

POLITICAL SCIENCE 247 THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

Professor David O'Connell
oconneld@dickinson.edu
717-254-8092
Denny Hall 13
Office Hours: M 3:00 – 4:00; F 2:00 – 4:00; By Appt.

Dickinson College
Fall 2019
MR 1:30 – 2:45
Denny Hall 304

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- presidents 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 presidents to lead, but we are unwilling to give them the tools needed 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, the president's place in the legislative process, the president's military responsibilities, and the president's 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 their 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 17**. 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 5, and the final paper will be due on **September 26**.

The second short paper will ask you to respond to the reading on presidential greatness that is assigned for **November 18**. The prompt for this paper will be distributed on October 31.

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 19 at 2:00**. 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 values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/access, email access@dickinson.edu, call (717)245-1734, or go to ADS in Old West (lower level), Room 005.

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can meet to review your Accommodation Letter and complete your Blue Forms. If you will need test proctoring from ADS, remember that you will need to provide them with at least one week's notice.

Documentary Film Series

We will be screening two documentaries over the course of the semester.

October 2

The Final Year – *The Final Year is a unique insiders' account of President Barack Obama's foreign policy team during their last year in office. Featuring unprecedented access inside the White House and State Department, The Final Year offers an uncompromising view of the inner workings of the Obama Administration as they prepare to leave power after eight years (2018, 1 hr 30 mins)*

November 6

Mitt – *The real Mitt Romney is revealed in this documentary that goes beyond the sound bites with unprecedented access to his 2012 presidential campaign (2014, 1 hr 33 mins)*

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 point in total). Snacks will also be provided.

Take a Dickinsonian to Lunch Program

In an effort to encourage small group interaction between students and college faculty/staff, students and college employees can request vouchers to take each other out to lunch at various local restaurants, the Union Station or the college cafeteria. This program is funded by the Student Senate and administered by the Office of Leadership & Campus Engagement. 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 \$10 per person.

Participating restaurants include: Grazery, Dickinson College Cafeteria, Dickinson College Union Station, Helena's Chocolate Cafe, Market Cross Pub, Miseno's II, Mt. Fuji, North Hanover Grill, Redd's Smokehouse, Spoons Cafe, Carlisle Thai, Denim Coffee, PB's Italian Kitchen, and Pizza Grille.

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

Course Outline

The purchase of the following two books is required:

- Troy, Gil. 2012. *Why Moderates Makes the Best Presidents: George Washington to Barack Obama*. 2nd ed. Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas.
- Greenstein, Fred I. 2009. *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama*. 3rd 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

September 2

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

September 5

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 9

- 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 12
- 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 16
- Howell, William G. and Terry M. Moe. 2016. *Relic: How Our Constitution Undermines Effective Government and Why We Need a More Powerful Presidency*. New York: Basic Books (M 47-56; 60-75; 99-106; 143-146; 160-163)

The Public Presidency

- September 19
- Kernell, Samuel. 1993. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. 2nd 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 23
- 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)
 - Russell, Adrienne. 2018. "Making Journalism Great Again: Trump and the New Rise of News Activism." In *Trump and the Media*, eds. Pablo J. Boczkowski and Zizi Papacharissi. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (M 204-212)

The President as an Economic Policymaker

- September 26 **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)

The President as Commander-in-Chief

- September 30
- 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)

October 2 **Film Screening: *The Final Year***

- October 3
- Polsky, Andrew J. 2012. *Elusive Victories: The American Presidency at War*. New York: Oxford University Press (M 3-6; 22-30; 202-252)

The Executive Branch and the President's Staff

- October 7
- 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 10
- Sollenberger, Mitchel A. and Mark J. Rozell. 2012. *The President's Czars: Undermining Congress and the Constitution*. Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas (M 1-2; 6-8; 146-162)
 - 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 14
- 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 17 **Midterm Exam**

October 18-23 **Mid-Term Pause**

Presidential Ethics

- October 24
- 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 28
- Barber, James David. 1985. *Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. 3rd 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 31 **Second Short Paper Prompt Distributed in Class**
- Alexander, Robert M. 2019. *Representation and the Electoral College*. New York: Oxford University Press (M 151-174)
- November 4
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2017. "The Triumph of Polarized Partisanship in 2016: Donald Trump's Improbable Victory." *Political Science Quarterly* 132 (Spring): 9-26 (M)

November 6 **Film Screening: *Mitt***

The Vice Presidency

November 7

- 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 11

- 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)
- Skowronek, Stephen. 2015. "Presidential Success and Failure." In *Debating the Presidency*, eds. Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press (M 96-108)
- Watterson, John Sayle. 2007. *Games Presidents Play: Sports and the Presidency*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press (M 185-200; 310-322)

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

November 14

- 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 18

Second Short Paper Due

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

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

November 21

- 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 25

- 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)

Nov 26 - Dec 2 **Thanksgiving Break**

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

- December 2
- 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 5
- 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: Early Reflections on the Obama Administration, Preliminary Thoughts on President Trump

- December 9
- 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)
 - Haberman, Maggie, Glenn Thrush and Peter Baker. 2017. "The President vs. The Presidency: Inside Trump's Hour-by-Hour Battle for Self-Preservation." *New York Times*, December 9 (M)

Lessons Learned for Presidential Leadership

December 12 **Last Class**

December 19 **Final Paper Due by 2:00 PM**