I. Course Description

The course is designed to examine the choices and limits of statecraft from a political and ethical perspective. The class will analyze the setting for statecraft (the international system), the resources available to political leaders in a state, and the margin which exists for human choice and creativity – the challenge of statecraft. The method of the course will involve an examination of basic issues in statecraft and then the study of selected political leaders, assessing how they understood the system and their state and how they shaped policy at the intersection of the system and state.

II. Course Requirements

1. Preparation of Readings and Participation in Class Discussion
2. Essay: “Portrait of a Leader”; (1000 words) due: Oct 6 (20pts)
3. Oral Exam: Based on Lectures and Readings (Sep 1 thru Nov 15); Exam Given (Nov 17-22); (30 pts)
4. Research Paper (20 Pages) due: Dec 18 (50 pts.)
5. Grading Policy: HKS guidelines for grading

III. Required Text and Class Format

1. Text: All readings ONLINE
2. Format: Class opens with 30 minutes of guided discussion led by professor; then formal lecture

Collaboration in Written Work: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you receive any help with your writing (e.g., feedback on drafts), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

Source: Harvard University Course Syllabus – Gov 20: Foundations of Comparative Politics, Professor Steven Levitsky, Fall 2013
IV. Course Outline

Part One: Design and Resources (Aug 30 – Sept 6)
   A. Introduction
   B. System, State and Statesmen
   C. Ethics and International Relations

Part Two: Statesmen and Statecraft (Sept 11-Nov 27)
   A. Otto von Bismarck: Reshaping the European Order (Sept 11-18)
   B. Woodrow Wilson: Creating a Legacy in War and Peace (Sept 20-27)
   C. John F. Kennedy: Between Containment and Catastrophe (Oct 2-4)
   D. Charles deGaulle: Maximal Goals and Minimal Means (Oct 11-18)
   E. Henry Kissinger: Theory and Practice of Diplomacy (Oct 23-30)
   F. Margaret Thatcher: Conservative Statecraft (Nov 1-6)
   G. Golda Meir: War without Peace (Nov 8)
   H. Liberal Statecraft: Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama (Nov 13-27)

Conclusion: Nov 29

IV. Required Readings

Sept 1-6:


Sept 11-13:


Sept 18


Sept 20:


Sept 25-27:


Oct 2:


Oct 4:


3. John F. Kennedy, *Commencement Address at American University* (June 10, 1963)

Oct 11 - 16:


Oct 18:


Oct 23:


Oct 25 - 30:


Nov 1:


Nov 6:


Nov 8:


Nov 13-15:


Nov 20-27:

1. Barack Obama, Nobel Address (Oslo 2009)

2. Barack Obama, Prague Address (April 15, 2009)

3. Barack Obama, Cairo Address (June 4, 2009)


All Obama Addresses on White House website.