

Author in Chief

The books our presidents have written

Course #	20FAU
Format:	Seminar
Moderator:	Linda Honan
Date and Time:	Tuesday, 9:30-11:30 10 weeks, starting September 22
Location:	Loomis Retirement Community, So. Hadley
Maximum number of participants:	14
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: This seminar will study the books written by United States presidents. We will consider their purposes in writing, and how successful they were; how attitudes to politicians' publications have evolved; and what effect their writings had then and subsequently.

Description: Each participant will study one book by a president. They will investigate the book's place in its author's biographical story, as well as the political situation when this book was written. For example, was the book:

- 1) an early product by someone anxious to become known, like Lincoln's Political Debates of 1859 or John F. Kennedy's Profiles in Courage of 1956;
- 2) a retrospective by someone toward the end of his career, eager to present his side of recent events, like the autobiographies of Jefferson, Adams and Theodore Roosevelt;
- 3) a roaring financial success, like Coolidge's 1929 autobiography, earning half a million dollars by the time of his death in 1933; or 4) in support of a favorite cause or explaining an unpopular decision, such as Jimmy Carter's Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid.

Through these books, written by people at the center of the life of their times, we can immerse ourselves in the cultural and political evolution of our country.

Role of participants: Each participant will choose one book by a president. They will study the place of the book in its author's life, what he hoped to accomplish by writing it, and will note its effect on history. They will have 20-30 minutes for their presentation, then lead collegial discussion

Resources: The following book is required; it is available in local libraries and bookstores, as well as from online sources: Craig Fehrman, *Author in Chief: the untold story of our presidents and the books they wrote*; Avid Reader Press 2020.

About the Moderator: Linda Honan is a retired museum educator and UMass program coordinator. She has moderated a number of seminars