

POS 4413 The American Presidency

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Olds

Meeting Time: Thursday 5:15-8:00 p.m.

Credit: 3 units, letter grade (including +/- modifiers)

Classroom: CWY 108

Office Hours: M to W 3:00-3:40, Th 3:00-4:40

Office: SOC 390

Email: colds@usf.edu

Specific Goals of the Course

The intention of this course is to assess the function of the American presidency as a core national political institution. We will explore the evolution over time in the executive branch's organization and powers. In the course, we will evaluate the role of the American president in the policymaking process of the United States. To do this, we will examine how the executive branch interacts with the media, the public, the bureaucracy, the courts, and Congress. General theories of presidential power will be analyzed in a systematic way. In other words, the goal is not to discuss current presidential politics. Instead, the goal is to grasp a firm understanding of the executive branch as an influential political institution. Along the way, you will cultivate general skills that will serve you well into the future:

- the ability to think critically about differing viewpoints by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of evidence
- the ability to communicate your ideas in a clear way both in verbal and written formats
- the ability to perform extended research of multiple sources to concisely summarize what is currently known about a topic

Course Objectives

As the instructor of this course, I expect that my students at the end of the course will:

1. Be able to discern the difficulties in trying to measure and evaluate social phenomena.
2. Be able to review, analyze, and connect preexisting research in a useful and coherent way.
3. Be able to express arguments rooted in substantive evidence.
4. Be able to respectfully and intelligently critique arguments made by others.
5. Be able to develop papers that are thorough, focused, and informative for readers.
6. Be able to verbally communicate your ideas to others with precision and clarity.
7. Be able to contrast the policymaking role of the president relative to formal and informal political institutions.
8. Be able to discuss areas of disagreement and debate on presidential powers and authority.
9. Be able to evaluate the historical and contextual factors that have shaped the everyday mechanics of the executive branch.

USF Statement on Academic Accommodations for a Disability

Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the Office of Students with Disabilities Services (SDS) to arrange appropriate accommodations. Students are required to give reasonable notice prior to requesting an accommodation.

Note: The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact USF Student Disability Services as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty

- ◇ Any handouts used in this course are copyrighted. Handouts means all materials generated for this class, which include, but are not limited to: syllabi, notes, essay prompts, in-class materials, and review sheets. This includes materials that are posted on the web as well as materials distributed in class. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts unless the instructor expressly grants permission.
- ◇ Lectures cannot be recorded, unless special accommodations for disability are required.
- ◇ Lecture notes may not be sold.
- ◇ No form of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will be tolerated. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have permission of that person. This includes copying material from books, reports, journals, pamphlets, handouts, other publications, web sites, etc., without giving appropriate credit for those ideas and/or without identifying material as quotations when taken directly from another source.
- ◇ Students should complete USF's on-line plagiarism tutorial, which may be found at: <http://davon.etg.usf.edu/share/plagiarism/>
- ◇ Violation of these rules, even if you unintentionally violate them, can result in disciplinary action including a grade penalty (an FF in the course), suspension, dismissal, and expulsion from USF. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, please consult the relevant sections of the USF student catalogs, and/or ask me for further explanation.

USF Statement on Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USF to suspend normal operations. During this time, USF may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Canvas, email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor the Canvas site for each class for course specific communication, as well as the main USF website, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information.

Note: Examples of an emergency could be a hurricane, tornado, institution-wide power outage, etc.

Course Format

The course is focused heavily on student participation. Active learning is a major emphasis in my approach to teaching. Although there is in-class lecture, a major portion of class is devoted to class discussion derived from the comments, criticism, and questions expressed by students about the class reading. Students will also be asked to work with other students together as a group to present a persuasive position regarding an area of political controversy. A positive environment is a good learning environment. Students must show respect to their peers and the instructor at all times. Since we will be engaging in discussion about controversial political topics, you will in all likelihood encounter a statement you disagree with. Regardless, you must not belittle, shout down, insult, or mock another person for their position. Doing so can lead to a person's dismissal from the course.

Grades

Grades will be based on your performance in six assignments. Students can earn one hundred points in this course. Please note that this is a course where extra credit assignments are not made available. Your grades will reflect your performance on the six assigned tasks only. Please note that attendance is a part of your grade given that you must be in class to participate in the class discussion, as well as to present with your group in the political disagreement discussions. Missing multiple sessions will make it difficult for you to follow the material and receive a passing grade in the course.

