

Department of Political Science
Political Science 4150: The American Presidency

Instructor: Prof. Jennifer Selin

Overview

This course offers an introduction to the study of the American presidency. The course has three aims. The first is to introduce important facts and fundamental principles of American politics to help students understand the presidency as an institution – its history, its design, how it operates, and how it interacts with the other branches of American government. Some questions the course will address are:

- *What are the president's constitutional powers?*
- *How important are presidential primaries?*
- *How much influence does the president have over Congress?*
- *What do executive agencies do and how responsive are they to the president?*
- *What is the president's role in foreign policy and national security?*
- *What makes a "good" president?*

A discussion of these topics and others will provide students with a solid understanding of the U.S. executive branch. This understanding will enhance students' abilities to analyze, critique, and debate American politics.

The second goal of the course is to force students to think critically about the presidency as an institution. In order to achieve this goal, students will be exposed to the conceptual material political scientists use to analyze presidential activities. We will apply these concepts to frame our thinking about important issues in the American presidency.

Finally, this course is designed to motivate further study of American politics and the executive branch of the U.S. government. I will often reference current events in connection with assigned readings and students are encouraged to keep abreast of political news. Where appropriate, we will also use case studies to further illustrate theoretical concepts. Students are encouraged to read materials outside of those assigned for class and to approach me with questions.

Books

The required texts are as follows and can be purchased or rented at the Missouri Bookstore or through online vendors such as Amazon or Barnes and Noble. To ensure that no student is disadvantaged, students should let me know if they have trouble acquiring the texts for any reason.

Gibbs, Nancy and Michael Duffy. 2013. *The Presidents Club*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Milkis, Sidney M. and Michael Nelson. 2019. *The American Presidency: Origins and Development*, 8th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Assessment

Student assessment is targeted to help provide students with a background in the concepts and debates that are central to the study of the American presidency. Students will be assessed according to their knowledge of course material and their ability to analyze, explain, and apply

that knowledge. Students are *expected to do more than just regurgitate or summarize assigned readings* – the most successful students will be able to synthesize material from lectures and readings and apply those concepts to analyze political issues. This is a demanding course that will require students to dedicate an appropriate amount of time to understanding covered material.

Student assessment will be as follows:

First Exam: 25%

Second Exam: 35%

Last Exam: 40%

Grading Scale

The following scale will be used to convert numeric course grades into letter grades:

F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
0-	60-	63-	67-	70-	73-	77-	80-	83-	87-	90-	93-	97-
59	62	66	69	72	76	79	82	86	89	92	96	100

Exams

All exams will be in essay format. These exams are designed to give students the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired from listening to lectures and from reading assigned material to current issues in the American presidency. The exams require students to illustrate mastery of course material, demonstrate original thinking, and develop coherent arguments.

Exam grades will reflect these three requirements. Exams in the A range will comprise work which goes well beyond class materials and discussions to demonstrate original thinking and thoughtful arguments that are expressed in clear, persuasive writing. Exams in the B range will exhibit mastery of course materials expressed in clear, error-free writing. Exams in the C range will demonstrate inadequate understanding of the course materials. Exams that score lower than a C will demonstrate an obvious lack of preparation and/or comprehension of class material.

Due Dates

Students should plan ahead so that they will be able to meet class requirements and assignments. I will grant extensions only for officially documented illnesses, family emergencies, and similar personal circumstances. Please note that assignments or exams in other classes are not grounds for an extension in this class. While I do accept unexcused late assignments, I assess a penalty of *one third of a letter grade for each day of lateness*. The penalty is in fairness to all students who submit their assignments on time.

Academic Integrity

University standards for academic integrity apply in this class. Put simply, **I do not tolerate cheating or plagiarism of any kind**. You are expected to know and understand the university's policies on this matter.

Disability Resources and Educational Services

To ensure that student concerns are properly addressed from the first day of class, I ask that students who require assistance to participate in this course contact me as soon as possible. To obtain academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students who require accommodations should both contact me and the Disability Center as soon as possible. To contact the Disability Center, you may call 573-882-4696, email disabilitycenter@missouri.edu, or visit the Center's website: <http://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu>.

Class Schedule

The schedule for the course is provided below. Readings not in Milkis and Nelson or *The President's Club* are posted under "Files" on Canvas. Students are responsible for all readings listed prior to the class period in which they are discussed.

Constitutional Origins of the Presidency

Lecture 1

No assignment.

Lecture 2

Selections from Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2018. *The Logic of American Politics*, 8th Ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press (pg 1-31).

