

# Poli Sci 220: The American Presidency

Instructor: John Lovett

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Classroom and Class Time: 1-1:50 PM, Kirby 109

Office Hours: Monday 2-3 PM, Tuesday 10-noon, and by appointment

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**Background:** The American presidency is a unique figure in world politics, having theoretically constitutionally limited power but extensive power over foreign affairs and domestic policy. In the modern age, we have seen presidents become more powerful relative to Congress and use these powers to push their agendas, with resistance across the board. This course will focus on the nature of the presidency and its relationship with other political actors and public policy in a time of major political developments within the office, both the ongoing primary process as well as the impeachment of President Donald Trump. Our goal in this class is to analyze and understand the presidency in the context of the modern age, to see how presidential power can and cannot overcome other actors in the process.

**Reading Material:** The main book for this course is:

Nelson, Michael, ed. *The Presidency and the Political System, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition*. CQ Press. (referred to in the syllabus as Nelson)

Get the 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, as the earlier editions have different essays from different writers in American politics. This is a collection of essays about the presidency. For your convenience I'll note the author of the chapter in question along with the chapter number.

In addition to the Nelson text, I will provide primary, analytical, and scholarly works that will help illuminate the main topics of the course that will be assigned in addition to Nelson. You are responsible for the readings, as they are a central part of the reflection grade (see grading below).

**Computer and Technology (Cell Phone) Policy:** There is a lot of research related to the use of computers in the classroom, most of it noting that students are less likely to pay attention if they have their computers out versus if they are writing down their notes. I'm going to allow you to have your computers out, but make sure you are only using it for note-taking or occasional online activities that we will do during activity periods. As for cell phones, do not have your cell phone out unless you have spoken to me beforehand that there is a reason you may need to have it out.

**Policy on Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty is broadly defined as submitting work that is not your own without attribution, and is not acceptable in this or any other academic course. Any academic dishonesty found on an assignment results in a failing grade for that assignment and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent permissible under the Wake Forest honor

code. If you have any questions or want to make sure you are citing something correctly, contact me and I'll be happy to help.

**Accommodations Statement:** Wake Forest University provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me privately as early in the term as possible. Retroactive accommodations will not be provided. Students requiring accommodations must also consult the Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services (118 Reynolda Hall, 336-758-5929, lac.wfu.edu).

**Grading:**

Take-Home Midterm Exam: 25%

Take-Home Final Exam: 25%

Response/Reflection Papers to the Week's Readings or Activities (1 page, due the Friday of that week, starting Week 2): 10% (12 opportunities, pick 10 (Weeks 2-7, 9-14))

Long Paper on a Former President's Contribution to How We Understand the Presidency, 8-10 pages: 20%

Poster Session Mini-Conference on your Paper: 10%

Attendance and Participation 10%

The midterm and final exams will focus on the first and second halves of the course respectively (though you may want to refer to earlier things when taking the final). They will consist primarily of essay questions, and you will have just over 3 days for the mid-term and just over 3 days for the final.

The response and reflection papers are your opportunity to reflect upon what we have read for the week and the larger meaning of those readings within American politics and the power of the presidency in general. My grading policy here (as they are highly subjective) will be on a check plus/check/check minus basis (mostly just to be sure that you're engaging the readings and thinking about them fully). I will accept these in paper form. Check + is full credit, Check is B (85), Check - is C (75).

The longer paper and mini-conference instructions will be posted to Sakai by the end of January. The basic focus of the paper will be to assess the presidency of a post-World War II former President (Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, HW Bush, Clinton, W Bush, or Obama) in light of our discussion of the presidency throughout the course. In that paper, you will discuss how the president you chose changed the nature of the presidency. That change can come in many forms, though the focus should be on how that president's actions reshaped the office versus what you think of that president.

For the mini-conference, you will make a poster outlining your argument and underlying evidence, which you will set up in class for people to read and ask questions. We will have 8 posters for each of the 3 days, where others will walk around and read/ask you questions about your work.

