Course Overview

This course covers the American presidency. We will define leadership and briefly highlight the historical grounding of the office and its development. Then, we will cover the presidential selection process and underscore the inner workings of the White House and limited influence that individual presidents have on the office of the presidency. We will also study the presidency in relation to the public and the media, and as a representative institution. The remainder of the course will look at the presidency in a system of institutions sharing powers, particularly its interaction with Congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy. Throughout the course, we will discuss some findings of the scholarly community and apply our understanding to current events.

Course Goals

1) Evaluate the role of the presidency as a key institution in the American political system.
2) Analyze the effectiveness of presidential leadership.
3) Think critically and communicate effectively about the topics presented in this course.

Readings


Online access to Rocketmix Modules and a series of journal articles

Course Assignments

1. First Exam  25 %
2. Rocketmix exercises  15 %
3. Final Paper  25 %
4. Second Exam  25 %
5. Class Participation  10 %
Course Policies and Procedures

Grading: Grading will follow a standard scale: 90% is an A, 80% is a B, 70% is a C, and 60% is a D. *I do not change grades unless I make a computational error.* Moreover, I do not reveal grades via e-mail or telephone and *there are no opportunities for extra credit*, except those mentioned herein or announced by me in class. I will submit your final grades, for view at my.unt.edu, shortly after I grade final exams. We will use blackboard (learn.unt.edu) for any quizzes, some assigned readings, and announcements.

Communications: If you have any questions about the class, please see me during my office hours or schedule an appointment to see me. If you choose to e-mail me, e-mail directly to the address listed on the syllabus, not through blackboard. To ensure that your e-mail does not wind up in my spam folder, clearly specify a class-related subject on the subject line of your e-mail. As a reminder, I do not reveal grades or schedule makeup exams via e-mail. If you need to discuss your grade or schedule a makeup exam, you must see me in person. Finally, if you choose to e-mail me instead of speaking with me in person, it is your responsibility to check e-mail frequently for my response.

If you do poorly on any of the assignments or exams, I advise you to see me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to seek my help if you need it. Pleading for a higher grade after you complete all assignments and exams will not avail you.

Exams: The first and second exams will test your understanding of assigned readings and lecture material. Both exams will consist of a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. You must write answers in blue or black ink on the paper provided. As there is no comprehensive final exam, the second exam will test your understanding of all material after the first exam.

Make up exams will only be given in light of a university excused absence or at the discretion of the professor. Inform me of your absence before or within 48 hours after the examination date, either in person or by e-mail. I will need specific, written documentation to verify the nature and legitimacy of your absence. You must present this documentation to me, in person, during my office hours (or make an appointment). At that time, I will determine whether you are eligible to take a makeup exam and we will schedule a time for the exam. Except under unusual and equally verifiable circumstances, you must take the makeup exam before the next class period after the regularly scheduled exam. You will have one hour to complete the makeup exam, which consists of answering *one essay question.*

Research Paper: The final paper is a research paper that will address a major question on the American presidency. You should begin thinking about your paper early, and may wish to glance ahead at a topic that you find interesting and review the bibliography at the end of an Edwards and Wayne chapter. Additional paper guidelines are outlined on the last pages of this syllabus.

Simulations: In addition to the lectures, textbook readings, articles, and other supplemental readings, you will complete six online simulations, associated with Rocketmix, that will complement several important topics covered throughout the semester. These are required and access cost $20, with signup available at rocketmix.com. Each assignment will be open one week before its due date. You must complete the assignment before 10am on the assigned due date. The ROCKETMIX MODULES are available here:
You will receive 1 point for completing each module; 1 point for completing it on time; then a (curved) point based on the assessment score. Taken together, these will be 15 percent of your final grade.

**Class Participation:** An important component to this class is being able to discuss intelligently matters pertinent to the presidency and American politics. Therefore, we will incorporate a discussion of current events into most classes. I encourage you to read a quality newspaper, e.g., *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, or *Washington Post* or their web counterparts on a regular basis. You may also learn from radio news sources, such as *National Public Radio,* and television news, e.g., *The News Hour.* I will also ask questions periodically throughout each class session. Keep in mind that class participation is worth one-tenth of your grade and it may be the difference between an A and a B or between a B and a C.

