Course Description

The Presidency of the United States is an institution that is unique in many ways, including its mode of selection, its array of formal and informal powers, and its potential to persuade and with public support to lead. As the University Bulletin states, this course includes an “examination of the politics of presidential selection, the authority of the contemporary institution, the processes of formulating public policy, and the influence of personality on performance in office.”

The course begins by examining the American Presidency’s foundation in the U.S. Constitution, including its explicit and inherent constitutional powers. The growth in presidential powers by means of informal powers, delegated powers, and precedent also is considered, including the rise of executive-centered governance. The Founders’ vision and design for the Presidency is examined as background for understanding the office and for evaluating its evolution.

Presidential selection, beginning with the presidential nomination process and continuing through the presidential general election, is considered as a means to understand the modern American Presidency. Particular attention is given to the impact of the presidential selection process on the power and leadership of the modern American Presidency as well as the characteristics and dynamics of the transition from campaigning to governing. The 2016 presidential nomination campaign and general election campaign are given particular attention as case studies in this discussion.

Presidential power and leadership is a theme that runs throughout the course. The Presidency is considered first in terms of the President’s political roles and as a public and plebiscitary institution. Then the exercise of presidential power in government vis-à-vis the other branches is examined, focusing on the President’s relationship with Congress and the legislative process. Also a theme of the course is the dual nature of presidential power and leadership, most notably how the Presidency differs between the policy domains of domestic policy and war power.

In the concluding weeks of the course, significant attention is directed at various contemporary models for understanding and explaining presidential power and leadership. Perspectives ranging from the institutional and dual presidencies models, to the psychological and personal models, to the public or persuasive presidency and the permanent campaign presidency models, are given particular attention. The future of presidential power and leadership, contemporary challenges facing the Presidency, and proposals for reforming the Presidency, also are discussed.
Required Readings


Course Requirements and Grading

The required assignments and the corresponding weighting in the course grade are as follows:

- Mid-term test – 25 percent – Mid-March.
- Research paper of twelve pages – 35 percent – Due on April 12, 2018.
- Note: The research paper must be submitted on paper and in class, not just by email.
- Final examination – 25 percent – As scheduled by the University – May 7 to 15, 2018
- Class participation – 15 percent.

Prerequisite

PSC 1002 – Introduction to American Politics and Government is a required prerequisite for PSC 2216 – The American Presidency.

Student Time Commitment

Each student should be aware of the time commitment that is needed to be successful in the course. The class meets for two class sessions per week, with each class session being 75 minutes, so a total of 150 minutes of time attending class per week is of critical importance. Preparation time also is essential, including time to do the assigned readings and time to review class notes and study for tests. In addition, because the research paper is a major part of the course, an investment of time to conduct this research and write the paper also is essential. A reasonable average of out-of-class time to be invested by the student in the course is five to six hours per week.
Order of Topics

I. INTRODUCTION:

Introductory Concepts in the Study of the Presidency
   Nelson, chapter 2.
   Greenstein, chapter 1.

The Constitutional Structure and Powers of the Presidency
   Nelson, chapters 1 and 4.
   U.S. Constitution, Article II.

Founding Vision and Design of the Presidency
   Federalist Papers, Number 69 and others.

II. PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION:

Presidential Nomination Campaigns
   Nelson, chapter 7.
   Greenstein, chapter 9.

Presidential General Election Campaigns
   Nelson, chapter 8.

Transition from Campaigning to Governing
   Nelson, chapter 5.
   Greenstein, chapter 14.

III. THE PRESIDENCY AND POLITICS:

The “Permanent Campaign” Presidency
   Nelson, chapter 9.
   Greenstein, chapter 12.

The Presidency and the Media
   Nelson, chapter 10.
   Greenstein, chapter 5.

The Presidency and Interest Groups
   Nelson, chapter 11.

The Presidency and Political Parties
   Nelson, chapter 12.
IV. THE PRESIDENCY AND GOVERNING:

The Presidency and Congress
Nelson, chapter 15.
Greenstein, chapters 3 and 6.

The Presidency and the Bureaucracy
Nelson, chapters 13 and 14.
Greenstein, chapter 4.

The Presidency and the Judiciary
Nelson, chapter 16.

V. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO PRESIDENTIAL POWER AND LEADERSHIP:

Presidential Domestic Power
Nelson, chapters 3, 17, and 18.
Greenstein, chapters 2 and 10.

Presidential War Power
Nelson, chapter 19.
Greenstein, chapters 6 (re-read), 11, and 13.

VI. MODELS OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER AND LEADERSHIP:

Institutional and Dual Presidencies Models
Nelson, 13 (re-read) and 3 (re-read).
Greenstein, chapters 8 and 11.

Psychological and Personal Models
Nelson, chapter 6.
Greenstein, chapters 7, 12 (re-read), and 15.

Public and Permanent Campaign Models
Nelson, chapters 7 (re-read) and 10 (re-read).
Greenstein, chapter 12 (re-read).

VII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY:

Future Directions of Presidential Leadership
Nelson, chapter 3 (re-read).

Reforming the Presidency
Policy on Class Attendance

Attendance at class, including punctuality in being present at the start of class, counts as part of class participation. Missing more than three classes during the semester without a valid excuse, such as illness or a family emergency, that is presented in writing by the student and accepted in writing by the professor, subjects the student to a penalty for lack of class participation.

Policy on Lateness with the Mid-Term Test, Final Examination, and Research Paper

Students also are expected to complete the mid-term test, the final examination, and the research paper on the announced dates and times. If the mid-term, final, or research paper due date is missed with a valid excuse, such as illness or a family emergency, the student may present a request for a make-up, or an extension of the research paper due date, to the professor; if the excuse is accepted, a make-up will be given or a new due date for the paper will be scheduled. Late work that is permitted with a valid and approved excuse still must be submitted no later than the last day of class or the student must request anIncomplete for the course and submit the required contract for the proposed Incomplete.

Academic Integrity

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html.

Additional Support for Students with Disabilities

Disability Support Services (DSS)

GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Additional information is available at www.gwu.edu/~dss.

University Counseling Center (UCC)

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations; and confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information, refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices
Emergency and Security Instructions in the Event of an Emergency during Class

In the event of an emergency during class time, we will try to stay in the classroom until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet at Gelman Library Lobby in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: [http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/](http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/).

Student Learning Objectives

The course seeks to introduce students to the American Presidency, including its constitutional design, the system of presidential selection, and the varied ways in which presidential power and leadership are exercised. Students who apply themselves by completing the assigned readings, attending and participating in class, and thinking and questioning as the course unfolds will:

1) Know and understand the fundamentals of the American Presidency as an institution and as a pivotal position of power and leadership in U.S. government and politics.

2) Understand and appreciate the founding vision and values for the American Presidency and how these fundamental principles relate to contemporary politics and proposals for reform.

3) Understand and be able to explain the political dynamics that underlie the American Presidency and the exercise of presidential power and leadership.

4) Be able to contribute in discussion and in writing on topics relating to the American Presidency as well as presidential power and leadership.