POLS 3316-001: The American Presidency

Dr. Joshua Ozymy
Fall 2013
Class Time: T&TR 2:30-3:15 BH 126
Office Hours: T&TR 3:15-4:45 and W 3:00-5:00 in BH 304
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Brief course description:
This course focuses on the American Presidency as an institution and the personalities and relevant historical situations related to the modern presidents. As such, the course explains why presidents act in particular ways and attempts to develop and explain generalizations about the Executive office, while placing it in a proper historical context. This is not a course strictly on the peculiarities, personality traits, and personal histories of individual presidents, but it will undertake considerable historical analysis in order to build context around the evolving institutional presidency. The course considers both foreign and domestic policy.

Format:
Participation is encouraged and expected. The class will be structured around instructor-led lectures and substantive student participation.

Attendance policy:
You should attend every class. Poor attendance will hurt your participation grade considerably.

Learning outcomes
A. Students will gain an understanding of the historical development of the presidency as an institution
B. Students will grasp the importance of the president's role in foreign policymaking
C. Students will comprehend the connection between the presidency and domestic policy
D. Students will understand the interactions between the executive, legislative, judicial, and administrative branches of government

Method of evaluating outcomes:
The instructor will gauge student learning primarily through formal testing via essay exams and a major writing assignment. Formal testing will be supported through a series of less-formal means including: thoughtful reading of the material by students demonstrated by class participation, instructor-student interaction in class, group assignments, and formal presentations, which will also contribute substantially to each student's final grade.

Course assignments and grading structure:
20% of course grade: Participation- demonstrated by thoughtful class participation
Why is your participation weighted so heavily in the course? Each Tuesday I will lecture on the appropriate topic noted in the syllabus. The following Thursday each student will be assigned a research topic for their chosen president (see below for specific dates) and will be required to integrate that information into the discussion when prompted as part of their participation grade.
10% of course grade: **Group assignment** students will be assigned to work in groups of three. They will be required to present a comparative analysis of their chosen president to the class, lasting no more than 20 minutes. In this presentation the group will create a PowerPoint presentation comparing and contrasting each of the three presidents' major domestic and foreign policy achievements and impact on the executive office as an institution.

35% of course grade: **Presidential Case Study (major writing assignment)**- each student will write a paper representing an in-depth analysis of a president's domestic and foreign policy and how they affected the evolution of the executive office. This assignment constitutes a serious research paper. It should not be the Wikipedia version of a president's stay in office. I will grade the paper on the following 100 point scale:

50 points for content: The paper should be clearly written, thorough, analytical and representative of a university paper in an upper-division class. It must show both a historical and institutional understanding of the president and the challenges he faced, their strengths and weakness, and their contribution to the office. The paper must be a minimum of 12 pages (minus back matter).

40 points for research and scholarly sourcing: The paper must include a minimum of 12 scholarly sources (i.e. from peer reviewed journals found in the online databases through the TAMUCC library) and use these sources in appropriate ways, such as adding nuance and detail to the paper and backing for claims made throughout-paraphrase Wikipedia material if you must, but do not cite it.

10 points for grammar and style: The paper must use APSA style appropriate for a research paper in political science and be written in a clear and interesting manner (other sources available online as well): [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html)

*The paper will be due in class by Tuesday, November 22. Penalty for lateness is 10 points per day.

35% of course grade: **Comprehensive Exam**- Will include all material covered in the course. The exam will be distributed during class on Tuesday, November 29 and will be due in class on Tuesday, December 6. Penalty for lateness is 10 points per day.

Letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

A= 89.50 or above  
B= 79.50 to 89.49 
C= 69.50 to 79.49 
D= 59.5 to 69.49  
F= Below 59.5
Required Readings:


3. Additional online readings as assigned throughout the semester

*The following make for excellent reading on the presidency, but are not required in this course:


Class Schedule (subject to change with proper notice):

Week 1 (): Introduction to class, explain assignments, use of library, groups
*Read chapters 1-2 in Nelson

Week 2: The evolving powers of the institutional presidency
Tuesday (): Lecture on the changing nature of presidential power
Thursday (): Discussion topic- In what way did your president most significantly advance to power of the executive branch?
*Read chapters 3-5 in Nelson

