Nearly 50 years after it ended, the presidency of Lyndon Johnson continues to inspire enormous interest and controversy. What sort of person was Johnson? What motives underpinned his greatest achievements and biggest errors in both the domestic and foreign-policy arenas? How can we reconcile the triumphs of civil rights and other transformational Great Society laws with the setbacks of the Vietnam War? What is LBJ’s legacy, and what place does he deserve in the long flow of American history? These will be among the major questions at the heart of this seminar. In addressing them, we will read and discuss scholarship on the Johnson administration and the 1960s. We will also meet with various participants in – or close observers of – the Johnson administration, including the president’s daughter, Luci Baines Johnson, and former aides.

Students will be evaluated largely on their preparation for, and participation in, seminar meetings. They will also write three papers of varying lengths. The largest one – and the course’s central writing requirement – will be a research paper of approximately 15 pages based on materials in the LBJ Library archive. In this way, students will be challenged to evaluate primary-source materials and arrive at their own conclusions about controversial aspects of the Johnson presidency. We will devote considerable time early in the term to identifying promising topics and learning how to use the library’s reading room. Over the remainder of the semester, students will be expected to conduct research and produce a polished paper.

Course requirements
1. Attendance and active participation in class (35 percent of term grade)
2. 2-page paper due September 15 at class (10 percent)
3. Paper of 3-4 pages due October 27 at class (20 percent)
4. Research paper of 15 pages due December 7 by 5 p.m. (35 percent)
**Required texts**
Packet of photocopied documents and other short readings

**Additional notes**
- The instructors may occasionally hand out short documents or other materials that should be treated as required reading.
- The instructors reserve the right to adjust the readings in order to respond to student interests and unexpected lines of discussion in our class.
- The required books are available for purchase at the University Coop. The photocopy reader is available at Jenn’s Copy & Binding at 2200 Guadalupe Street and on the course Canvas site.
- By UT-Austin policy, you must notify the instructors of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class or assignment in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
- Students should be fully aware of university rules regarding academic dishonesty. The instructors assume full compliance throughout the semester and will strictly observe all university procedures in cases of violations. (Link to University Honor Code: [http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct](http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct))
- The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 or 471-6441. Students requiring special accommodations should raise this issue with the professor at the beginning of the term.
- Late papers will be penalized one-third of a grade (for example, from a B+ to a B or from a B- to a C+) for each day they are overdue.
- Students will be evaluated on a grading scale that includes pluses and minuses (A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc.).
- Unless they obtain permission from one of the instructors, students MUST ARRIVE ON TIME and stay for the entire class period.
- Attendance is a requirement and is assumed. Each student may miss two classes without explanation, but each unexcused absence thereafter will result in a three-point deduction from her/his terms score.
- Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: [http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-h/](http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-h/)
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<td>August 27</td>
<td>Introduction to Course Goals and Requirements</td>
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<td>September 3</td>
<td>The Domestic Context of the 1960s</td>
<td>Reading: Isserman &amp; Kazin, intro-ch. 3</td>
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<td>September 10</td>
<td>From Congress to the Vice Presidency</td>
<td>Reading: Robert Dallek, The Flawed Giant, ch. 1 (reader)</td>
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<td>September 15</td>
<td>Assuming the Presidency: The Assassination</td>
<td>Reading: Isserman &amp; Kazin, ch. 5; Updegrove, ch. 2</td>
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<td>September 17</td>
<td>1964: Challenges at Home</td>
<td>Reading: Updegrove, ch. 3; Isserman &amp; Kazin, ch. 6</td>
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<td>September 22</td>
<td>LBJ in the White House (Guest: Former Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes)</td>
<td>Reading: Updegrove, chapter 4</td>
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<td>September 24</td>
<td>Introduction to the Archive (Guest: Senior Archivist Claudia Anderson)</td>
<td>Assignment: Fill out Research Application and turn in preliminary statement of research topic</td>
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<td>September 29</td>
<td>Introduction to the Archive: Small Groups (Guests: Archives Staff)</td>
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<td>October 1</td>
<td>1964: Challenges Abroad (Guest: Admiral Bobby Ray Inman)</td>
<td>Reading: Waldo Heinrichs, “Lyndon B. Johnson: Change and Continuity”; Thomas Alan Schwartz, Lyndon Johnson and Europe, prelude and epilogue (reader)</td>
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October 6  The 1964 Election (Guest: Professor H.W. Brands)
    READING: H.W. Brands, *American Dreams: The United States Since 1945*, ch. 5 (reader); Updegrove, ch. 5

