

# PSC 334: The American Presidency

209 Graham Building  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:45  
Fall 2007



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## Course Description

This course will examine the current state of the American presidency. Key issues and themes to be discussed in the course will include: how scholars go about studying the president (the individual holding the office at any given time), and the presidency (the institution, regardless of the individual in office); the evolution of the presidency from its constitutional beginnings to the present; the rise of presidential dominance among other American political institutions, particularly the Congress; the development of the current form of presidential campaigns and elections; the role of the president in the domestic and foreign policy processes, including President Bush's response to events since September 11, 2001; and the president's relationship with the public, as manifested in opinion surveys and via the mass media.

Along the way we will examine several questions: How *does* or how *should* the president go about making decisions? Is the president well-served by the White House staff, the Cabinet, and the bureaucracy? What strengths and weaknesses does the president bring to his relationship with the Congress? Does the process by which we select presidents produce qualified, capable people to run the government? Does the way the press covers the White House help or hurt its occupant? Are the powers of the executive adequate to permit the president to meet the responsibilities of the office and the expectations of the public? How does the current Bush administration's theory of the "unitary executive" accord with common understandings of the separation of powers? These and related questions will be our primary focus during the semester. We will seek to answer them in the context of both the historical foundations of the presidency, as well as the experiences of recent presidents, including Reagan, Clinton, and the Bushes, H. W. and W.

## Course Goals

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- critique the president's role in contemporary American society;
- discuss the various methods political scientists use to study the presidency;
- appreciate the problems associated with defining and measuring the concepts of power and leadership;
- critically analyze a variety of texts that deal with the president as an individual and the presidency as an institution;
- construct and communicate clear, concise arguments regarding the president and the presidency.

## Course Requirements

The format of the course will involve lecture, discussion, and questions – hopefully lots of them. I like to keep things informal, so *always* feel free to ask questions if what we're talking about particularly interests, troubles, or confuses you. The course grade will be determined on the basis of two exams (October 2 and December 13), a data-based paper, memos responding to questions I pose about the readings, and a variety of in-class assignments, announced and unannounced.

In-class assignments will include short responses to readings and lecture material and periodic quizzes on the day's reading material. They are designed to give you an incentive to keep current in your reading and an opportunity to think carefully about issues central to understanding the presidency – issues that you will encounter again on the exams. These assignments will often be announced during the class period in which they are assigned. Being absent for an assignment, with the exception of excused absences (for a university-sponsored athletic event, or a *documented* illness), will produce an automatic grade of zero. In-class assignments *cannot be made up*. Extra-credit opportunities *will not* be provided to students who are absent for in-class assignments.

A portion of the in-class assignment grade will also be based on your active participation in the class. Be aware that "active participation" encompasses more than intelligent discussion, which is, of course, important. It also refers to your demeanor, which should reflect your willingness to listen attentively to others, take notes, and turn off all cell phones and pagers before the start of class.

The response memos will give you an opportunity to write a short essay in answer to a question that I pose about class readings. Each student will hand in three such memos over the course of the semester. These essays, which are to be roughly 600 words, will be due the day before we meet to discuss the readings in question. Understand that I may ask you to comment on your essay in class, so think about and be prepared to

discuss your work. While there is no unambiguously correct answer to any of the questions I pose, ask yourself the following before turning in these assignments:

- Have I not only read, *but made an honest effort to understand* the material?
- Have I contributed something more than a summary of the reading(s)? In other words, have I made an insightful comment or raised an interesting question that I would like to discuss in class? Is this contribution a result of my own reflection or is it drawn from another source? If the latter, have I explicitly cited my source?
- Does every word of my essay count, or am I simply throwing words on the page to meet the word count? If the latter, why am I wasting the time of the professor and all of my colleagues?

Finally, your paper assignment, which is due November 29, will cover a topic that I assign. I will provide more information about the paper in class, but be prepared to analyze a data set that includes voluminous measures of the political behavior, attitudes, and characteristics of a nationally representative sample of American citizens. The data will provide insights into what citizens were thinking about leading up to and in the aftermath of the 2004 presidential election between President Bush and Senator Kerry. Students who have taken PSC 301, Research Methods in Political Science, will be familiar with the kind of data analysis required.

#### • **Required Texts**

I have ordered the following texts for this course; they are available at the UNCG Bookstore:

Edwards, George C., III and Stephen J. Wayne. 2006. *Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making*, Seventh Edition. Thomson-Wadsworth.

Edwards, George C., III. 2006. *Readings in Presidential Politics*. Thomson-Wadsworth.

Throughout the semester, I will also ask you to read book chapters or articles that I have placed on electronic reserve. An asterisk (\*) in the course outline below means that the reading material is available via Blackboard.