There is no extra credit in this course beyond bonuses on the two exams, well except right here. Send me a picture of either Gritty (mascot of the Philadelphia Flyers) or Baby Yoda by February

15 and you get a full bonus point on the final exam. If you do it before the final exam time begins, you get a half point.

## **Grades**

Academic achievement in this class is graded on the following basis:

93-100 – A  
90-92 – A-  
87-89 – B+  
83-86 – B  
80-82 – B-  
77-79 – C+  
73-76 – C  
70-72 – C-  
60-69 – D  
0-59 – F

## **Schedule**

Note: Depending on Impeachment Schedule and Primary Schedule I reserve the right to reorganize our focus away from the weeks in question and onto what’s happening in Washington, though you will be responsible for the readings (and we will eventually get back to them).

### **Week 1 (January 13-17): Opening and Overview of the Presidency**

**Note: No class January 17<sup>th</sup> (I’m out of town)**

January 13 – Opening

Read the syllabus

January 15 – An overview of Current Events and the Presidency: Policy, Impeachments, Primaries, and Foreign Policy

Nelson Ch. 2 (Ragsdale, if the book is available at the bookstore)

Azari, Julia. “Trump Is A 19th-Century President Facing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Problems.” *Fivethirtyeight*. (Sakai)

Farrington, Dana. “Trump Impeachment Inquiry: A Guide To Key People, Facts And Documents.” NPR (Sakai)

Follow the news this week on the primaries and Iran.

**Week 2 (January 22-24): Historical Development of the Presidency**  
**No class January 20<sup>th</sup> (Martin Luther King Day)**

January 22/24 – The Constitutional Presidency

Nelson Ch. 1 (Tulis)

Articles I and II of the US Constitution

Cash, Jordan T. “George Mason and the Ambiguity of Executive Power.”  
*Presidential Studies Quarterly*. (Sakai)

Hamilton, Alexander. Federalist 67 (Sakai)

Hamilton, Alexander. Federalist 69 (Sakai)

January 24/27 – The Historical Development of the Presidency Post-Constitution

Nelson Ch. 3-4 (Skowronek, Milkis & Landy)

**Week 3 (January 27-31): Electing the President Part 1: The Presidential Primaries**

January 27 – Finish discussion of Historical Development

Focus in particular on Chapter 4 and the individual redevelopments

January 29/31 – Primaries

Nelson Ch. 7 (Brown)

Pildes, Richard H. “The Historical Development of the U.S. Presidential Nominations Process.” (Sakai)

Putnam, Josh. “Everything you need to know about how the presidential primary works” *The Washington Post/The Monkey Cage* (Sakai)

Follow news coverage of the upcoming Iowa Caucuses on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **Week 4 (February 3-7): Electing the President Part 2: The General Election, Debates, Coverage, and the Electoral College**

Nelson Ch. 8 (Edwards)

Azari, Julia. "What We Know About The Impact Of Primary Debates." *FiveThirtyEight* (Sakai)

Azari, Julia. "Weak parties and strong partisanship are a bad combination" *Vox/Mischiefs of Faction* (Sakai)

Searles, Kathleen, and Kevin K. Banda. "But Her Emails: How journalistic preferences shaped election coverage in 2016" *Journalism*. (Sakai)

Winneg, Kenneth, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Learning From the 2016 U.S. General Election Presidential Debates" *American Behavioral Scientist* (Sakai)

February 5 – We'll spend some time discussing the Iowa caucuses and what's coming afterwards.

## **Week 5 (February 10-14): Styles of Presidential Power**

Nelson Ch. 5, 6, 9 (Quirk, Nelson, Miroff)

Azari, Julia. "Institutional Change and the Presidential Mandate." *Social Science History*. (Sakai)

Barber, James. "Adult Identity and Presidential Style: The Rhetorical Emphasis." *Daedalus*. (Sakai)

## **Week 6 (February 17 and 21): Presidential Communication – Persuasion, Going Public, the State of the Union, and Donald Trump's Twitter**

### **NOTE: NO CLASS February 19**

Nelson Ch. 10 (Hershey)

Corrigan, Matthew. "The Transformation of Going Public: President Clinton, the First Lady, and Health Care Reform" *Political Communication*. (Sakai)

