

The U.S. Presidency
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
2:00 – 2:50 p.m.

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Room:
Office:
Office Hours:

Course Description

This course is intended as a broad survey of the literature on presidential and executive branch politics. The central focus of the course will be on the U.S. Presidency, but much of what we discuss will have direct relevance for the study of executive politics more generally. As such, we will focus on the role of the president in the U.S. political system, presidential selection, executive politics, inter-branch relations, presidential power, and executive policymaking. Throughout the course, we will pay attention to current political and scholarly controversies in terms of identifying important research questions as well as examining and improving upon existing research designs. By the end of the course, you should have a better understanding of how the executive branch operates.

Required Texts

Edwards, George C. III. 2019. *Why the Electoral College is Bad for America*, 3rd edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Howell, William G. 2013. *Thinking About the Presidency: The Primacy of Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rudalevige, Andrew. 2021. *By Executive Order: Bureaucratic Management and the Limits of Presidential Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Course Materials

The readings for the course will be drawn from the list of books above, in addition to scholarly articles each week. Required books are available for purchase from the usual sources or may be checked out from the library. Unless otherwise indicated, assigned articles can be downloaded from www.jstor.org or I will provide them to you. Please keep in mind that assigned readings or the course schedule may be altered at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

Attendance	10 Points
Participation	10 Points
Short Writing Assignments	20 Percent
Midterm Exam	20 Points
Final Exam	20 Points
Final Paper	20 Points

Attendance and Participation: Each student will be granted 2 unexcused absences. After those are exhausted, the attendance grade will be the proportion of all classes attended. For example, a student who attends all classes will receive all 10 points. A student who attended all but 2 classes will also receive all 10 points. A student who missed 3 classes but had a university approved excuse will also receive all 10 points. However, a student who used both “freebies” but also missed 10 percent of the classes will only receive 90 percent of the available points.

Short Writing Assignment: Each student will be required to submit a short writing assignment on the day that you are responsible for leading class discussion. This assignment should briefly summarize and critically analyze the assigned readings. The paper should be approximately 2-3 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. *Be sure to spell check and read over your paper before submitting it for a grade.*

Class Debates: On most Fridays throughout the course, we will engage in debates related to the presidency. I will be accepting volunteers for debate topics listed on the syllabus during the early weeks of the semester and four students (two on the “for” side and two on the “against” side) will debate the assigned topic for 30 minutes followed by class discussion to determine which side offered a more compelling presentation and “won” the debate. Half of your participation grade for the course will be assessed based on your active involvement in these debates. More details will be provided early in the course.

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam in this course. Exams are closed book and will include a mix of identification, short answer, and essay questions. The final exam is cumulative and will include material covered in the class lectures and the assigned reading. Make-up exams will not be allowed without a university-approved excuse. It is the student’s responsibility to schedule a make-up exam as quickly as possible after her or she has provided an excuse. Any potential conflicts should be cleared with the instructor as soon as possible. Exams may not be taken early.

Final Paper: Everyone will be required to submit a final paper at the end of April. This assignment will analyze a topic relevant to the study of the U.S. presidency, which we will cover in this course. These papers should be approximately 8-10 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. *Your final grade on the project will be penalized if there are grammatical or spelling errors in the completed paper.*

Overall Grades: Grades are constructed to reflect the university standards, which are summarized below. Grades will be based on how many points you earn according to the following distribution:

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

How to Succeed in this Course

- Be respectful of your own and others' ideas.
- Attend class consistently.
- Keep up with the readings.
- If something is not clear, ask a question.
- Clarify expectations with the instructor.
- Utilize all resources available to you.

Course Schedule (Subject to change as events warrant):

1/10 Introduction

1/12 **Studying the Presidency**

Discussion of the challenges associated with studying the presidency

1/14 Howell, *Thinking About the Presidency* (pgs. 1-70)

1/17 **No Class, MLK Day**

1/19 Howell, *Thinking About the Presidency* (pgs. 71-143)

1/21 **Presidential Primaries**

Aldrich, John. 2009. "The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice."
PS: Political Science & Politics 42(1): 33-38.

1/24 Norrander, Barbara. 2006. "The Attrition Game: Initial Resources, Initial Contests, and the Exit of Candidates During the U.S. Presidential Primary Season." *British Journal of Political Science* 36: 487-507.

1/26 Sides, John, Chris Tausanovitch, Lynn Vavreck, and Christopher Warshaw. 2018. "On the Representativeness of Primary Electorates." *British Journal of Political Science*

1/28 **Debate:** *A national primary should be established and held on the same day every four years to select each party's presidential nominee.*

