Presidency and Executive Politics

GOVT 320
Fall 2015
MWF, 1:10-2:00
Kirby Hall of Civil Rights 106
Instructor: Steven White
Office: Kirby Hall of Civil Rights 110
Office Hours: MW 2:00-3:30 and by appointment
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Course Description

This course examines the role of the presidency in American politics. It begins with constitutional and theoretical background, then turns to an examination of the modern presidency’s links with Congress, the Supreme Court, parties, interest groups, and public opinion, among other topics. After considering these topics in a general sense, we will apply these perspectives to important historical examples from FDR to the present. We will conclude by taking a look ahead to the 2016 presidential election and the future of presidential democracy in America.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe the American presidency and its relationship with other parts of American politics
- Understand and apply social scientific frameworks for assessing presidential behavior
- Describe the contours of presidential politics from FDR through Obama
- Assess claims about the determinants of presidential behavior using appropriate evidence
Assessment Criteria

This is a writing-intensive [W] course. Students are required to write a final research paper, as well as several short response papers and a midterm paper responding to a question I pose to the class. There are no in-class exams.

The final grade will be a weighted average of the following:

10%: Attendance and participation
20%: Four response papers (2-3 pages each)
25% Midterm paper (5-7 pages)
5%: Research proposal and annotated bibliography (3-5 pages)
35%: Research paper (15-20 pages)
5%: Presentation based on research paper

This course requires you to write an original research paper, which constitutes 35 percent of your final grade. The paper is due December 18 by 5 pm. You must meet with me to discuss your topic no later than October 24, but preferably well in advance of that. Before meeting with me, you should write down about a page of ideas for a paper topic and potential ways in which you might examine the topic. This will give me an initial sense of where you’re going and whether you’re on the right track before the proposal is due.

A research proposal for the final paper (with annotated bibliography) will constitute another 5 percent of your grade. The proposal is due October 30 at the beginning of class. This will allow me to give you more detailed feedback on how to frame and go about researching and writing your paper.

An in-class presentation of your findings will constitute another 5 percent.

In lieu of an in-class midterm exam, there will be a 5-7 page paper responding to one of two questions I will pose to the class. This will constitute 25 percent of your final grade. The questions will be announced on September 28 and the paper will be due October 9 at the beginning of class.

Another 20 percent of your grade comes from a series of short response papers. These will be due the night before via email so they can help inform our discussions the next day. You will each be assigned four class sessions where you will write a 2-3 page paper highlighting key themes from the readings and raising points for discussion. While not nearly as detailed as the other papers, simply summarizing the readings is not sufficient. You must go beyond this and assess the claims they make: Do you buy the arguments? What do they get right? What do they get wrong? Are there other perspectives that would be a useful complement?

Finally, attendance and class participation will account for 10 percent of your grade. I encourage you to come to class with questions about the readings and ideas for discussion. I am genuinely interested in hearing your thoughts on the material! For those who feel uncomfortable or nervous speaking up in class, you will not be penalized for shyness and I encourage you to communicate your thoughts and questions on the readings to me via email and in office hours.
Books

This course requires you to purchase (or read in the library reserves) two books:


All other readings will be available on Moodle.

Academic Integrity

This class is focused on the development of writing skills. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated. Further information about the academic code at Lafayette can be found at: https://facultyadvising.lafayette.edu/policies/academic-integrity/

Accommodations

Please get in touch with me within the first two weeks of the class if you need additional accommodations. More information can be found online at: http://attic.lafayette.edu/disability-services/

Federal Credit Hour Compliance Statement

The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four credit hour course. Please see the Registrar’s Office web site (http://registrar.lafayette.edu/additional-resources/cep-course-proposal/) for the full policy and practice statement.