Lecture 3

Milkis and Nelson, The Constitutional Convention (pg 1-32).
Letter from James Madison to Thomas Jefferson. 1787. In James P. Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson, eds., *Understanding the Presidency*, 7th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Lecture 4

Milkis and Nelson, Creating the Presidency (pg 33-82).
Hamilton, Alexander, "Federalist No. 69," *New York Packet*, March 14, 1788.
Hamilton, Alexander, "Federalist No. 70," *New York Packet*, March 14, 1788.

Lecture 5

Milkis and Nelson, Bringing the Constitutional Presidency to Life (pg 83-120).
Presidents Club, Introduction (pg 1-14)

Perspectives on Presidential Power

Lecture 6

Taft, William Howard. 1916. "The Strict Constructionist Presidency." In James P. Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson, eds., *Understanding the Presidency*, 7th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.
Roosevelt, Theodore. 1913. "The Stewardship Presidency." In James P. Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson, eds., *Understanding the Presidency*, 7th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Wilson, Woodrow. 1908. "The Public Presidency." In James P. Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson, eds., *Understanding the Presidency*, 7th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Lecture 7

Presidents Club, Nixon and Ford (pg 290-336)

Selections from Neustadt, Richard E. 1960. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons (pg 29-52).

Lecture 8

Selections from Skowronek, Stephen. 1993. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (pg 17-58).

Selecting Presidents

Lecture 9

Milkis and Nelson, The Triumph of Jeffersonianism (pg 121-150).

Presidents Club, Eisenhower and Truman (pg 55-100).

Lecture 10

Bush v. Gore, 531 U.S. 98 (2000).

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, 558 U.S. 310 (2010).

Lecture 11

Presidents Club, Nixon and Reagan (pg 191-219)

First Exam Due

Presidents and Parties

Lecture 12

Milkis and Nelson, The Age of Jackson (pg 151-188); The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (pg 189-216).

Lecture 13

Milkis and Nelson, The Reaction against Presidential Power (pg 217-260).

The Public Presidency

Lecture 14

Milkis and Nelson, Progressive Politics and Executive Power (pg 261-318).

Selections from Kernell, Samuel. 1997. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. In, Samuel Kernell and Steven S. Smith, eds. *Principles and Practice of American Politics*, 5th ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage (pg 300-315).

Lecture 15

Presidents Club, Reagan and Nixon (pg 352-371), Bush and Nixon (pg 372-394).
Milkis and Nelson, *The Triumph of Conservative Republicanism* (pg 319-346).

The Institutional Presidency

Lecture 16

Milkis and Nelson, *The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency* (pg 347-400).
Selections from Dickinson, Matthew J. 1996. *Bitter Harvest: FDR, Presidential Power and the Growth of the Presidential Branch*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press (pg 9-15; 204-228).

Lecture 17

Presidents Club, Kennedy and His Club (pg 101-158).
Selections from Selin, Jennifer L. and David E. Lewis. 2018. *Sourcebook of United States Executive Agencies*. Washington, DC: Administrative Conference of the United States (pg 17-81).

Lecture 18

Moe, Terry M. 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure, In John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, eds., *Can the Government Govern?* Washington, DC: Brookings.

Lecture 19

Moe, Terry M. 1985. "The Politicized Presidency." In, John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, eds., *The New Direction in American Politics*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Lecture 20

Marbury v. Madison, 5 U.S. 137 (1803).
Humphrey's Executor v. United States, 295 U.S. 602 (1935).

Lecture 21

Free Enterprise Fund v. Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, 561 U.S. 477 (2010).

Lecture 22

No assignment.

Second Exam Due

Congress and the Presidency

Lecture 23

Presidents Club, Johnson and Eisenhower (pg 159-189).
Selections from Fiorina, Morris P. 1977. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*. New Haven: Yale University Press (pg 37-47).

Lecture 24

McCubbins, Matthew D. and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrol Versus Fire Alarm." *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1):165-177.

Presidential Policymaking

Lecture 25

Presidents Club, Bush and Carter (pg 395-408), Six Presidents (pg 409-449).
Wildavsky, Aaron. 1966. "The Two Presidencies." *Society* 35(2):23-31.

Lecture 26

Presidents Club, Johnson and Nixon (pg 221-257).
Moe, Terry M. and William G. Howell. 1999. "Presidential Power of Unilateral Action." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 15(1):132-179.

Lecture 27

Presidents Club, Nixon and Johnson (pg 258-290).
Selections from Howell, William G. and Jon C. Pevehouse. 2007. *While Dangers Gather*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (1-32).

Lecture 28

No assigned reading.

Last Exam Due