



PSC 334-01: The American Presidency

209 Graham Building
Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:15
Fall 2009

Professor David B. Holian
Office: 229 Graham Building

Office Hours: M 1:30-3, Th 3:30-5
Email: dbholian@uncg.edu

Course Description

This course will examine the current state of the American presidency. Key issues and themes to be discussed 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 and President Obama's responses 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 did the Bush administration's theory of a very powerful executive accord with common understandings of separation of powers among coequal branches? How different is the Obama administration in this regard? Can a president claim unchecked powers *and* remain accountable to the people? We will focus on these and related questions 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, the Bushes, Clinton, and Obama.

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

If you are new to political science and/or have never taken PSC 100, American Politics, you should seriously consider dropping this class. My assumption is that you already know, or can easily brush-up on, the basics. See me if you have any questions about your ability to understand the advanced material you will be required to read, interpret, do research on, and write about.

The format of the course will involve lecture, discussion, and questions – hopefully lots of them. *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, a term paper based on a presidential advising simulation, and two exams. You can make up the first exam, scheduled for October 1, *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 11 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. These assignments 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 term 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*.

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 term paper will be based on a presidential advising simulation. Each student will take on a defined role as an advisor to the president. Students will work in small groups with other advisors whose job will be to formulate and sell administration policy on an issue of concern to the public. The term paper is due on **Thursday, December 3**, the final day of class. 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*. 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:

[PL] Edwards, George C., III and Stephen J. Wayne. 2009. *Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making*, Eighth Edition. Thomson-Wadsworth.

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

The course outline below also includes book chapters and articles that I have placed on electronic reserve. An asterisk (*) 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:

Participation/in-class assignments	10%
Term paper/simulation participation	40
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*

In literature, the theater – and 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 event or 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 your poor decisions with last second offers of extra credit, or the like. 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. Don't ask for one.

Course Outline

Date	Topics	Readings
August 25	Introduction to the Course The One, the Few, the Many	Syllabus
August 27	I. THE ONE: Leadership in Context A. Constitutional Foundations	PL, ch. 1, Appendices A & C
September 1	B. The President's Office & Decision Making	PL, chs. 6 & 7
September 3	No Class – American Political Science Association Annual Meeting	
September 8 September 10	C. The Limits of Leadership: Political Time	Skowronek * RPP, ch. 3
September 15 September 17	D. Presidential Power Persuasion and Command	Neustadt * RPP, ch. 4
September 22 September 24	The Rhetorical Presidency	Tulis * Holian *
September 29	E. The Presidential Character	PL, ch. 8; RPP, ch. 5
October 1	EXAM #1	

	<u>II. THE MANY: The Electoral Connection</u>	
October 6	A. Presidential Primaries	PL, ch. 2
October 8	B. General Elections	PL, ch. 3
October 13	No Class – Fall Break	
October 15 October 20	B. General Elections, continued	RPP, ch. 1 RPP, ch. 2
October 22 October 27	C. The President & the Public	PL, ch. 4 RPP, chs. 6 & 7
October 29 November 3	D. The President & the Media	PL, ch. 5 RPP, chs. 8 & 9
	<u>III. THE FEW: At Work in Washington</u>	
November 5 November 10	A. The Executive Branch	PL, ch. 9 RPP, ch. 12
November 12 November 17	B. Congress	PL, ch. 10 RPP, ch. 11
November 19 November 24	C. The Courts	PL, ch. 11 RPP, ch. 13
November 26	No Class – Thanksgiving	
December 1 December 3	D. Foreign & Defense Policy	PL, chs 14 & 15 RPP, ch. 10
December 8	Reading Day	
December 11	EXAM #2 (3:30)	