

# The American Presidency

## PSCI 4140-001

### Spring 2024

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**Professor:** Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha  
**Phone:** 565-2329  
**Class:** TR 9:30-10:20 am, GAB 114

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**Office Hours:** TR 10:30am-12:00 pm

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### *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 and what makes presidents successful.
- 3) Think critically and communicate effectively about the topics presented in this course.

### *Readings*

Doherty, Brendan J. 2023. *Fundraiser in Chief: Presidents and the Politics of Campaign Cash*. University of Press of Kansas.

Scholarly articles, available through the UNT Library or via Canvas.

### *Course Assignments*

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|------------------------|------|
| 1. First Exam          | 15 % |
| 2. Book Review         | 15 % |
| 3. Final Paper         | 25 % |
| 4. Final Essay         | 10 % |
| 5. Reading Notes       | 25 % |
| 6. 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, which will be visible on my.unt.edu when UNT makes grades official.

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 will not avail you!

**Communications:** If you have questions about the class, please see me during my office hours or schedule an appointment to see me. Other than the most rudimentary topics, it is much easier to communicate about class in person. Because I do not reveal grades or schedule makeup exams via e-mail you should see me in my office about these issues. If you choose to e-mail me, please specify a class-related subject on the subject line of your e-mail to ensure that I receive the e-mail. If you choose to e-mail me, it is your responsibility to check frequently for my response. I respond to e-mails very quickly, so please e-mail me directly at [Matthew.Eshbaugh-Soha@unt.edu](mailto:Matthew.Eshbaugh-Soha@unt.edu). At times, I may use the announcement feature in Canvas to communicate with the entire class, but I do not check Canvas messages frequently.

**Exam:** There is one exam for this class. It is designed to test your understanding of assigned readings and lecture material and 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 and is scheduled for finals week.

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*.

**Final Essay:** In lieu of a final exam, you will write a two-page, in class summary of two areas of presidency research from the second half of the semester. Your task is to show me what you know about two weekly topics that you do not address in your research paper. Your goal is to identify the main issues in that weekly topic and provide specific evidence from the lectures, readings, or both demonstrating that you have a firm understanding of the main findings. You will write this, in class, on **May 2**. You may use one page of hand-written notes to complete this assignment.

**Critical Book Review:** You will write a critical book review of *Fundraise in Chief*. This book review should summarize the book, which includes identifying the authors' question, the importance of the topic, the author's findings, and his primary conclusions. You should be able to summarize the main points of the book in a concise and clear style. You do not want to go through the book chapter by chapter, summarizing each, but rather offer a general overview, supplementing main points from the book as needed support. In addition, offer an insightful critique of the book, using logic and reason or data to back up your concerns. You might suggest if the authors accomplished what they set out to accomplish or discuss how the book supports or disagrees with class lectures and other readings. The book review should be four pages long and follow the assignment style guidelines listed at the end of the syllabus. It is due on **February 22 at the beginning of class**. We will also discuss this book at length on the review's due date, another opportunity to score class participation points.

**Research Paper:** Write an 8–10-page research paper (approximately 2,500-3,000 words) in which you will address an individual president's success regarding three major areas. **The final draft is due on April 30.**

**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 or watch a quality news source regularly to help contextualize what you learn in class into the current presidency. I will also ask questions periodically throughout each class session; some over current events and some over the readings.

Although I think it is important for you to also develop your spoken communication skills in this class, I realize that some students simply will not talk. In the event that you do not wish to speak in class, I give you one option before the end of January to discuss with me in person how you would like your class participation points distributed into another grading category.

**Readings Notes:** We will discuss a peer-reviewed article or book chapter every week this semester. To encourage you to read each article for detail, you will submit a summary (approximately one single-spaced page) over each weekly reading. Students must save their file as "LastNameWeek," every Sunday by 11:50pm in Canvas. For example, Joe Biden's summary of Fisher (2006) should be titled BidenWeek2 and uploaded by January 21, 2024 at 11:50pm. Articles to be read are available through the UNT library; book chapters are posted on Canvas. You may miss two reading notes submissions without penalty. For those of you who complete all of them, a reward awaits.

**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, although you will have access to all slides that I post on canvas. Please do not be late to class, as it is disruptive to not only me, but also your classmates. If you have an issue that requires you to be delayed in arriving to class, please speak with me. I understand that a late arrival is possible. I request the courtesy of you telling me so that I can expect any disruptions to my class.

## ***Course Schedule***

## INTRODUCTION

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Week One, January 16    | Introduction and Studying the Presidency   |
| Week Two, January 23    | The Constitutional Presidency and Presidential War Power   |
| Read:                   | Fisher, Louis. 2006. "What is the Appropriate Role of Congress in National Security Policy?" In <i>Readings in Presidential Politics</i> , Edwards, ed. Wadsworth.                   |
| Week Three, January 30  | Presidential Leadership: Historical and Contextual   |
| Read:                   | Skowronek, Stephen. "Presidential Leadership in Political Time." In <i>Presidents and the Political System</i> , Nelson, ed. CQ Press: 111-156.                                      |
| Week Four, February 6   | Presidential Nominations   |
| Read:                   | Dowdle, et al. 2016. "Forecasting Presidential Nominations in 2016." <i>PS: Political Science</i> 691-695.   |
| Week Five, February 13  | Presidential Elections   |
| Read:                   | Forecasting elections<br>Coleman, Miles, and Kyle Kondik. 2023. "A Brief History of Electoral College Bias." ( <a href="#">weblink</a> )   |
| Week Six, February 20   | Presidential Campaigns   |
|                         | Read: Doherty, <i>Fundraiser in Chief</i><br><b>February 22: Book Review, Due</b>  |
| Week Seven, February 27 | Presidential Decision Making   |
| Read:                   | Greenstein, Fred I., and John P. Burke. 1989. "The Dynamics of Presidential Reality Testing: Evidence from Two Vietnam Decisions." <i>Political Science Quarterly</i> 104: 557- 580. |
| Week Eight, March 6     | The Institutional Presidency, Review, and Exam 1   |
| <b>March 8</b>          | <b>Exam 1 in class</b>   |
| <b>March 12-16</b>      | <b>Spring Break, No Classes</b>  |
| Week Nine, March 20     | The President and the Public   |
| <b>March 21</b>         | <b>Meet at the Library</b>   |
| Week Ten, March 27      | The President and the Public (continued)   |

Read: Christenson, Kreps, and Kriner. 2021. "Going Public in an Era of Social Media?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 51: 151-165.