Regarding assignments submitted late without a university excused absence, I will deduct one full letter grade for each day an assignment is late. If there is a personal conflict with any of the assignment due dates, please notify me as soon as possible.

Item #1: Talking Points and Class Discussion Participation (20 points)

For each class session where readings are assigned, students will write two talking points. Each talking point should be three to five sentences long. Each talking point will be about the readings for that particular week. Given that there are multiple readings, both talking points cannot be only about one single piece of reading for that week. The intention here is to get you to engage with the multiple readings assigned. Talking points can be a critique of one or multiple readings, a comparison/contrasting of readings, or a question regarding one or multiple readings for that week. You must write original talking points for readings assigned each week. Talking points that only discuss reading materials from a prior week will not receive credit. Talking points are due at 11:59 p.m. the day before class for all those weeks where reading is assigned.

Students are expected to make a sincere effort to contribute to the weekly class discussion of the talking points, as well as the political disagreement discussions.

The number of points you earn will be based on whether you submit talking points that adhere to the described standards and whether you attempt to participate in the dialogue in class. For those instances where you have a university excused absence, you can still earn participation points by completing a take-home assignment assigned by me. You must ask for the take-home assignment the same week of the excused absence.

Items #2 and #3 involve a Literature Review. Students will identify, and then write about, a topic in the presidency literature that is of interest to them. Potential examples include the following:

- Does presidential rhetoric influence which issues the media and the public find important?
- Can the president influence Supreme Court decision-making?
- Is there evidence in support of Wildavsky's "Two Presidencies" thesis?
- How consequential are presidential unilateral actions like executive orders on policy in America?
- How does a president's personality potentially determine how they behave while in office?

All papers must be typed in a word-processing computer program and follow specific formatting rules (12-pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, and one inch margins on all sides). Microsoft Word .doc files are preferred. Students will be expected to avoid frequent spelling and grammatical errors when writing their papers. The student should cite all resources used when constructing these papers using guidelines presented in the American Political Science Association Style Manual. **Every paper assignment must be checked for academic integrity by submitting the paper to TurnItIn's plagiarism monitor via Canvas.**

Item #2: Selecting a Potential Area of Research Literature (5 points)

In this paper, students will offer a description of the specific area of literature on the American presidency that interests them. You must explain why you find this area of literature interesting. The student should also briefly discuss their impressions about how much work has been done in the academic literature previously on the area they are interested in. A description of the claims and findings of these past studies is not necessary for this particular paper - only a statement as to whether past research has been attempted and what types of outlets this research has been published in (e.g. which type of academic journal(s), edited

volumes, and books) is required. The paper should be no greater than three pages long. Refer to the class calendar at the end of the syllabus for due date.

The scoring of this assignment is based on the following (out of 5 points possible)

- 2 Points: The student offers a potential area in the academic research literature relevant to the course that interests them
- 1 Point: The student offers an explanation as to why this area of research interests them
- 1 Point: The student states whether previous research has been conducted on the topic and where it has been published
- 1 Point: The writing has an easy to follow structure (introduction-body-conclusion). The student also follows requested formatting rules and avoids frequent spelling and grammatical errors

Item #3: Literature Review on Selected Area of Research (25 points)

In this paper, students will present a thorough review and analysis of previous research that is related to their respective area of interest. The important/major works in the research area should be detailed in the literature review. This means the research that is highly cited by other scholars in the selected research area needs to be covered. It is the responsibility of the student to summarize these major works and evaluate how their findings have shaped how the area of research you selected is currently understood.

An assessment of the makeup of the literature is essential. This means if there is a high level of disagreement in the past scholarship in terms of theories and findings, the student must offer some thoughts as to why they believe this is the case. For those students where a relatively limited literature exists pertaining to their area of interest, they must offer some thoughts as to why they believe this is the case. The student must provide a general assessment of what they think the strengths and weaknesses are of the research literature they examined. What are the aspects that the academic literature has clarified well, and what are the aspects that the academic literature explained poorly? The length of the paper should be four to five pages. Refer to the class calendar at the end of the syllabus for due date.