Dwidar, Maraam, Connor Dye, E.J. Fagan, Katie Madel and Laura Quaglia. "Trump's State of the Union addresses are very different from his predecessors'. Here's how." *The Washington Post/Monkey Cage* (Sakai)

Klein, Ezra. "The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, Explained." *Vox* (Sakai)

Lovett, John, Devin Christensen, and John A. Curiel. "Haters and Losers: Television Media and Donald Trump's Twitter Feed." (Sakai)

## **Week 7 (February 24-28): Formal Powers and Formal Consequences: Presidential Powers and Impeachment**

Nelson Ch. 20 (Nelson)

Conroy, Meredith. "Trump Hasn't Rolled Back Obama's Executive Orders (So Far)." *Fivethirtyeight*. (Sakai)

Howell, William. "Unilateral Powers: A Brief Overview." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. (Sakai)

Moore, Emily H. "Polarization, Excepted Appointments, and the Administrative Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. (Sakai)

Ostrander, Ian, and Joel Sievert. "The Logic of Presidential Signing Statements" *Political Research Quarterly*. (Sakai)

## **Week 8 (March 2-6): Review and Midterm**

March 2 – Review Session

Exam will go live March 3 at 10 AM, due at the end of class time March 6 (2 PM).

**Both March 4 and March 6 classes cancelled so you can work on the exam**

*March 9-13: SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)*

## **Week 9 (March 16-20): The President and Congress**

Nelson Ch. 15 (Dickinson)

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science*. (Sakai)

Dull, Matthew, et. Al. Appointee Confirmation and Tenure: The Succession of U.S. Federal Agency Appointees, 1989–2009. *Public Administration Review*. (Sakai)

Lovett, John, Shaun Bevan, and Frank R. Baumgartner. “Popular Presidents Can Influence Congressional Attention, for a Little While.” *Policy Studies Journal*. (Sakai)

Edwards, George C. III and B. Dan Wood. “Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media.” *American Political Science Review* (Sakai)

### **Week 10 (March 23-25): The President and the Bureaucracy/Supreme Court**

Nelson Ch. 13, 14, 16 (Burke, Lewis and Moe, Yalof)

Kennedy, Joshua B. ““Do This! Do That!’ and Nothing Will Happen”: Executive Orders and Bureaucratic Responsiveness” *American Politics Research*. (Sakai)

**NO CLASS March 27 (Use the time to work on your projects)**

### **Week 11 (March 30 – April 3): The President and Parties/Interest Groups**

Nelson Ch. 11, 12 (Tichenor, Milkis)

*April 3: Paper/Poster Workshop Day: Come with questions on your projects.*

### **Week 12 (April 6-8): The President and Foreign Policy**

Nelson Ch. 17, 19 (Rudalevige, Polsky)

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, William G. Howell, and David E. Lewis  
“Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Reevaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis,” *Journal of Politics* (Sakai)

Glazier, Rebecca, and Amber Boydston. “The President, the Press, and the War: A Tale of Two Framing Agendas.” *Political Communication* (Sakai)

Kreps, Sarah E. “Legality and Legitimacy in American Military Interventions.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. (Sakai)

**NO CLASS April 10 (Good Friday)**

**Week 13 (April 13-15): The President and Domestic Policy**

**Note: No class April 17 (I'm at the MPSA Meetings in Chicago)**

Nelson Ch. 18 (Porter)

Lovett, John. *The Politics of Herding Cats: When Congressional Leaders Fail*.  
Chapter 7: Health Care (health care has been a topic that presidents have made central foci with Congress behind them, but they have had limited success in changing policy)

**Week 14 (April 20-24): Mini-Conference**

Monday/Wednesday/Friday – 8 posters each day

**Week 15 (April 27-29): Reflections and the Future**

Monday: Long Paper Due

Linz, Juan J. “The Perils of Presidentialism” *The Journal of Democracy*. (Sakai)

Wednesday: Review

**FINAL EXAM: Exam will be live Friday, May 1 at 10 AM, due May 4 at 5 PM**