Week Eleven, April 3

The President and the Media

Read: Groeling, Tim. 2008. "Who's the Fairest of them All?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38: 631-57.

**April 5**

**Paper Workday**

Week Twelve, April 10

The President and the Courts

Read: Eshbaugh-Soha and Collins. 2015. "Presidential Rhetoric and Supreme Court Decisions." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*

Week Thirteen, April 17

The President and Congress

Read: Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 313-329.

Week Fourteen, April 24

The President and Unilateral Action

Read: Moe, Terry M. 1982. "Regulatory Performance and Presidential Administration." *American Journal of Political Science* 26: 197-224.

Week Fifteen, April 30

The President and the Bureaucracy

**April 30**

**Final Paper due**

**May 2**

**In-class Final Essay**

### ***Assignment: Research Paper***

The purpose of this paper is for students to learn more about the many explanations related to presidential leadership and success. To do this, choose one US President (likely since Eisenhower) and analyze the president's success in at least three areas. This could include the president's success leading the public, media, and Congress (focusing on a specific instance in each), or the paper could focus on presidential leadership of Congress, explaining the president's success in three separate instances. The idea is for you to underscore your understanding of a key area of literature and support a hypothesis with data from a specific presidency. For example, you may choose to test the hypothesis that presidential success in Congress is driven by party control of Congress. You would review the literature that has already provided support for this hypothesis, and then you would find specific evidence from a single presidency. You could demonstrate support for this hypothesis by illustrating, for example, that President Obama was more successful on a major initiative in his first year in office rather than in his fifth year given differences in party control of Congress.

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 a survey of the available literature, answering “what we know” about your topic. The next section will develop a hypothesis, effectively applying “what we know” to your president of choice. Further, explain why you chose the president you have chosen, paying particular attention as to why this president will help you to test your hypothesis. The penultimate section of the paper will analyze your data across your three instances. The ultimate and concluding section of the paper will 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.

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. To learn about your president and your cases, *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* is highly recommended. 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. Wikipedia is not a peer-reviewed source. Avoid it. If you are unsure as to what counts as a peer-reviewed source, please ask.

Public opinion is a central feature of the modern presidency. Therefore, your paper must also incorporate some public opinion data to support your observations. Use one of the following sources in your paper:

- *Roper Public Opinion Database* (this is available through the UNT library)
- *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press* (people-press.org).
- *The Gallup Poll* (gallup.com)

[APSA citation style](#) is required for this research paper.

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. You are required to submit two versions of your book review and research paper. First, upload your paper in Canvas so that we may produce an AI and plagiarism score through Turnitin. Second, bring a hardcopy to class.
2. 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.

3. All papers must include a title page. A title page contains the following information: The title of the paper, your name, and the date.
4. The title page, references, or endnotes do not count toward the paper's page total.
5. You must staple each paper in the upper left-hand corner, and number all pages except the title page. No other binding, please.
6. 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 (20 points)
3. References: incorporating 8 peer-reviewed sources into your research paper (20 points)
4. Public opinion data: provide data from one of the data sources listed above (5 points)
5. Research: ask a thoughtful question (or state a clear thesis or hypothesis), analyze three areas of presidential success, integrate your sources into your research paper, discuss them separately and accurately, and offer a conclusion that follows from your analysis (50 points)

The research portion of the rubric is divided as follows:

- Analyze the president's success in three areas (20 points)
- Integrate and analyze eight sources (20 points)
- Ask a question (or state a clear hypothesis) and offer a conclusion (10 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.

## University Policies and Procedures

**Dropping Courses:** Please link <http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide> for information concerning drops, withdraws, and other administrative information.

**Course Evaluation:** Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students the ability to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor to improve the quality of student experiences in the course. If over 75 percent of the class completes the SPOT, each student will receive one percentage point of extra credit.

**Mobile Device Policy:** Although I allow laptops and tablets in class, I do not recommend that you use them. Growing evidence indicates that taking notes by hand improves retention of materials and their understanding. The use of laptops and tablets often leads to checking email and social media or browsing the internet. They may also distract from in-class discussion. If I find that devices become a distraction, I retain the right to ban them in class. Unless you obtain permission from me to access your cell, please silence and store all phones during class.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:** UNT 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 a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students 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 [ODA website](#).

**Academic Misconduct:** According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Your first academic integrity violation is subject to a range of penalties, including failing the class. If you commit more than one academic integrity violation, your actions are subject to a review by the Academic Integrity officer. This may involve a hearing in which you are subject to expulsion.

All writing assignments should be written and prepared by the student. The use of AI Writing Tools, such as and including chatGPT, are not permitted in this course even if properly attributed. AI-generated submissions will be treated as a violation of the University's academic integrity policy.

**Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004):** The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

**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](http://www.unt.edu/csrr).

**Emergency Notification & Procedures:** UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Retention of Student Records:** Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals.

**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.