

Political Science 312

Presidential Politics

Fall 2017

Department of Political Science
Oregon State University

1 Instructor Information

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Office Hours: 9:00-10:00 2:00-3:00 M, W or by
Apt
Class Location: Gilkey 113

2 Course Description

Very few topics at the constitutional convention drew as much interest and debate as the formation of the executive branch. While the founding fathers outlined the role of the president on paper, 45 Presidents over more than two centuries have defined the branch in practice. The goal of this course is to investigate this unique branch of government in more detail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the American Presidency. To accomplish this goal, we will begin by focusing on the foundations of the presidency and explore how different Presidents have shaped the office. Additionally, we will explore how the presidency is shaped by the other institutions of Government, the electoral process, and the media. Finally, we will explore the conditions in which the President is able to maximize his/her influence on public policy.

In addition to learning more about presidency, students in this class will learn skills that transcend the course's topic and can be used in their future careers. In particular, students in this course will learn how to think critically about social science research, learn how to formulate and analyze a research question using real world data, and improve their public speaking abilities.

3 Course Readings

This course's readings will be primarily drawn from readings from social scientific websites, journal articles and book chapters which will be available on the course website. Students will be required to complete all of the readings before each class.

4 Course Structure

Recent research has demonstrated both the strengths and limitations of a strict lecture format. While students learn a significant amount of information through hearing the analysis of professors, a combination of lecture, discussion, active learning exercises, videos and student participation generally yields better learning outcomes for students. To ensure that students get the most out of this course, we will use a multi-faceted approach to learning which will include all of these features.

5 Assessment

In-Class Short Writing Assignments (10%)

To help students think critically about this topic and to improve their writing and communication skills, students will be asked to write down their answers (about a paragraph in length) to 2 to 4 question prompts given in each class. Students will be required to turn in 12 of their written responses and these will be graded simply as pass or fail. Each completed assignment is worth 1%. For every additional writing assignment students turn in (beyond the 12), they will earn a half of a percent extra credit toward their final exam grade. **For full credit, each question must be answered and they are due at the end of class. No late assignments will be accepted.**

Midterm (25%-30%)

The midterm will test your knowledge of the first half of the course. The test will include a combination of multiple choice questions, short answer identifications, and a short essay prompt. The essay prompt will ask students to take a critical approach on the successes and failures of the abolitionist movement and the civil rights movement and apply this analysis to the black lives matter movement.

Debates and Final Paper (40%)

After the Midterm, students will be randomly assigned a position and a topic that pertains to an important issue in presidential politics. In groups of five, students will prepare a three to five minute opening statement which will provide an outline of the topic, items in support of their position, and critiques of the opposition. The students will then as a group give two five minute constructive and rebuttal speeches. Finally, the students will answer questions about their topic and their position from the audience. Each group will also be required to submit a five to seven page paper detailing their argument at the end of the debate. More details about the course debates are available on the course website.

Final (25%-30%)

The final will test your knowledge of the second half of the course, with a few questions from the first half of the course. The test will include a combination of multiple choice questions and short answer identification.

6 Course Policies

A Note on Academic Integrity

I find it unfortunate that instructors must include this section on the syllabus, but with a rise of electronic resources, academic dishonesty is a part of the reality in which we now function. Thus, I include a very short reminder here on the importance of maintaining academic integrity. Cheating in any form is prohibited and will result in an automatic fail for the course.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty, and Disability Access Services. (DAS) Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the

faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.

Accessibility of Course Materials

All materials used in this course are accessible. If you require accommodations please contact Disability Access Services (DAS).

Additionally, Canvas, the learning management system through which this course is offered, provides a vendor statement certifying how the platform is accessible to students with disabilities.

7 Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

Wednesday-September 20th Introduction and Syllabus

- *NO READING*

Monday-September 25th Creating the Presidency

Required Readings

- Federalists Papers 70, 72 & 73 (Posted Online)
- The Anti-Federalists Papers 69, 70, 73, & 74 (Posted Online)

Wednesday-September 27th The Presidency in Practice

Required Readings

- George Washington's Farewell Address (Posted Online)

Monday-October 2nd Presidents During Time of War

Required Readings

- DeRouen, Karl. "Presidents and the diversionary use of force: A research note." *International Studies Quarterly* 44.2 (2000): 317-328.

Wednesday-October 4th Presidential Scandals

Required Readings

- Kassop, Nancy. "The Law: The Clinton Impeachment: Untangling the Web of Conflicting Considerations." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30.2 (2000): 360-374.

Monday-October 9th Revising Article II Exercise

Required Readings

- Article II of the Constitution

Wednesday-October 11th The President and the Media*Required Readings*

- Sparrow, Bartholomew H. "Who speaks for the people? The president, the press, and public opinion in the United States." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38.4 (2008): 578-592.

Monday-October 16th The President and Public Opinion*Required Readings*

- Kernell, Samuel. *Going public: New strategies of presidential leadership*. CQ Press, 2006. Chapter 5

Wednesday-October 18th Predicting Presidential Success*Required Readings*

- Barber, James David. *The presidential character: Predicting performance in the White House*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992. Chapter 1

Monday-October 23rd Midterm*Required Readings*

- Barber, James David. *The presidential character: Predicting performance in the White House*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992. Chapter 1

Wednesday-October 25th-Presidential Primaries*Required Readings*

- Steger, Wayne P., John Hickman, and Ken Yohn. "Candidate competition and attrition in presidential primaries, 1912-2000." *American Politics Research* 30.5 (2002): 528-554.

Monday-October 30th-Presidential Debates*Required Readings*

- Schill, Dan, and Rita Kirk. "Courting the Swing Voter Real Time Insights Into the 2008 and 2012 US Presidential Debates." *American Behavioral Scientist* 58.4 (2014): 536-555.
- Matthew, Dylan. 2012. Do presidential Debates Usually Matter? Political Scientists Say No. *Monkey Cage: Washington Post*

Wednesday-November 1st The Electoral College*Required Readings*

- Gelman, Andrew. Compared to national popular vote, the electoral college favors voters in small states (on average), not large states. *Monkey Cage: Washington Post*

Monday-November 6th-Movie-Mitt*Required Readings*

- None

Wednesday November 8th-The General Election*Required Readings*

- Baum, Matthew A. "Talking the vote: Why presidential candidates hit the talk show circuit." *American Journal of Political Science* 49.2 (2005): 213-234.

Monday-November 13th The President and Supreme Court*Required Readings*

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- Johnson, Timothy R., and Jason M. Roberts. "Pivotal politics, presidential capital, and Supreme Court nominations." *Congress & the Presidency: A Journal of Capital Studies*. Vol. 32. No. 1. 2005.

Wednesday-November 15th The President and Congress*Required Readings*

- Edwards III, George C., Andrew Barrett, and Jeffrey Peake. "The legislative impact of divided government." *American journal of political science* (1997): 545-563.

Monday-November 20th The President and the Bureaucracy*Required Readings*

- Patterson, Bradley Hawkes. *The White House Staff: Inside the West Wing and Beyond*. Brookings Institution Press, 2000. Chapter 1

Wednesday-November 22nd No Class Thanksgiving*Required Readings*

- None

Monday-November 27th Debate Part 1*Required Readings*

- Group 1: Would our founders be happy with the modern executive branch?
- Group 2: How strong should presidential war powers be?

Wednesday-November 29th Debate Part 2

Required Readings

- Group 3: Should we abolish the electoral college?
- Group 4: Has technology and the media improved the executive branch?

Final is on Tuesday, December 5th at 9:30am *May Be Subject to Change*