Week 3: The personal Presidency and the power of persuasion (public opinion)
Tuesday (): Lecture on "going public" and presidential rhetoric
Thursday (): Discussion topic- What was the focus of your president's campaign (issues, message, etc)?
*Read chapters 8-9 in Nelson

Week 4: Presidential elections and campaigns
Tuesday (): Lecture on the nature of modern presidential campaigning
Thursday (): Documentary, *So Goes the Nation*
*Read chapters 6-7 in Nelson

Week 5: The president and Congress
Tuesday (): Lecture on the relationship between the executive and legislative branches
Thursday (): Documentary, *A Perfect Candidate*
*Read chapter 14 in Nelson*

Week 6: The President and the Judiciary
Tuesday (): Lecture on the relationship between the executive and judicial branch
Thursday (): Discussion topic- Please discuss your president's relationship with the judicial branch. Was the Supreme Court supportive of his policies or was their friction? Please cite specific examples.
*read chapter 15 in Nelson*

Week 7: The President and the Bureaucracy
Tuesday (): Lecture on the relationship between the executive and administrative branch
Thursday (): Research Day- Instead of holding class during this session, I will reserve the time in my office (and the office hours that follow) to assist students with any questions concerning their final paper.
*Read chapter 13 in Nelson*

Week 8: Presidential scandals and abuse of power
Tuesday (): Lecture on the use and abuse of presidential power
Thursday (): Discussion topic- What was your President's greatest public scandal while in office? If none, what was the best example of his abuse or possible misuse of power?
*Read chapters 16-17 in Nelson*

Week 9: American foreign policy
Tuesday (): Lecture on international relations
Thursday (): Discussion topic- What was your president's greatest foreign policy achievement?
* Read chapters 1-8 in Lind*

Week 10: Foreign policy continued
Tuesday (): Lecture on the goals of American foreign policy
Thursday (): Discussion topic- What was your president's greatest foreign policy failure?
* Read chapters 9-14 in Lind*

Week 11: FDR: A case study in the evolving institutional presidency
Tuesday (): Lecture on the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt
Thursday (): Documentary, *The Presidents-FDR*
Finish watching the documentary online:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/video/fdr_01.html#v102
Week 12: LBJ: A case study in the limitations and possibilities of government
Tuesday (): Lecture on the historical importance, failures and contributions of Lyndon B. Johnson
Thursday (): Research Day- Instead of holding class during this session, I will reserve the time in my office (and the office hours that follow) to assist students with their final paper.
*Homework- watch, *The Presidents-LBJ* online at PBS *American Experience* (click each yellow star about the window in the center of the screen to advance to movie: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/video/lbj_01.html#v226](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/video/lbj_01.html#v226)

Week 13: Presentations
Tuesday (): Groups 1-3
Thursday (): Groups 4-6
*Read chapters 10-11 in Nelson

Week 14: Thanksgiving
Tuesday (): Documentary, *Anytown, USA* and **due date for major writing assignment**

Week 15: Presentations
Tuesday (): Groups 7-9 and **comprehensive exam distributed in class**
Thursday (): Groups 10-12

Week 16: Wrapping up and final class discussion
Tuesday (): Last day of class and **comprehensive exam due**

**Student Responsibilities:** TURN OFF CELL PHONES!!!
Pay attention during class. Private conversations, sleeping, and reading non-class related material will not be tolerated. Learn something! Participate in class discussions.

**Students with Disabilities/Religious Needs:** If you are a student with a disability or special needs, please let me know during the first week of class.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Driftwood 101. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Academic Honesty:** University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of
another as one’s own work.) If unsure of what honesty entails or if for more information regarding the penalties for academic dishonesty, please refer to the University Catalog.

**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires students to meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E (825-3466).

**Grade Appeal Process:** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the student may take the steps below.

1. Presentation of grievance to instructor. (This step must be taken within fourteen calendar days after the beginning of the next term.)

2. Appeal to department chair or area coordinator.

3. Written appeal to the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.

4. Preliminary review and advising by an ombudsman appointed by the Provost.

5. Submission of file by department chair to the chair of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.

6. Review of file by committee chair and submission of case to committee.

7. Proceedings of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee. (Committee holds hearing, reviews data, presents findings to all parties, and makes recommendation to Provost.)

8. Decision by Provost.

9. Final appeal in writing to the Provost if student or instructor thinks appropriate procedures have not been followed. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm.