

## POLITICAL SCIENCE 247 THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

---

Professor David O'Connell  
oconneld@dickinson.edu  
717-254-8092  
Denny Hall 13  
Office Hours: M 4:15-5:15; F 2-4; By Appt.

Dickinson College  
Fall 2016  
MR 3:00 – 4:15  
Denny Hall 203

### Course Overview

This course attempts to grapple with one of the fundamental paradoxes of the American presidency. On the one hand, Americans tend to believe that the president is responsible for much of what happens to the country. If the economy performs well, the president gets the credit. If a natural disaster is mishandled, the president takes the blame. And the apparent successes of the great leaders of the past- men like Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt- generate high expectations for any incoming Commander-in-Chief. However, at the same time, Americans also retain a powerful historical skepticism about centralized power. The president has limited constitutional authority and the executive remains the least institutionalized branch of government. Hence, the paradox- we expect the president to lead, but we are unwilling to give him the tools he needs to do so. The president's formal powers do not necessarily translate into *power*.

This class will be structured around the problem of presidential power. The first part of the course will introduce a framework for analyzing presidential action. Topics will include the president's role as a public leader, his place in the legislative process, his military responsibilities, and his position within the executive branch. In the second part of the course, we will work to apply this framework in order to understand key presidential successes and failures, including case studies of Reagan's first year in office and Clinton's failed attempt at healthcare reform. The goal of these discussions will be to leverage what we have learned in order to explain why a president achieved his goals- or not. Finally, a concluding research paper will provide the opportunity for you to conduct your own analysis of a moment of presidential leadership.

### Assignments

**Midterm Exam (20%)** – An in-class midterm exam will be given on **October 13**. All students must take the exam on this date. A make-up will only be offered in the event that a student misses the exam due to a family or medical emergency.

**Short Papers (30%)** – Students will be asked to write two short papers of approximately 5 pages in length. Each paper will count for 15% of your grade.

The first short paper will involve comparing and contrasting the experiences of a pre-modern and a modern president of your choosing. A prompt will be distributed on September 1, and the final paper will be due on **September 22**.

The second short paper will ask you to respond to the reading on presidential greatness that is assigned for **November 14**. The prompt for this paper will be distributed on October 27.

Late papers will be assessed a penalty of one grade (i.e. an A becomes an A-) for every day past the deadline.

**Research Paper (25%)** – Students will be expected to complete an approximately **15 page** research paper. The paper is to be written in a spirit similar to the second part of the course. You will be asked to select your own case study to analyze in light of what you have learned about presidential power. For instance, say you want to understand why President Bush’s Social Security reforms failed at the start of his second term. You would use outside research in tandem with your class materials as you formulate your argument. More detailed guidance will be provided later.

The paper will be due **December 16 at Noon**. Late papers will be assessed a penalty of one grade (i.e. an A becomes an A-) for every day past the deadline.

*Students are strongly encouraged to schedule a meeting with me prior to beginning to write.*

**Reading Quizzes (10%)** – Four (4) times over the course of the semester we will begin class with an unannounced quiz on that day’s reading. These short quizzes will be multiple choice questions. They are not meant to be difficult. I will drop your lowest score and then your final reading grade will be the total points you earned on the remaining three quizzes divided by the total possible points.

**Participation and Attendance (15%)** – This part of your grade will be calculated as follows: First, your participation will be judged as to whether it is of excellent, above average, average, below average, or low quality. Note, *quality* does not necessarily mean *quantity*. Excellent participation is worth 15 points, above average participation is worth 14 points, average participation is worth 13 points, below average participation is worth 12 points, and low quality participation is worth 11 points.

Attendance will also be taken at the start of each class by means of a sign-in sheet. It is your responsibility to sign-in. This is the official record of your attendance. Absences will be excused only in the event of my prior approval or a family or medical emergency. Two (2) unexcused absences will be forgiven over the course of the semester. After that, each additional absence will result in a 1 point deduction.

For example, consider a student whose participation is above average but who has four unexcused absences. This student will receive 12 points for participation and attendance (14 for participation and a 2 point deduction for the four absences).

## **Learning Goals**

After completing this course, students should:

- Have obtained a substantial amount of knowledge about the institution of the presidency. Students should be able to explain the history of the executive branch, how the office runs on a day to day basis, and they should be able to identify and discuss the roles played by the actors that surround the president.
- Be able to objectively analyze the achievements and failures of any president. Students will ideally be more sympathetic to the challenges of presidential leadership.

- Have improved their critical reading skills through a series of quizzes and assignments assessing comprehension of course material.
- Have improved their research skills through a demanding final paper.

## Accommodating Students With Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Dana Hall, Suite 106. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented.

The Director of ODS is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. ODS proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer (717-254-8107 or [proctoring@dickinson.edu](mailto:proctoring@dickinson.edu)). Address general inquiries to 717-245-1734 or e-mail [disabilityservices@dickinson.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@dickinson.edu). For more information, go to [www.dickinson.edu/ODS](http://www.dickinson.edu/ODS).

## Movie Series

We will be screening three movies over the course of the semester.

October 24

***Dave*** (1993) – Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver

November 2

***The Ides of March*** (2011) – Ryan Gosling, George Clooney

November 16

***Frost / Nixon*** (2008)- Frank Langella, Michael Sheen

The specific time and location for each movie will be announced later. After watching the movie, we will have a brief discussion about how the film relates to what we have learned in class.

Attendance at these movies is optional. However, for each movie you attend you will earn an additional half point on top of your final course average (up to 1.5 points in total). Snacks will also be provided.

## Election Events

Students will be required to attend the following Clarke Forum event:

October 13

7 - 8:30

Presidential Election Roundtable

*Participants include Profs. David O'Connell, Sarah Niebler, Katie Marchetti, and Eric Vazquez*

Students are also encouraged to attend a campus wide viewing of the first presidential debate. If you attend this event, you can earn an additional half point on top of your final course average.

September 26  
9:00 – 10:30 PM  
Dana 110

There will be additional opportunities to attend viewings of the second and third debates, should you be interested. Further information about a campus wide election night party will be forthcoming later in the semester.

### **Take a Dickinsonian to Lunch and Food for Thought Programs**

In an effort to encourage interaction between students and college faculty, the Office of Leadership & Campus Engagement and the Student Senate have made vouchers available for use at various local restaurants. Vouchers can be picked up in the Student Life Office on the lower level of the HUB, weekdays from 8:30am - 4:30pm and are valued at \$8 per person. Participating restaurants include: Back Door Cafe, Dickinson College Cafeteria, Dickinson College Union Station, Issei Noodle, Market Cross Pub, Miseno's II, Mt. Fuji, North Hanover Grill, Redd's Smokehouse, and the White Elephant.

Additionally, the Food for Thought program provides faculty with tickets to share breakfast, lunch or dinner with students in the Dining Hall.

I make an effort to get to know each student who takes a class with me. I encourage you to take advantage of one of these initiatives, or at the very least to make use of my office hours at some point this semester.

### **Course Outline**

The purchase of the following four books is required:

- Ellis, Richard J. and Michael Nelson, eds. 2014. *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Sides, John and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Troy, Gil. 2012. *Why Moderates Makes the Best Presidents: George Washington to Barack Obama*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas.
- Greenstein, Fred I. 2009. *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Additional readings will be found in PDF format on the class' Moodle website. These readings are marked with a (M) on the outline. Students are expected to complete all readings prior to the class for which they are assigned.

## Introduction

August 29

### The Historical Evolution of the Presidency and the President's Formal Powers

September 1

#### **First Short Paper Prompt Distributed in Class**

- Rossiter, Clinton. 1987. *The American Presidency*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press (M 1-29)
- Tulis, Jeffrey K. 1987. *The Rhetorical Presidency*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 3-6; 17-18; 27-45; 61-67; 87-93; 145-161)
- Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist #70* (M)

September 5

- Neustadt, Richard E. 1960. *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership*. New York: John Wiley and Sons (M 33-64; 86-93)
- Greenstein, Fred I. 1982. *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader*. New York: Basic Books (M 3-7; 15-54)

### The President in Congress

September 8

- Cameron, Charles M. 2000. *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press (M 4-10; 18-26; 46-50; 61; 65-68; 229-236)
- Edwards III, George C. 1989. *At the Margins: Presidential Leadership of Congress*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press (M 167-212)

September 12

- Ellis and Nelson, *Debating the Presidency*, 143-160

### The Public Presidency

September 15

- Kernell, Samuel. 1993. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press (M 1-10; 45-47)
- Edwards III, George C. 2003. *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit*. New Haven: Yale University Press (M 3-8; 28-34; 49-75; 187-198; 206-208)

September 19

- Jacobs, Lawrence R. 2010. "The Presidency and the Press: The Paradox of the White House Communications War." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. Washington, DC: CQ Press (M)

### The President as an Economic Policymaker

September 22

#### **First Short Paper Due**

- Morgan, Iwan W. 2009. *The Age of Deficits: Presidents and Unbalanced Budgets from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush*. Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas (M 158; 165-178; 202-205)
- Taylor, Mark Zachary. 2012. "An Economic Ranking of the US Presidents, 1789-2009." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45 (October): 596-604 (M)

## The President as Commander-in-Chief

September 26      First Presidential Debate Viewing

- September 26
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1966. "The Two Presidencies." *Trans-action* 4 (2): 7-14 (M)
  - Howell, William G. and Jon C. Pevehouse. 2007. "When Congress Stops Wars: Partisan Politics and Presidential Power." *Foreign Affairs* 86 (Sept-Oct): 95-107 (M)
- September 29
- Polsky, Andrew J. 2012. *Elusive Victories: The American Presidency at War*. New York: Oxford University Press (M 3-6; 22-30; 202-252)
  - Ellis and Nelson, *Debating the Presidency*, 187-195

## The Executive Branch and the President's Staff

- October 3
- Lewis, David E. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 1-4; 30-43; 147-171)
- October 6
- Ellis and Nelson, *Debating the Presidency*, 226-245
  - Dallek, Robert. 1998. *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*. New York: Oxford University Press (M 185-189; 293-298; 494-497)
  - Stephanopoulos, George. *All Too Human: A Political Education*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company (M 328-341)

## The President and the Courts

- October 10
- Yalof, David. 1999. *Pursuit of Justices: Presidential Politics and the Selection of Supreme Court Nominees*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (M 1-3; 97-125)
  - Crouch, Jeffrey. 2008. "Presidential Misuse of the Pardon Power." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38 (December): 722-734 (M)

October 13      Clarke Forum Presidential Roundtable (Mandatory Class Event)

October 13      **Midterm Exam**

October 14-19    **Mid-Term Pause**

## Presidential Ethics

- October 20
- Pfiffner, James P. 2004. *The Character Factor: How We Judge America's Presidents*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press (M 18-90)
  - McDermott, Rose. 2008. *Presidential Leadership, Illness, and Decision Making*. New York: Cambridge University Press (M 83-85; 88-105; 110-114)

## The Importance of Presidential Personality and Character

October 24            Movie Screening: *Dave*

- October 24
- Barber, James David. 1985. *Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall (M 1-11)
  - Wayne, Stephen J. *Personality and Politics: Obama For and Against Himself*. Washington, DC: CQ Press (M 71-85)

## The President as a Candidate

October 27            **Second Short Paper Prompt Distributed in Class**

- Kamarck, Elaine C. 2016. *Primary Politics: Everything You Need to Know About How America Nominates Its Presidential Candidates*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press (M 178-190)
  - Ellis and Nelson, *Debating the Presidency*, 57-75
- October 31
- Sides and Vavreck, *The Gamble*, 1-31; 97-107; 115-128; 138-140; 150-161; 171-173; 238-242

November 2           Movie Screening: *The Ides of March*

## The Vice Presidency

- November 3
- Goldstein, Joel K. 2008. "The Rising Power of the Modern Vice Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38 (September): 374-389 (M)
  - Baker, Peter. 2013. "The Final Insult in the Bush-Cheney Marriage." *New York Times*, October 10 (M)
  - Sirgiovanni, George S. 1994. "Dumping the Vice President: An Historical Overview and Analysis." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24(Fall):765-782 (M)

## Wives, Political Time, and Pastimes: Unappreciated Influences on Presidential Power

- November 7
- Borrelli, Maryanne. 2001. "Competing Conceptions of the First Ladyship: Public Responses to Betty Ford's '60 Minutes' Interview." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 31 (September): 397-414 (M)
  - Ellis and Nelson, *Debating the Presidency*, 96-108
  - Watterson, John Sayle. 2007. *Games Presidents Play: Sports and the Presidency*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press (M 185-200; 310-322)

November 8           Election Day

## When It's Over: Presidential Transitions and the Post-Presidency

- November 10
- Kumar, Martha Joynt. 2001. "The White House as City Hall: A Tough Place to Organize." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 31 (March): 44-55 (M)

- Gibbs, Nancy and Michael Duffy. 2012. *The Presidents Club*. New York: Simon and Schuster (M 395-420; 427-431; 490-503)
- Shear, Michael D. and Gardiner Harris. 2015. "With High-Profile Help, Obama Plots Life After the Presidency." *New York Times*, August 16 (M)

Presidential Greatness: Is It Even Possible Today?

November 14

**Second Short Paper Due**

- Troy, *Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents*, 1-17; 93-121; 183-200; 273-286

November 16

Movie Screening: Frost / Nixon

Case Study 1: Truman, Eisenhower, and the Cold War Presidency

November 17

- Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 27-57
- McCullough, David. 1992. *Truman*. New York: Touchstone (M 520-526; 529-535; 539-549; 553-565; 582-583)

Case Study 2: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Fight for Civil Rights

November 21

- Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 59-89
- Giglio, James N. 1991. *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy*. Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas (M 159-187)

November 22-28

**Thanksgiving Break**

Case Study 3: Ronald Reagan, Year One: The Greatest Presidential Year Ever?

November 28

- Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 145-157
- Wilentz, Sean. 2008. *The Age of Reagan*. New York: HarperCollins (M 127-150; 281-287)

Case Study 4: Clinton and Bush: The Presidency in an Era of Polarization

December 1

- Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 173-205
- Harris, John F. 2005. *The Survivor: Bill Clinton in the White House*. New York: Random House (M 110-119)

Case Study 5: Reflections on the Obama Administration

December 5

- Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 207-218
- Edwards III, George C. 2012. *Overreach: Leadership in the Obama Presidency*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 1-35; 116-134)

Lessons Learned for Presidential Leadership

December 8

**Last Class**

December 16

**Final Paper Due by Noon**