases from 2009 to 2016

July 7

- Examine the major issues & events that shaped the first term of Donald Trump
- Analyze the 2016 election by looking at debates, platforms, & campaign strategies
- Role-Play the 2016 election & the first impeachment trial of Donald Trump
- Research Supreme Court cases from 2017 to 2020 & 2nd Round of Presidential Face-Off Tournament

July 8

- Analyze the major events & issues that impacted Joe Biden's presidency
- Role-play the 2020 presidential debate & examine the major issues & events that impacted the 2020 election
- Role-play the second impeachment of Donald Trump & Research major court cases from 2021-2024
- Quarterfinals of the Presidential Face-Off Tournament

July 9

- Examine the major events & issues that have impacted Donald Trump's 2nd term as president
- Watch the key debates during the 2024 election & Role-play the 2024 debates between Kamala Harris & Trump
- Role-play the U.S. Senate during key moments from the 2nd term of Trump during the 2025-2026 session
- Semifinals of the Presidential Face-Off Tournament

July 10

- Final Assessment of Presidential Politics from 2000 to the Present & Presidential Face-Off Tournament Champ.
- Political Survey in Computer Lab over modern issues with presidential politics & Discuss your Rushmore project
- Role-play a possible 2028 presidential debate between potential candidates & Play Beyond Balderdash Game

Rubric for Evaluation at the end of the class that will be mailed home to parents within a few weeks at the conclusion of VAMPY:

- Class Participation: Debates, Discussions, Court Cases, Role-Plays, Creating Posters, Research & Work Ethic during Study Hall
- Critical & Analytical thinking skills during debates, discussions, presidential speeches & research concerning Presidential Politics
- Study Hall Mount Rushmore Project
- Debate as Presidential Candidate (1980, 1992, 2000, 2008, 2016, 2020, 2024, Future 2028)
- Presidential Hall of Fame Face-Off Tournament
- Assessment #1 & #2 over Presidential Politics from 1960 to Present & Editorials over Creative Writing