The American Presidency
PSCI 4140-001
Spring 2011

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Office Hours: MT 2:00-3:30 pm  Class: TR 9:30-10:50pm, Wooten 119

Course Overview
This course focuses on the American presidency. We will 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 of individuals 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. In particular, we will stress the presidency and its interaction with Congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy. Throughout the course, we will discuss some findings of the scholarly community.

The structure of the class requires ample student participation. Typically, I will lecture on Tuesdays, introducing the main topics of the week, and then we will set most of Thursday aside to discuss the findings in the articles or books assigned.

Course Goals
1) To develop a broad understanding of the presidency as a political institution.
2) To improve critical thinking and writing skills.

Readings
Han, Lori Cox, ed. 2010. New Directions in the American Presidency. Routledge. (Required)

Course Assignments
1. First Exam  25%
2. Discussion Leader  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.

If you do poorly on any of the assignments, 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 will not avail you.

Communications: If you have any questions about the class, please see me during my office hours or schedule an appointment to see me. You are more than welcome to e-mail me as well, but it is much easier to communicate about class in person. For security reasons, including network vulnerabilities to viruses and spam, I will not answer e-mail that fails to 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.

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 for this class, 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) and before the makeup examination date. 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 a Han chapter related to that topic. Additional paper guidelines are outlined on the last pages of this syllabus.

Discussion Leader: Given the relatively small size of this class and that it is an honor’s course, we will spend part of one class period each week (typically on a Thursday) discussing the weekly topic. As there will be a scholarly article assigned for most weeks, one person will be charged with leading the discussion of the article. The leader will be graded on his or her effectiveness in summarizing and characterizing the article in itself and as it relates to the weekly topic. Some questions to
consider follow: what are the authors’ main findings; how do they arrive at their conclusions; are the findings believable; how do the findings contradict or support the lectures; and are there any concerns or criticisms that you have about the article? Encouraging class discussion by presenting thoughtful questions to the class is also part of this assignment.

**Class Participation:** An important component to your intellectual development 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. I expect you to be prepared to participate in class by reading each day's assignments beforehand. To ensure that you read the assignments, I reserve the right to quiz you over reading materials (which will count as part of your participation grade). If I quiz you over the readings, your participation on assigned reading and performance on quizzes will count for roughly one-half of your class participation grade. 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. But 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.

**Dropping Courses:** Please link [http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/spring/calendar.htm](http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/spring/calendar.htm) for information concerning drops, withdraws, and other administrative information.

**Course Evaluations:** You will be provided an opportunity at the end of the semester to evaluate this course. The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is administered by the University. This survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, through my.unt.edu, and may be completed outside of class.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:** The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, you must contact the Office of Disability Accommodation before accommodations can be given.

Students who wish to utilize the testing center must first complete an Alternative Test Request form from the Office of Disability Accommodations that must be signed by the instructor for each course and exam that he or she wishing to take at ODA Testing Center. The form must then be turned in to ODA's main office at the University Union Suite 322A at least 72 hours prior to any regularly scheduled exam and 1 week before a final exam. Please see [http://www.unt.edu/oda/index.html](http://www.unt.edu/oda/index.html) for information.
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/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf

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.

Course Materials and Copyright Statement: The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By “handouts,” I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

Course Schedule

INTRODUCTION

Week One, January 18: Introduction and Studying the Presidency
Read: Han, Chapter 1
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, pp. 13-18; Appendix A

Week Two, January 25: The Constitutional Presidency and Presidential War Power
Read: Han, chapters 2 and 11
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, pp. 2-11; Chapter 14

Week Three, February 1: Presidential Leadership in Historical Context

Week Four, February 8: Presidential Nominations
Read: Han, chapter 3
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 2
Week Five, February 15: Presidential Elections
Read: Han, chapter 3
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 3

Week Six, February 22: Individual Presidents
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 8

Week Seven, March 1: Presidential Decision Making
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 7

Week Eight, March 8: The Institutional Presidency and Exam 1
Read: Han, chapter 8
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 6

**EXAM 1: March 10, in class**

**MARCH 14-18: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASSES**

Week Nine, March 22: The President and the Public
Read: Han, chapter 5
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 4

Week Ten, March 29: The President and the Media
Read: Han, chapter 4
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 5
Week Eleven, April 5:       The President and the Courts
Read: Han, chapter 7
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 11
Discuss: (1) Yates, Jeff, and Andrew Whitford. 1998.  “Presidential Power and the
United States Supreme Court.” *Political Research Quarterly* 51(2): 539-50.

Week Twelve, April 12:     The President and Congress
Read: Han, chapter 6
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 10
(2) Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. “The President’s Legislative Influence

Week Thirteen, April 19:   The President and Unilateral Action
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 15

No class: April 21

Week Fourteen, April 26:  The President and the Bureaucracy
Read: Han, chapter 9
Supplemental: Edwards and Wayne, chapter 9

**Final Paper due, April 26 in class**

Pre-finals Week, May 3:     Course conclusions and review

**Exam 2: Thursday May 12 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 Han or Edwards and Wayne chapters that relate to your topic. You will also develop and test a hypothesis. I am pleased to interpret what pertains to the American presidency broadly, but the paper should have several parts.

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. 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.

Since you will be collecting data, I advise you to think of a research question and begin collecting data early. I am more than happy to provide additional data resources, but include the following as a first step.
Selected Online Resources:

- Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (ropercenter.uconn.edu). Available through the UNT library webpage.
- The American Presidency Project (americanpresidency.ucsb.edu). Public papers and other presidential documents.
- Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania (appcpenn.org). Conducts research on political communication. Web page includes numerous reports.
- Vanderbilt University Television News Archive (tvnews.vanderbilt.edu).
- Thomas—Library of Congress (Thomas.loc.gov). Provides detailed information on legislation, including roll-call vote data.

The research paper is a 12 to 15-page paper. Please see “paper guidelines” for spacing and format issues. You must use at least ten quality sources to complete this paper. (This means you must cite and incorporate them within the paper!) Quality sources are scholarly works, such as university press books or journal articles, on the presidency and American politics. 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, or Presidential Studies Quarterly. Although in some instances, quality periodicals such as the National Journal or The New York Times may be useful to supplement your research, they do not count toward the ten-source minimum. Magazines such as Time or Newsweek are not quality sources, neither is Wikipedia. If you are unsure as to what counts as a quality source, please ask.

Please use APSA citation style: http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPSA.html

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 a 10 to 12 page paper in your college career.

The Presidency Research Group of the American Political Science Association offers a best undergraduate paper award. As an incentive to you, if any of you produces a paper worthy of nomination, I will nominate it. For this reason, I am willing to accept slightly longer papers (which are more appealing to the award committee), so long as the additional length is warranted. The deadline for nominations is May 1.
Paper Guidelines:

1. The paper must be typed and double-spaced in 12-point font (Times New Roman), 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, the class, 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 ACCEPTED 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 10 quality 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.