The scoring of this assignment is based on the following (out of 20 points possible)

- 10 Points: The student presents a thorough summary of past important/major works related to their research area
- 10 Points: The student gives a general assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the past important/major works related to their research area
- 5 Points: The writing has an easy to follow structure (introduction-body-conclusion). The student also follows requested formatting rules and avoids frequent spelling and grammatical errors

Item #4: Political Disagreement Discussions (20 points)

Students will work as a group to present one side of an area of political disagreement pertaining to the American presidency. The group will also exchange questions with the group presenting the other side of the area of disagreement, and answer questions from the rest of the class and the instructor. The goal for each group is to provide informative and persuasive evidence of your respective position in the political disagreement. Research from sources not assigned in the course should be incorporated in the discussion. Five to ten minutes will be devoted to each group presenting their side. Ten minutes will be devoted to each of the two groups questioning each other. Another ten to fifteen minutes will be devoted to questions from the audience. Following that, there will be time provided for open discussion. Please note that all students in the group will receive the same grade. The topics and tentative dates for the political disagreement discussions are presented at the end of the syllabus.

The scoring of this assignment is based on the following (out of 20 points possible)

- 4 Points: The group provides an informative summary of the key points of their position
- 4 Points: The group offers thoughtful critiques of the position presented by the other side of the political

disagreement

- 4 Points: The group answers questions from the other group, the audience, and the instructor
- 4 Points: The group incorporates findings in their presentation from scholarly sources not assigned in class readings
- 4 Points: The group adopts an overall professional and respectful tone throughout the political disagreement discussion

Item #5: Take-home Analytical Essays One (15 points)

For this assignment, students will be presented with an essay prompt or prompts that they have several days to complete. The essays are open note and open book, but you cannot collaborate with anyone in completing the responses. All papers must be typed in a word-processing computer program and follow specific formatting rules (12-pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, and one inch margins on all sides). Microsoft Word .doc files are preferred. Students will be expected to avoid frequent spelling and grammatical errors when writing their papers. The student should cite all resources used when constructing these papers using guidelines presented in the American Political Science Association Style Manual. **Every submission must be checked for academic integrity by submitting the paper to TurnItIn's plagiarism monitor via Canvas.**

You will have one week to complete the prompt or prompts once you receive the assignment in class. Refer to the class calendar at the end of the syllabus for distribution and due dates. Anyone who is not in class at the time of the distribution of the assignment will receive a different prompt or prompts, so they should not expect to gain an advantage over those who do come to class.

Item #6: Take-home Analytical Essays Two (15 points)

The format requirements for this assignment are essentially the same as Item #6. The analytical essays are open-book, open note, but students cannot collaborate with anyone when completing responses. Refer to the class calendar at the end of the syllabus for distribution and due dates.

Final grades are out of one hundred points possible-

Grade Score

A+= 98.6-100

A = 91.5-98.5

A-= 90.0-91.4

B+= 88.6-89.9

B = 81.5-88.5

B-= 80.0-81.4

C+= 78.6-79.9

C = 71.5-78.5

C-= 70.0-71.4

D+= 68.6-69.9

D = 61.5-68.5

D-= 60.0-61.4

F = 59.9 or less

FF= Academic dishonesty

Grade Appeals: If a student has an issue with the grade they earned for one of the assignments, the student must write a one-page explanation describing what aspect or aspects the evaluation missed. A twenty-four hour cooling off period is required, meaning you cannot submit an appeal within the first twenty-four hours after you receive an assignment grade. The written appeal can only be submitted between the second and third day after you receive an assignment back. Please note that if you submit a grade appeal, the work can potentially be scored lower than the initial grade if the second review of the assignment suggests there are additional issues or problems with the assignment. Appeals should be submitted via e-mail.

Course Materials

There are two texts that are required. These books are frequently discounted on online sites like Amazon.com. They can also be rented. All other assigned readings, such as academic journal articles and book chapters, will be posted on Canvas.

Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

The two assigned texts should also be available on reserve at the USF Library, and can be checked out for brief periods of time.

Reading Schedule

Week One

No readings

Week Two

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 1 - The Changing Presidency." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1998. "The Two Presidencies." *Society* 35 (2): 23-31.

Week Three

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 2 - Election Politics." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Lim, Elvin T. 2008. "Chapter 1 - The Problem of Presidential Rhetoric," and "Chapter 2 - The Linguistic Simplification of Presidential Rhetoric." In *The Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shogan, Colleen J. 2007. "Anti-Intellectualism in the Modern Presidency: A Republican Populism." *Perspectives on Politics* 5 (2): 295-303.