**Attendance:** Attendance is expected, but not required for this class. Keep in mind that you must attend class to participate in class, just as you are responsible for all materials covered in class. If you miss a lecture, see a classmate for notes. I do not post PowerPoint slides for my upper level courses. Please do not be late to class, as it is disruptive to not only me, but also your classmates. Being on time and not leaving early (without express consent of the professor) are required. Persistent tardiness will result in a lower grade for the course.

**Dropping Courses:** Please link [http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-registration-guide](http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-registration-guide) for information concerning drops, withdraws, and other administrative information.

**Course Evaluations:** You will have two opportunities at the end of the semester to evaluate this course. First, there is a new University-wide survey that will be made available to you at the end of the semester to be completed outside of class. Consistent with unofficial University policy, if over 60 percent of the class completes the survey, each student will receive one percentage point of extra credit. Second, I ask that you complete an in-class evaluation required by the political science department.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:** The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at [http://www.unt.edu/oda](http://www.unt.edu/oda). You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

**Academic Misconduct:** Academic integrity emanates from a culture that embraces the core values of trust and honesty necessary for full learning to occur. As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust
necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship. For detailed information about the policy, please visit:

http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/15.2.7_GradeAppeals_May2015_1.pdf
http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf

For more information on what constitutes plagiarism, please visit: http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/

**Acceptable Student Behavior:** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr. In short, please be considerate of others.

**Course Materials and Copyright Statement:** The handouts, which include all materials generated for this class, are copyrighted. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

**Course Schedule**

**INTRODUCTION**

Week One, August 24: Introduction and Studying the Presidency

Read: Edwards and Wayne, pp. 13-18; Appendix A
      Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake, Chapter 1

Week Two, August 31: The Constitutional Presidency and Presidential War Power

Read: Edwards and Wayne, pp. 2-11; Chapter 14

September 7 No class, Labor Day Holiday

Week Three, September 9: Presidential Leadership: Historical and Contextual


**Simulation 1:** Ranking Presidents, due September 9

Week Four, September 14: Presidential Nominations

Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 2
Week Five, September 21:  Presidential Elections  
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 3

**Simulation 2: Campaigns and Elections, due September 21**

Week Six, September 28:  Individual Presidents  
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 8

**Simulation 3: Presidential Honeymoons, due October 2**

Week Seven, October 5:  Presidential Decision Making  
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 7

Week Eight, October 12:  The Institutional Presidency, Review, and Exam 1  
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 6

**EXAM 1: October 19, in class**

Week Nine, October 21:  The President and the Public  
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 4

**Simulation 4: Reagan: The Great Communicator!?, due October 26**

Week Ten, October 26:  The President and the Media  
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 5

Week Eleven, November 2:  The President and the Courts  
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 11
Week Twelve, November 9: The President and Congress
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 10

Simulation 5: The Johnson Treatment, due November 9

Week Thirteen, November 16: The President and the Bureaucracy
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 9

Simulation 6: The Recess Appointments Controversy, due November 18

Week Fourteen, November 23: The President and Unilateral Action
Read: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 15

Final Paper due: November 30
December 2: Course Review

Exam 2: Saturday, December 5 at 8am

Assignment: Research Paper

The research paper should address a question that you ask about the American presidency. In brief, the paper will focus on a particular area of the presidency, research a question in that area, assess the weight of the evidence, and make an argument: what are the arguments in favor of and against the Electoral College, for example, and which side is more convincing? Where is the argument not convincing? What evidence, especially beyond what is portrayed in the reader, can you bring to bear to support your argument? Are there any gaps in this debate or other issues in this area of the literature that you think political scientists should explore? You should cover most of the important literature on your topic. You will likely focus on a selection of books and articles related to your topic area or review the bibliography at the end of the Edwards and Wayne chapters that relate to your topic. You will also develop and test a hypothesis.

The paper should be organized in the following way. Aside from an introduction that will cleverly and concisely introduce your paper topic as well as its importance, you should build an extensive survey of the available literature. A literature review is a brief discussion of published research on your topic. It will serve to demonstrate your familiarity with the research associated with your topic and provide the foundation for your theoretical contribution. Most often, you will find a question that has not been answered or one that has been answered poorly in your review of the literature. Indeed, when writing your literature review you should explore the shortcomings of previous work and think about how your paper may remedy them. Next, present a hypothesis and test that hypothesis with data. You should describe your data, of course, including your methodology. Your “data” may be quantitative or qualitative; whatever best fits your talents and topic. Finally, discuss your results and provide a brief conclusion about your findings. Typically, you will want to reflect
on why you found what you expected to find, why (or why not), how your results fit into the literature you reviewed and, perhaps, what other questions might future scholarship attempt to answer.