Schedule

August 31: Introduction
  - Read the syllabus

September 2: Expectations and Reality
  - “The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, explained,” *Vox*
  
  - Brendan Nyhan, "Donald Trump, the Green Lantern Candidate," *New York Times*

September 4: NO CLASS
September 7: Development of the American Presidency I
  • Jeffrey Tulis, “The Two Constitutional Presidencies” (PPS)

September 9: Development of the American Presidency II
  • Stephen Skowronek, “The Development of Presidential Power: Conservative Insurgency and Constitutional Construction” (PPS)

September 11: Development of the American Presidency III
  • Marc Landy and Sidney Milkis, “The Presidency in History” (PPS)

September 14: Bargaining
  • Selections from Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power*

September 16: Going Public
  • Selections from Samuel Kernell, *Going Public*

September 18: Executive Prerogative
  • Selections from John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*
  • Richard Pious, "Prerogative Power and Presidential Politics," *Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency*

September 21: Unilateral Powers
  • Andrew Rudalevige, “The Presidency and Unilateral Powers: A Taxonomy” (PPS)

September 23: Veto Bargaining with Congress
  • Selections from Charles Cameron, *Veto Bargaining*

September 25: Presidency and Congress
  • Matthew Dickinson, “The Presidency and Congress” (PPS)

September 28: Presidency and Courts
  • Lee Epstein and Jeffrey Segal, "Nominating Federal Judges and Justices," *The Oxford Handbook on the American Presidency*
  • Midterm paper assigned
September 30: Presidency and Bureaucracy
  • John Burke, “The Institutional Presidency” (PPS)
  • Daniel Lewis and Terry Moe, “The Presidency and Bureaucracy: The Levers of Presidential Control” (PPS)

October 2: Presidency and Interest Groups
  • Daniel Tichenor, “The Presidency and Interest Groups: Allies, Adversaries, and Policy Leadership” (PPS)

October 5: Presidency and Political Parties
  • Sidney Milkis, “The Presidency and Political Parties” (PPS)

October 7: Presidency and Public Opinion
  • Selections from Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro, Politicians Don’t Pander

October 9: Presidency and Media
  • Elvin Lim, “The Presidency and the Media: Two Faces of Democracy” (PPS)

    • MIDTERM PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

October 12: NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

October 14: Nominating a President I

October 16: Nominating a President II

October 19: Campaigning and Elections
  • Shanna Pearson, "The Presidential Campaigns Didn't Really Matter," Pacific Standard

October 21: Library Information Session with Ana Ramirez Luhrs
  • Meet in Skillman 003
October 23: Electoral College
• George C. Edwards III, “The Faulty Premise of the Electoral College” (PPS)

October 26: Presidential Mandates
• Julia Azari, "Institutional Change and the Presidential Mandate," Social Science History 37(4), 2013, 483-514

October 28: Presidents and Domestic Policy
• Selections from Larry Bartels, Unequal Democracy

October 30: Presidents in Wartime I
• Andrew Polsky, “The Presidency at War: The Window of Agency in Wartime Presidential Leadership” (PPS)

November 2: Presidents in Wartime II
• Selections from William Howell et al., The Wartime President

November 4: Changes in Presidential Leadership
• Roger Porter, “The Three Presidencies: Power and Policy” (PPS)

November 6: FDR and the New Deal
• Fred Greenstein, The Presidential Difference, Chapter 2
• Selections from Ira Katznelson, Fear Itself

November 9: FDR and World War II
• Selections from Doris Kearns Goodwin, No Ordinary Time

November 11: Truman in FDR’s Shadow
• Fred Greenstein, The Presidential Difference, Chapter 3
• Selections from David McCullough, Truman

November 13: Truman and Civil Rights
• Selections from Philip Klinkner and Rogers Smith, The Unsteady March
November 16: Eisenhower, the Cold War, and the “Military-Industrial Complex”
  • Fred Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, Chapter 4
  • Eisenhower’s farewell address to the nation (video)

November 18: LBJ at Home and Abroad
  • Fred Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, Chapter 6
  • Selections from Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*

November 20: Carter, Reagan, and the Rise of Evangelicals
  • Fred Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, Chapters 9-10
  • Selections from William Martin, *With God on Our Side*

November 23: George W. Bush
  • Fred Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, Chapter 13

November 25: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 27: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 30: Nominating Obama

December 2: Obama in Office
  • Fred Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, Chapter 14
  • Dino Christenson and Douglas Kriner, "Political Constraints on Unilateral Executive Action," *Case Western Reserve Law Review*
  • Craig Goodman, "Why It's Too Early to Assess Obama's Legacy," *Mischiefs of Faction*
December 4: Where Do We Go From Here? Looking to 2016
• Readings TBD based on real world events

December 7: The Presidency in Comparative Perspective
• Juan Linz, “The Perils of Presidentialism,” *Journal of Democracy*

December 9: Presentations

December 11: Presentations

*FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE DECEMBER 18 BY 5PM*