October 8  Reflections on LBJ in the White House (Guest: Ms. Luci Baines Johnson)
    READING: Isserman & Kazin, ch. 7

October 13 The Great Society (Guest: Michael Gillette, Director, Humanities Texas)
    READING: Isserman & Kazin, chs. 8-9

October 15 LBJ and Civil Rights
    READING: Updegrove, ch. 6

October 20 Civil Rights (watch first half of “Selma”)

October 22 Civil Rights (watch second half of “Selma”)
    ASSIGNMENT: work on paper due Oct. 27

October 27 The Cold War and the Vietnam Problem
    ASSIGNMENT: Paper 2 due in class

October 29 LBJ and Vietnam
    READING: Lawrence, intro-ch. 3; Updegrove, ch. 7; transcript of LBJ’s conversation with Bundy, May 27, 1964 (reader)

November 3 Vietnam: Escalation and the Question of Alternatives
    READING: Lawrence, ch. 4; Fredrik Logevall, “‘There Ain’t No Daylight’: Lyndon Johnson and the Politics of Escalation”; Humphrey letter, February 17, 1965 (reader)

November 5 Public Opinion and Protest at Home and Abroad (Guest: Professor Jeremi Suri)

November 10 Vietnam: Managing the War, 1965-1968
    READING: Updegrove, ch. 8; Lawrence, ch. 5

November 12 The Later Years in the White House (Guest: Former White House Counsel Larry Temple)
    READING: Isserman & Kazin, chs. 10-11; Updegrove, ch. 9
November 17  Midterm Elections and the End of the Liberal Moment
READING: Julian Zelizer, *The Fierce Urgency of Now*, ch. 7 (reader); Isserman & Kazin, ch. 12

November 19  Tet and the Crisis of 1968
READING: Updegrove, ch. 10; Lawrence, ch. 6; LBJ speech, March 31, 1968 (reader)

November 24  LBJ’s Post-Presidency (Guest: Former LBJ Library Director Harry Middleton)
READING: Isserman & Kazin, ch. 14; Updegrove, chs. 11-12

December 1  Assessing LBJ
READING: Lawrence, chs. 7-8; Julian Zelizer, *The Fierce Urgency of Now*, ch. 9 (reader)

December 3  Assessing LBJ
ASSIGNMENT: Come to class prepared to speak briefly about your research project

ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

Paper 1: 2 pages (approximately 500 words), due September 15
Interview a relative, friend, or other acquaintance with personal memories of LBJ. What memories stand out most strongly? How does your interviewee think about LBJ as a person, politician, and leader? Why do you think your interviewee remembers LBJ as s/he does? How accurate or reliable do you think this memory is?

Paper 2: 3-4 pages (approximate 900-1200 words), due October 27
Based on your readings and your viewing of “Selma,” what do you make of the film’s portrayal of LBJ and the ensuing controversy? Do you think Johnson is fairly or unfairly depicted in the movie? State a clear argument and defend your position with evidence from the film, readings, and any other sources you find useful.

Paper 3: 15 pages (roughly 4500 words, including notes), due Monday December 7
Each student must write a paper based largely on research in the LBJ archive. Although you are free to design your own topic, we propose the following ten questions to guide your thinking and strongly suggest that you choose one of these. Half of the list is related to domestic policy, and half is related to foreign policy. Your final paper should include a title, properly formatted footnotes, bibliography, and a word count. If you choose one of the role-play papers, you are still responsible for these elements, even though they may seem artificial to the exercise. No matter what topic you choose, you should state a clear argument at the outset of your paper and defend your point with specific evidence. The books listed in the bibliography below may help you gain basic background on your topic and appreciate the basic contours of scholarly debates.
1. What were LBJ’s views on civil rights? Choose two or three moments from his long career (not necessarily from his time in the presidency) and compare the views he expressed. Depending on what moments you choose, you might end up writing about the evolution of LBJ’s thinking over time, the different ways in which he expressed himself to different interlocutors, or differences between public and private expressions.