Remember that your question should revolve around a research question that can be refuted. Make sure that your question is specific enough to address effectively. If your question is too broad, then you will have a difficult time collecting evidence for a reasonable conclusion.

Although there are many possible approaches to answering questions about the presidency, one effective approach to studying the presidency is through content analysis. Content analysis is the process of observing and cataloguing information from a form of communication into quantifiable terms. Some examples include: counting the number of presidential skits on Saturday Night Live across three decades to see if SNL is more critical of the presidency now that it used to be; coding the content of the president’s speeches, and then a comparable news program to see if the two coincide at all; sample segments from The Daily Show from 2006 and 2009 to see if the program is equally critical of Republican and Democratic presidents, or if there appears to be a bias in news coverage.

Another possibility is to incorporate public opinion data to support your argument. This might be more supplemental (as we will discuss) or more central to your analysis. Either way, one required aspect to your research paper will be to visit the Roper Center (available through the UNT library), search for a range of surveys that relate to your topic, and present these data to me. Since I want you to use this resource, specifically, turning in a screen shot of your findings is acceptable.

Additional Online Resources:

- The American Presidency Project (americanpresidency.ucsb.edu). Public papers and other presidential documents.
- Thomas—Library of Congress (Thomas.loc.gov). Provides detailed information on legislation, including roll-call vote data.

The research paper is an 8 to 10-page paper. Please see “paper guidelines” for spacing and format issues. You must use at least 8 peer-reviewed sources to complete this paper. (This means you must cite and incorporate them within the paper!) Peer-reviewed sources are scholarly works, such as university press books or journal articles, on the presidency and American politics. Your paper MUST include some public opinion data, and there will be a short assignment about mid-semester where you will access the iPoll databank (Roper Center), find and report some public opinion data related to your project. Your paper MUST include at least four journal articles from The American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, Journal of Politics, Political Research Quarterly, Presidential Studies Quarterly, or Congress and the Presidency. Although in some instances, quality periodicals such as the National Journal or The New York Times may supplement your research, they do not count toward the 8-source minimum. Time or Newsweek are not peer-reviewed sources, neither is Wikipedia. Avoid them. If you are unsure as to what counts as a peer-reviewed source, please ask.
The first step to writing a good paper is organization. Use an outline. If you know how information fits into your paper before you write, you will find writing to be much easier. Use headings. Headings will allow you to break up a lengthy paper into several smaller papers. This will also make writing easier, especially if you have not yet written an 8 to 10 page paper in college.

**Paper Guidelines:**

1. The paper must be typed and double-spaced in 12-point font (in the ballpark of Times New Roman or Garamond), and with one-inch margins.

2. All papers must include a title page. A title page contains the following information: The title of the paper, your name, and the date.

3. The title page, references, or endnotes do not count toward the paper’s page total.

4. You must staple each paper in the upper left-hand corner, and number all pages except the title page. No other binding, please.

5. Please use appropriate headings which not only break up a lengthy paper into several shorter papers, they are also nice visual cues for the reader. And you want the reader to be pleased with your paper.

ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE AS ASSIGNED AND ARE ONLY ACCEPTED LATE AT 10 PERCENT PER CALENDAR DAY LATE. If I do not have your paper by the deadline, it is late. *I do not accept e-mailed paper assignments.*

**Paper Grading**

I will grade your book review on the following criteria:

1. Adherence to “paper guidelines,” or paper’s overall presentation (10 points)

2. Paper organization and writing: a well-organized and written paper is a good paper (25 points)

3. References: incorporating 8 peer-reviewed sources into your research paper (15 points)

4. Research: ask a thoughtful question, integrate your sources into your research paper, discuss them accurately, frame a hypothesis, test it, and raise criticisms and questions (50 points)

An A paper, for example, will follow the paper guidelines almost perfectly; will be well-organized with a clear introduction (tell me what you are going to discuss) and thesis (your research question or topic), body (tell me), and conclusion (tell me again); will be well-written with minimal grammatical and spelling mistakes; and will be researched well, integrating all eight sources into a coherent, interesting, and clear argument that stays focused on your thesis.

You will not receive an A if you rely too heavily on one source, cite less than the minimum sources, do not organize your paper well, or do not write well.