Week Four

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 3 - Public Politics." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Pfiffner, James P. 2006. "Do Presidents Lie?" In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George C. Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 159-181.
- Edwards, George C. 2006. "The Limits of the Bully Pulpit." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George C. Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 183-211.

Week Five

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 4 - Presidential Character and Performance." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Wayne, Stephen J. 2006. "Presidential Decision Making: The Influence of Personality on George W. Bush's Decisions to Go to War." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George C. Edwards. Belmont,

CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 135-155

- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 12 - Resolved, a president's personal attributes are the best predictors of performance in the White House." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Six

No readings

Week Seven

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 5 - Legislative Politics." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 1 - Resolved, the framers of the Constitution would approve of the modern presidency," "Chapter 2 - Resolved, political parties should nominate candidates for the presidency through a national party," and "Chapter 3 - Resolved, the president should be elected directly by the people." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Eight

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 6 - Executive Politics." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

- Wattenberg, Martin P. 2006. "The Changing Presidential Media Environment." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 215-233.

- Cohen, Jeffrey E. 2006. "News that Doesn't Matter: Presidents, the News Media, and the Mass Public in an Era of New Media." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 235-259.

- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 5 - Resolved, the media are too hard on presidents." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Nine

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 7 - Judicial Politics." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

- Goldman, Sheldon. 2006. "Is There a Crisis in Judicial Selection?" In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 337-354.

- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 10 - Resolved, the president has too much power in the selection of judges." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Ten

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 8 - The Politics of Domestic Policy." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

- Howell, William G. 2006. "Power without Persuasion: Rethinking Foundations of Executive Influence." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 109-133.

- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 6 - Resolved, the president is a more authentic representative of the American people than is Congress." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives*

tives on the American Executive. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Eleven

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 9 - The Politics of Economic Policy." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Whittington, Keith E., and Daniel P. Carpenter. 2003. "Executive Power in American Institutional Development." *Perspective on Politics* 1(3): 495-513.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 11 - Resolved, the vice presidency should be abolished." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Twelve

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 10 - The Politics of National Security Policy." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 7 - Resolved, presidents have usurped the war power that rightfully belongs to Congress," and "Chapter 8 - Resolved, fighting the war on terrorism requires relaxing checks on presidential power." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Thirteen

- Pika, Joseph A., and John A. Maltese. 2014. "Chapter 11 - The Challenges of a Second-Term President." In *The Politics of the Presidency*. Revised 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Mayer, William G. 2006. "Why Presidents Break Promises." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 3-29.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 4 - Resolved, the Twenty-second Amendment should be repealed." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Fourteen

Holiday. No in-class meeting. No readings

Week Fifteen

- Edwards, George C. 2006. "The Flawed Foundations of the Electoral College." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 31-65.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2010. "Chapter 9 - Resolved, presidential signing statements threaten to undermine the rule of law and the separation of powers," and "Chapter 13 - Resolved, great presidents are agents of democratic change." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 2nd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Class Calendar of Important Dates

- September 26 Item #2 Due at 5:15 p.m. on Canvas (Potential Research Area Paper)
- September 26 Item #5 Distributed in Class (Analytical Essays One)
- October 3 Item #5 Due at 5:15 p.m. on Canvas (Analytical Essays One)

- November 14 Item #3 Due at 5:15 p.m. on Canvas (Literature Review Paper)
- November 28 Holiday. No class meeting.
- December 5 Item #6 Distributed in Class (Analytical Essays Two)
- December 12 Item #6 Due at 7:30 p.m. on Canvas (Analytical Essays Two)

Political Disagreement Topics - Tentative Schedule

- Week 5 - A president's personal attributes are the best predictors of performance in the White House
- Week 7 - The framers of the Constitution would approve of the modern presidency
AND Political parties should nominate candidates for the presidency through a national party
AND The president should be elected directly by the people
- Week 8 - The media are too hard on presidents
- Week 9 - The president has too much power in the selection of judges
- Week 10 - The president is a more authentic representative of the American people than is Congress
- Week 11 - The vice presidency should be abolished
- Week 12 - Presidents have usurped the war power that rightfully belongs to Congress
AND Fighting the war on terrorism requires relaxing checks on presidential power
- Week 13 - The Twenty-second Amendment should be repealed
- Week 15 - Presidential signing statements threaten to undermine the rule of law and the separation of powers
AND Great presidents are agents of democratic change

Syllabus subject to change at instructor's discretion