- **Grading**

The overall grade for the course will be determined as follows:

In-class assignments/participation	15%
Response memos	15
Data-based paper	20
First exam	20
Second exam	<u>30</u>
	100%

**Please note that failure to complete either of the exams or the paper assignment will result in a non-negotiable F for the class.**

When calculating final course grades, I will compute the overall numerical averages and use the following table to convert these averages to letter grades:

Letter scale	Numerical ranges for final grades	Letter scale	Numerical ranges for final grades
A	>92	C	>72, <77
A-	>=90, <=92	C-	>=70, <=72
B+	>=87, <90	D+	>=67, <70
B	>82, <87	D	>62, <67
B-	>=80, <=82	D-	>=60, <=62
C+	>=77, <80	F	<60

- **Special Needs**

If you have any special needs that will affect your ability to learn in this class, please inform me immediately and appropriate steps will be taken to assist you.

- **Cheating & Plagiarism**

The university's Academic Integrity Policy, which addresses the consequences of cheating and plagiarism, is available via the web at: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>.

The Honor Policy defines cheating as: "Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise." The

policy defines plagiarism as: “Intentionally or knowingly representing the words of another as one's own in any academic exercise.”

In other words, exams are closed book, closed notes. Collaborative work on the exams, papers, memos or in-class exercises is considered cheating. You may study together if you like – in fact I encourage you to form study groups – but think for yourselves. Also, if you are using words that are not your own – whether a sentence, a paragraph or a longer passage – put them in quotation marks and attribute them to the proper source. *Even if you paraphrase information, you must still properly cite your source.* If you have questions about the appropriate format for citations, make sure that you ask me before turning in the paper or consult this Jackson Library web site: <http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/handouts/turabian.asp>. Turabian is the preferred citation style for the social sciences. You can also visit the Writing Center (3211 HHRA) for additional assistance with citations. For more information, visit the Writing Center's web page at <http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/>.

- **Miscellaneous**

You can make up the first exam *only* if you provide me with written notice of a reasonable excuse (e.g., extracurricular commitment, illness, family issue) *in advance of the exam*. Students who miss the first exam and do not notify me in advance will receive a non-negotiable zero. You cannot make up the final exam. Incompletes are not available.

## Course Outline

Date	Topics	Readings
August 21	Introduction to the Course The One, the Few, the Many	Syllabus
August 23 August 28	<b><u>I. THE ONE: Leadership in Context</u></b> A. Constitutional Foundations	E&W, ch. 1, Appendices A & C
August 30	<b>No Class</b>	
September 4	B. The President's Office & Decision Making	E&W, chs. 6 & 7
September 6 September 11	C. The Limits of Leadership: Political Time	Skowronek * E, ch. 3 (Jacobson)
September 13 September 18	D. The Modern Presidency Leadership: Persuasion and Command	Neustadt * E, ch. 4 (Howell)
September 20 September 25	Leadership: The Rhetorical Presidency	Tulis * Holian *

September 27	E. Presidential Personality	E&W, ch. 8 E, ch. 5 (Wayne)
<b>October 2</b>	<b>EXAM #1</b>	
	<b><u>II. THE FEW: At Work in Washington</u></b>	
October 4 October 9	A. The Executive Branch	E&W, ch. 9 E, ch. 12 (Edwards)
October 11	B. Congress	E&W, ch. 10
October 16	<b>No Class - Fall Break</b>	
October 18	B. Congress, continued	E, ch. 11 (Sinclair)
October 23	C. The Courts	E&W, ch. 11 E, ch. 13 (Goldman)
October 25	D. Foreign & Defense Policy	E&W, chs 14 & 15
<b>October 29</b>	<b>Ted Sorenson, former Special Counsel &amp; Adviser to President John F. Kennedy, will speak at the EUC Auditorium at 7 p.m. Attendance is mandatory.</b>	
October 30	D. Foreign & Defense Policy, continued	E, ch. 10 (Fisher)
November 1	E. Domestic Policy	E&W, ch. 12
November 6 November 8	F. The Budget	E&W, ch. 13
	<b><u>III. THE MANY: The Electoral Connection</u></b>	
November 13	A. Presidential Primaries	E&W, ch. 2
November 15 November 20	B. General Elections	E&W, ch. 3 E, ch. 1 (Mayer) E, ch. 2 (Edwards)
November 22	<b>No Class - Thanksgiving Break</b>	
November 27 November 29	C. The President & the Public	E&W, ch. 4 E, ch. 6 (Pfiffner) E, ch. 7 (Edwards)
December 4 December 6	D. The President & the Media	E&W, ch. 5 E, ch. 8 (Wattenberg) E, ch. 9 (Cohen)
December 11	<b>Reading Day</b>	
<b>December 13</b>	<b>EXAM #2 (8 a.m.)</b>	