

OLLI at DU West Syllabus – Spring 2024

Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis - A Comparison Of Their Lives and Their Leadership

6 weeks – Online

Facilitator: Tom Kleinschmidt

Week 1 The early life and education of both Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis will be reviewed and a comparison made. In their formative years, who were the key influencers for each and how did they set off on the paths that they took.

Week 2 As the two men reached maturity, they made career choices and their lives moved in different directions. Each lost a spouse or potential spouse and had to deal with that grief. As they moved into political life, they developed a series of political beliefs. These beliefs will be compared and contrasted.

Week 3 In order to become President, each man moved thru a different process. Lincoln was elected in an election with 4 candidates. Davis was elected by a Provisional Congress of the states that seceded when Lincoln was elected. The political forces were different for each man and each man had different constituencies.

Week 4 A comparison will be made of the two men, in how they handled the crises that developed and soon led to the Civil War. What were they each initially trying to do and how effective were they in moving toward their early goals? As the war began, how effective were each man's decisions in selecting both civilian and military leaders. What was the long-term strategy that each man developed for the handling of the war.

Week 5 As the Civil War continued, the initial rush of enthusiasm wore off. What steps did each man take to try to bolster morale both in the army and on the home front. What allies did they develop and what enemies did they make? What was the developing style of management that each man was showing?

Week 6 In the latter portion of the war, Lincoln faced war weariness at home and Davis' Confederacy faced an imminent doom if nothing changed. How did each man face this reality and what steps did they take. On a personal level, each man had changed during his Presidency. What was the personal toll each man paid? When the war ended, Lincoln was assassinated. What was his legacy? Davis was captured, imprisoned and then released. How did he weather the post war years?