- 1/31 **Presidential Elections**
Gomez, Brad, Thomas Hansford, and George Krause. 2007. "The Republicans Should Pray for Rain: Weather, Turnout, and Voting in U.S. Presidential Elections." *Journal of Politics* 69(3): 649-663.
- 2/2 Mayhew, David R. 2008. "Incumbency Advantage in U.S. Presidential Elections: The Historical Record." *Political Science Quarterly* 123(2): 201-228.
- 2/4 **Debate:** *The 22nd Amendment should be repealed allowing presidents to run for a third (and potentially fourth) term of office.*
- 2/7 Kriner, Douglas L. and Andrew Reeves. 2012. "The Influence of Federal Spending on Presidential Elections." *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 348-366.
- 2/9 **Exam One**
- 2/11 **Debate:** *There is too much money in presidential elections and reforms need to be enacted to prevent wealthy donors from "buying" election results.*
- 2/14 **The Electoral College**
Edwards, *Why The Electoral College is Bad for America*, pgs. 1-100
- 2/16 Edwards, *Why The Electoral College is Bad for America*, pgs. 101-219
- 2/18 **Debate:** *The Electoral College should be abolished and replaced with a system that is fairer and more representative of the popular vote.*
- 2/21 **The Presidency as an Institution**
Ragsdale, Lyn and John Theis. 1997. "The Institutionalization of the American Presidency, 1924-92." *American Journal of Political Science* 41(4): 1280-1318.
- 2/23 Dickinson, Matthew and Kathryn Dunn Tenpas. 2002. "Explaining Increasing Turnover Rates Among Presidential Advisors, 1929-1997." *Journal of Politics* 64(2): 434-448.
- 2/25 **Debate:** *The president should be given a line item veto to assist in eliminating waste in congressional spending among other potential abuses.*
- 2/28 **Presidential Approval**
Kriner, Douglas L. and Eric Schickler. 2014. "Investigating the President: Committee Probes and Presidential Approval, 1953-2006." *Journal of Politics* 76(2): 521-534.
- 3/2 Christenson, Dino P. and Douglas L. Kriner. 2017. "Mobilizing the Public Against the President: Congress and the Political Costs of Unilateral Action." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(4): 769-785.

- 3/4 **Debate:** *We expect far too much from modern presidents and we need to adopt more realistic expectations of what presidents can accomplish during their time in office.*
- 3/7 **No Class, Spring Break**
- 3/9 **No Class, Spring Break**
- 3/11 **No Class, Spring Break**
- 3/14 **The President and Congress**
Canes-Wrone, Brandice and Scott de Marchi. 2002. "Presidential Approval and Legislative Success." *Journal of Politics* 64(2): 491-509.
- 3/16 Rogowski, Jon C. 2016. "Presidential Influence in an Era of Congressional Dominance." *American Political Science Review* 110(2): 325-341.
- 3/18 **Debate:** *The War Powers Resolution needs to be strengthened to discourage presidents from committing troops abroad without prior congressional approval.*
- 3/21 Hassell, Hans J. G. and Samuel Kernell. 2016. "Veto Rhetoric and Legislative Riders." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 845-859.
- 3/23 **Exam Two**
- 3/25 **Debate:** *The Constitution needs to be revised to give the president "fast-track" authority to propose legislation that Congress must accept or reject without amendment (on a majoritarian basis, without filibuster), much as it does for trade deals.*
- 3/28 **Unilateral Presidential Power**
Ostrander, Ian and Joel Sievert. 2013. "What's So Sinister about Presidential Signing Statements?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43(1): 58-80.
- 3/30 Thrower, Sharece. 2017. "To Revoke or Not Revoke? The Political Determinants of Executive Order Longevity." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(3): 642-656.
- 4/1 **Debate:** *Modern presidents have too much unilateral authority and greater checks on executive power should be put into place by Congress and/or the judiciary.*
- 4/4 Rudalevige, *By Executive Order*, pgs. 1-109
- 4/6 Rudalevige, *By Executive Order*, pgs. 110-220
- 4/8 **No Class, Midwest Political Science Association Meeting (Chicago, IL)**
- 4/11 **The President and the Courts**
Johnson, Timothy and Jason Roberts. 2004. "Presidential Capital and the Supreme Court Nomination Process." *Journal of Politics* 66(3): 663-683.

- 4/13 Bailey, Michael, Brian Kamoie, and Forrest Maltzman. 2005. "Signals From the Tenth Justice: The Political Role of the Solicitor General in Supreme Court Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(1): 72-85.
- 4/15 **Debate:** *Presidents should not be allowed to appoint justices to the U.S. Supreme Court in their fourth (or eighth) year of office.*
- 4/18 **Executive Branch Politics**
Gronke, Paul, Jeffrey Koch, and J. Matthew Wilson. 2003. "Follow the Leader? Presidential Approval, Presidential Support, and Representatives' Electoral Fortunes." *Journal of Politics* 65(3): 785-808
- 4/20 Ostrander, Ian. 2016. "The Logic of Collective Inaction: Senatorial Delay in Executive Nominations." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 1063-1076.
- 4/22 **No Class, Research Day**
- 4/25 **Presidents and the Media**
Baum, Matthew A. and Samuel Kernell. 1999. "Has Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television?" *American Political Science Review* 93(1): 99-114.
- *Final Papers Due**
- 4/27 Druckman, James. 2003. "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate Revisited." *Journal of Politics* 65(2): 559-571.
- 4/29 **Debate:** *The media has played a critical role in holding the president accountable in the history of this country and additional safeguards need to be put into place to ensure that this continues to be the case in an age of increasingly partisan and social media.*
- 5/2 Class Wrap-Up
- 5/4 **No Class, Reading Day**
- 5/6 Final Examination, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.