



PSC 334-01: The American Presidency

209 Graham Building
Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:15
Fall 2008

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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; and the president's relationship with the public, as manifested in opinion surveys and 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 provide us with qualified, capable people to run the government? On balance, does the way the press covers an administration help or hurt the president? 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 a very powerful executive accord with common understandings of separation of powers among coequal branches? Can a president claim unchecked powers *and* remain accountable to the people? 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 experience 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;
- 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 a variety of in-class assignments, announced and unannounced, an in-depth presidential election simulation on which your term paper will be based, and two exams. You can make up the first exam, scheduled on September 30, *only* if you provide me with documented 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 December 12 final exam. I will allow an incomplete grade *only* under extraordinary circumstances that are carefully documented.

In-class assignments will include short responses to readings and lecture material and periodic quizzes on the day's reading. 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 are likely to encounter on the exams and in the paper. 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 noisy and disruptive electronics before the start of class.

Your paper assignment will be based on the presidential election simulation that the class will participate in during the middle third of the semester. Each student will take on one of a number of roles in either the McCain or Obama campaigns. (Sorry Barr, McKinney, or Nader supporters.) Your job during the simulation will be twofold: to fulfill your role in a way that contributes to victory for your candidate, and to use your experience in a way that informs your term paper. The term paper is due on **Tuesday, November 25**. Source material used in the papers must be completely documented. Papers will be penalized one half of one letter grade for each day they are handed in after the beginning of the class on the date they are due. *The late penalty will continue to accrue on weekends and holidays*. I will provide much more information on the simulation and term paper in class.

• Required Texts

The following required texts 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 indicates that the reading material is on e-reserve, available via Blackboard, and identifiable by the author's last name.

• Grading

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

In-class assignments/simulation participation	20%
Term paper	30
First exam	20
Second exam	<u>30</u>
	100%

Please note that failure to complete the term paper and take both of the exams 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: "Representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise."

In other words, exams are closed book, closed notes. You may study together if you like – in fact I encourage you to form study groups – but think for yourselves. In your papers, 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/>.

• *Deus ex machina*: Not in this class

In literature, the theater – and now, political science – a *deus ex machina* is any unlikely occurrence or device that magically resolves the difficulties or the seeming hopelessness of the plot – or semester. All the poor decisions leading to a story's climax are wiped away by an improbable intervention at the last moment. If you've ever read a book in which the heroine realizes that the horrors visited upon her were all just a dream, or watched a play in which the hero, facing disaster, is saved just before the curtain falls by some unlikely contrivance of the playwright, you're familiar with this literary gimmick. There will be no such last-second interventions in this class. My responsibilities to you include making my expectations transparent and treating you – and everyone else in the class – fairly. My responsibilities do not include wiping away poor decisions with last second offers of extra credit. Such behavior on my part would be unfair to others in the class who worked hard enough to meet or exceed my expectations. There are no exceptions. So don't ask for one.

Course Outline

Date	Topics	Readings	Assignments
August 26	Introduction to the Course The One, the Few, the Many	Syllabus	
August 28	No Class – American Political Science Association Annual Meeting		
September 2	<u>I. THE ONE: Leadership in Context</u> A. Constitutional Foundations	E&W, ch. 1, Appendices A & C	
September 4	B. The President's Office & Decision Making	E&W, chs. 6 & 7	
September 9 September 11	C. The Limits of Leadership: Political Time	Skowronek * E, ch. 3	
September 16 September 18	D. The Modern Presidency Leadership: Persuasion and Command	Neustadt * E, ch. 4	
September 23 September 25	Leadership: The Rhetorical Presidency	Tulis * Holian *	
September 30	EXAM #1		

October 2	Mandatory Class Session – Presidential Election Simulation Discussed Note: Beginning October 7, each campaign will have 15 minutes of class time once a week to meet and discuss strategy. These group meetings are mandatory and will occur as noted below.		
October 7	<u>II. THE MANY: The Electoral Connection</u> A. Presidential Primaries	E&W, ch. 2	Group meeting
October 9 October 14	B. The General Election	E&W, ch. 3 E, chs. 1 & 2	Strategy Memo due Group meeting
October 16	C. The President & the Public	E&W, ch. 4	Strategy Memo due
October 21	Fall Break		
October 23	C. The President & the Public, continued	E, chs. 6, & 7	Group meeting
October 28 October 30	D. The President & the Media	E&W, ch. 5 E, chs. 8 & 9	Strategy Memo due Group meeting
November 4	No Class – ELECTION DAY – Vote!		Strategy Memo due
November 6	Status quo or change? Who won (do we know yet?) & why. Simulation wrap up.	Read, view, listen to media coverage of Election 2008	Oral presentations by Campaign Managers
November 11 November 13	<u>III. THE FEW: At Work in Washington</u> A. The Executive Branch	E&W, ch. 9 E, ch. 12	
November 18 November 20	B. Congress	E&W, ch. 10 E, ch. 11	
November 25	C. The Courts	E&W, ch. 11 E, ch. 13	Term Paper due
November 27	No Class – Thanksgiving		
December 2 December 4	D. Foreign & Defense Policy	E&W, chs 14 & 15 E, ch. 10	
December 9	Reading Day		
December 12	EXAM #2 (3:30)		