

Advanced Institute, Winter 2016
GREAT FIGURES OF THE 20TH CENTURY: MARGARET THATCHER
Instructor: Daniel Johnson
Washington, D.C.

Our goal with these weekend seminars will be to examine the worldviews and leadership styles of four important figures of the twentieth century, in order to surface underlying questions about statesmanship. We will ask questions such as: What is statesmanship? How does one recognize it? And if one can, in fact, speak of statesmanship, what are (or should be) its fundamental constituent components?

These seminars are not intended to be mere biographical surveys of great lives well lived. While the (relatively brief) readings will give you the background that you need, you may also want to familiarize yourself with the basic biographies of our figures, with something as simple as their Wikipedia entries. Our goal, ideally, will be to spend some time covering the basic narratives of what transpired during each figure's career, but then to engage in extended, thoughtful seminar-style discussion of the issues that these events and narratives raise, exploring their unfolding in our past and reflecting on their implications for our future. We will hope not to simply learn *about* our figures – Churchill, Reagan, Thatcher, and Ben-Gurion – but *from* them.

Saturday, February 27, 2016

9:00 am to 10:30 am

The Battle for Britain

In this session, we shall look at how Mrs. Thatcher defied the British establishment to turn round the UK economy, fought and won the Falklands War against the Argentine dictatorship, pioneered privatization, survived attempted assassination at the hands of Irish Republican terrorists, and fought a year-long miners' strike led by far-Left extremists bent on destroying her government. We will simulate British and American cabinet discussions on the Falklands War, rehearse key economic debates, recreate the strategy to defeat union power, and re-enact the aftermath of the Brighton bomb.

Readings:

- Margaret Thatcher, Speech at the Conservative Party Conference in Brighton, October 1984 (Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOizSzKZtRY>)
- Charles Moore, "The Enemy Within," pp 142-182, in: *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography, Volume Two: Everything She Wants* (Knopf, New York 2015)
- Robin Harris, "War Leader," pp 201-222, in: *Not For Turning: The Life of Margaret Thatcher* (Bantam, London 2013)
- Daniel Johnson, "For Her, It Was Always a Question of Honour," in *Standpoint*, June 2013

11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Winning the Cold War

In this session, we return to the darkest days of the Cold War, when Mrs. Thatcher defied the orthodoxies of détente to challenge Soviet aggression and strengthen NATO. We will imagine

ourselves in her shoes, facing Gorbachev for the first time and finding common ground without compromising the defense of the West. We shall trace the evolution of her close but complex relationship with Reagan, including the crises over Grenada, the Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”) and the Reykjavik summit, concluding with her response to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf War.

Readings:

- Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Joint Houses of Congress, February 1985 (Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYiOvW0IS0s>, Thatcher begins her speech at around 17:50)
- Charles Moore, “Glasnost in the Chilterns,” pp 225-253, in: *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography, Volume Two: Everything She Wants* (Knopf, New York 2015)
- Robin Harris, “Cold Warrior,” pp 252-278, in: *Not For Turning: The Life of Margaret Thatcher* (Bantam, London 2013)
- Daniel Johnson, “She Wore Her Suits Like Armor,” in *Wall Street Journal*, January 3, 2016

1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Exit over Europe

In this session we shall trace Mrs. Thatcher’s policy towards her European partners and re-enact the debates within Parliament, Cabinet and her own Conservative party. Her triumphs over the budget rebate and the single market were followed by growing frustration over the direction taken by the Europe and a series of conflicts with her colleagues, culminating in her decision to set out an alternative vision and a series of attempts to depose her. We shall recreate the tragic events that led to her fall, despite her unique achievement of three successive victories in general elections, and discuss the relevance of her ideas for the present existential challenges facing Europe.

Readings:

- Margaret Thatcher, The Bruges Speech, September 1988 (Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkRwMFy0CVM>)
- Robin Harris: “Skies Darken” and “The Fall,” pp 279-341, in: *Not For Turning: The Life of Margaret Thatcher* (Bantam, London 2013)

Sunday, February 28, 2016

9:00 am to Noon

Morality, Legacy, and Leadership

For our final session, we shall consider the sources of Mrs. Thatcher’s leadership, grounded in moral principles and biblical values, and ask how statesmanship in our day can avoid relativism and cynicism. We will discuss the Thatcherite legacy, both in policy and in style, while evoking and analyzing the charisma that enabled the Iron Lady to leave her mark on posterity long after most leaders are forgotten.

Readings:

- Margaret Thatcher, Speech at the Church of St. Lawrence Jewry, London, March 1981
- Nigel Lawson, “The Lasting Legacy of Mrs. Thatcher,” in *Standpoint*, May 2009