

Fall 2012 Heyman Center Friends Colloquium

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: CAN A DEMOCRACY SELECT THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST?

Richard M. Pious
Thursdays, 5:30-7:30

Course Description

Richard M. Pious, Adolph and Effie Ochs Professor of Political Science and American Studies at Barnard College, Columbia University, will examine the working of the presidential nominating system and its various transformations as American political culture became increasingly democratized. The colloquium will consider these and related questions: What did the Constitutional Framers intend, and why did that system quickly devolve into the “Congressional Caucus”? What was the impact of Jacksonian Democracy on the nominating process, and how did it affect the workings of the presidency? What caused the transformation to the current system of primaries and open caucuses, and what impact has the modern system had on the workings of the presidency? What impact has money had in the modern system, and could new systems of public financing of presidential nominations and elections be implemented to limit the impact of large donors? What has been the impact of the transformation of presidential nominations from party politics to personality and plebiscitary politics? With the nomination of Obama, have we entered into a new era of politics as salvation, and if so, what might be the consequences? Can we modify the current system to provide better chances that nominees in the future will represent the “best and brightest” of our political class?

Syllabus

September 13: THE CONSTITUTIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS AND THE RISE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS

James Ceasar, *Presidential Selection*, Ch. I: The Founders
Ch. 2: *Presidential Selection* in the Jeffersonian Era

James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention*

Madison, et. al., *The Federalist Papers* Nos. 68, 71, 72

“George Washington’s Letter to Thomas Jefferson, and Jefferson’s Response”
in Adkins, Randall, *The Evolution of Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections*

September 27: THE ERA OF THE PARTY POLITICOS

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, “Parties in the United States”

James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* “Nominating Conventions” “Why Great Men are Not Elected President” “The Presidential Campaign”

M. Ostragorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, Vol. II, “Chapter Three: The National Convention”

October 11: MODERN NOMINATING POLITICS

James Ceasar, *Presidential Selection*, Ch. IV: Woodrow Wilson and the Origin of the Modern View of Presidential Selection
Ch. V: The Development of the Presidential Selection System in The 20th Century

Robert LaFollette “Peril in the Machine” in Adkins, Randall, *The Evolution of Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections*

Mandate for Reform (McGovern-Frazier Report) in Adkins, Randall, *The Evolution of Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections*

October 25: MONEY IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

Elizabeth Drew, *Politics and Money*

Feingold v. McConnell on campaign finance reform, in Adkins, Randall, *The Evolution of Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections*

November 8: POLITICS AS SALVATION

Randall Balmer *God in the White House* pp. 79-174

David Remnick *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*
Ch. 17 To the White House, and Epilogue

November 29: CAN WE SELECT FOR THE “BEST AND BRIGHTEST”?

James Ceasar *Presidential Selection*, Ch. VI: Modern Party Reform

James Pfiffner *The Character Factor*, Ch. V: Character, Consistency and Campaign Promises

Birth Bayh Resolution on Direct Popular Election in Adkins, Randall, *The Evolution of Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections*

December 6: Makeup if needed