HIS 350R (39445): The History of the American Presidency  
Fall 2012 – M 6 pm – GAR 2.128  
H. W. Brands (GAR 3.306; hwbrands@austin.utexas.edu; M 5-6, W 2:30-3:30)

Description:
For more than a century, the presidency has occupied the center of American politics. Yet the modern presidency bears faint resemblance to the institution the Founders framed in the 1780s. This course will examine the presidency and the individuals who have held it, with an eye toward discovering trends of historical and contemporary interest. Topics will include the presidency as conceived by the framers of the Constitution, the emergence of political parties, the role of the president as diplomat-in-chief, the presidency and the sectional crisis, the president at war, the emergence of the United States as a world power, the president as a celebrity, the family lives of presidents, and the president and the evolving media.

Readings:
H. W. Brands, A Brief History of the Presidency (draft posted on Blackboard)  
Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents  
Joyce Appleby, Thomas Jefferson  
H. W. Brands, Woodrow Wilson  
Robert Dallek, Harry S. Truman

Assignments:
Students will write two book reviews (500 words each) and one research paper (5000 words). The reviews will cover books from the common reading list. The paper will examine one president in detail.

Grading
Class preparation and participation: 25%  
Book reviews: 25%  
Research paper: 50%

Schedule
Sep 10 Overview of course and presidency  
Sep 17 Brief History, parts 1-2, and Thomas Jefferson.  
Oct 1 Brief History, parts 5-6. Identify your president  
Oct 8 Woodrow Wilson. Bibliography  
Oct 22 Presidential Power, pp. tba-end. Outline  
Oct 29 Harry S. Truman. Introduction  
Nov 5 Part 1  
Nov 12 Student presentations. Half draft  
Nov 19 Student presentations. Full draft  
Nov 26 Student presentations  
Dec 3 Final paper. Congratulations: You’re done!