2. How would you characterize the relationship between LBJ and Martin Luther King, Jr.? Choose a few moments when the two men interacted and analyze their views of one another.

3. Many historians of the Vietnam War have observed that numerous powerful figures (Hubert Humphrey, George Ball, Walter Lippmann, and Charles de Gaulle, for example) expressed deep misgivings about American escalation in Vietnam and urged LBJ to wind down the U.S. commitment rather than fight a major war. For your paper, choose one of the men who dissented from the drift of the administration’s policy. Why do you think the dissenter failed to influence LBJ’s decisions?

4. Historians and biographers have often pointed to LBJ's early life in explaining his passion for education reform and his desire to be the “education president.” Assess this generalization in light of the documentary record. To what extent did LBJ’s education agenda grow from his personal experiences?

5. The Great Society – and LBJ – have long been criticized by conservatives who believe that Great Society programs initiated by LBJ epitomize big government overreach and inefficiency. Choose one of LBJ’s signature Great Society initiatives (Job Corps, VISTA, EEOC, etc.) and assess how LBJ and his advisers thought about long-term costs and coped with their critics. To what extent did they envision a major expansion of government spending, and how did they seek to assure cost-effectiveness and efficiency? You may, of course, wish to comment on whether their assessments were reasonable and whether later criticism of the Great Society is fair.

6. Critics of LBJ have long claimed that he was out of his depth in the realm of foreign policy and showed little creativity or subtlety in his thinking. Choose one of the following episodes from LBJ’s presidency and assess the extent to which this criticism is valid: the Panama “flag riots” in January 1964, the 1964 coup in Brazil, the 1965 U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic, the 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Southern Rhodesia, and the 1965 India-Pakistan War.
7. Historians usually argue that détente – the easing of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union – occurred during the Nixon administration. Yet LBJ did much to ease Cold War hostility with Moscow and to design an arms-control agenda that would come to fruition later. Indeed, it is arguable that LBJ was a key architect of the most important arms-control agreement ever negotiated – the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which continues to play an important role in international relations today. Write an essay assessing the LBJ administration’s basic aims and performance in connection with any one of the following subjects: ABM (anti-ballistic missile) technology, MIRV (multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles) technology, nuclear non-proliferation, the status of Berlin, and U.S.-Soviet trade.

8. On March 31, 1968, LBJ gave a nationally televised speech best remembered for his announcement that he would not run for another term as president. But he also announced changes in the way the United States would conduct the war in Vietnam. Among other things, he declared that he would curtail the bombing of North Vietnam and would seek negotiations with Hanoi. The media naturally reported that LBJ had decided to alter course dramatically in Southeast Asia. But did he change course as sharply as his rhetoric suggested? In what ways and to what extent did U.S. conduct of the war change over the remainder of the LBJ term? Might LBJ reasonably be accused of clinging to an approach in Vietnam that he knew had not worked?

9. Imagine it is early December 1964, and you are LBJ’s Secretary of State. Drawing on research in the LBJ archive, write a memo to the president advising him about what to do in Vietnam. You are free to take any position you like so long as you take care to present an opinion that would have been plausible at the time.

10. Imagine it is January 1, 1966, and you are LBJ’s top domestic-policy adviser. Write a memo to the president advising him on how to pursue his Great Society agenda at a moment when the political winds were starting to turn against the administration. You may wish to address relations with Congress, shifts in public opinion, and the perils of pursuing the Civil Rights agenda in a way that bore more directly on race relations in the north.
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BASIC MATERIAL ON LBJ


Caro, Robert A. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, 3 vols. New York: Knopf, various years.


