

POS 4413 The American Presidency

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Olds

Meeting Time: Online asynchronous

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

Classroom: Online-based distance course

Office Hours: M-Th 6-7:30 p.m., and by appointment via Skype or GIA office

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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
- 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 a writing style that is focused and informative for readers.
6. Be able to 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, and review sheets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts unless the instructor expressly grants permission.
- ◇ Students must provide legitimate documentation for any instance where a student will not meet an assignment deadline that meets university guidelines for a permissible absence. This documentation must be provided the same business week of the absence. Documentation can be left in the GIA department main office and should be time-stamped by a GIA office worker.
- ◇ Lectures cannot be recorded, unless special accommodations for disability are required.
- ◇ Lecture notes may not be sold. Lecture slides may not be distributed outside of Canvas.
- ◇ 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.

USF Writing Center

For free assistance with written assignments and class projects, an appropriate option is to make an appointment at the USF Writing Center, which is located inside the main library. The Writing Center is comprised of people trained in writing and communication, and can assist with strategies for developing and researching topics, writing drafts, organizing ideas, and revising assignments.

For more information about the Writing Center, to make an appointment, or for online writing resources, please go to <http://usf.edu/writing/>.

Course Format

The course is focused heavily on student participation. Active learning is a major emphasis in my approach to teaching. A major portion of class is devoted to class discussion that will occur in the discussion forum section of the Canvas learning management system. A positive environment is a good learning environment, and is especially important in a course with little face-to-face interaction between students and the instructor. Students must show respect to their peers and the instructor at all times.

Since we will be exchanging ideas and at times touch on controversial political topics through the online forum, you will in all likelihood encounter a statement you disagree with. Regardless, you must never belittle, shout down, insult, or mock another person for their position. Doing so can lead to a person's dismissal from the course. The intention of the course is to learn about how to approach questions of human behavior through the framework of the American presidency. Any behavior that hinders the ability of others to learn the materials is not permissible.

Grades

Grades will be based on your performance in four 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 four assigned tasks only.

Late assignments are not accepted unless a note from an appropriate source confirms a university excused reason for the work needing to be submitted late. As stated in the academic honesty section, this documentation must be provided the **same business week** as the absence. No documentation equals no acceptance of work after the deadline. Absolutely no exceptions to this will be made. Please notify the instructor of record in advance when possible with an appropriate university excused reason for days in which you might not be able to make an assignment due date.

Item #1: Class Discussion Participation (52 points)

Students will be expected to write a brief three to five paragraph analysis of the discussion question raised for the week, and post their entry in the discussion thread for that specific week. There will be thirteen graded discussion questions over the course of the semester. Students must post their individual analysis by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m. EST. Students **will not earn credit for submitting their analysis after this deadline**. Every individual student is expected to reply to the entries made by at least two other students in the class, and respond to the comments other students make about your own entry. The replies are due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. EST.

Each comment should be substantive, and be written with formal spelling, grammar, and punctuation. All posts in the discussion forum must engage with the course materials, in particular, the course reading. You will not receive full credit if you refuse to analyze the course reading. Evaluate the course materials in your own words and do not rely on outside sources. Up to four points can be earned each week for this assignment, with the number of points determined by whether each post makes a contribution to the overall discussion, engages with the course materials, and follows the formatting guidelines specified here.

Do not wait until the last minute to submit your contributions to the discussion, as that limits the ability for everyone to converse with each other.

Item #2: Roper Center Survey Evaluation (8 points)

For this assignment, the student will evaluate the responses to a survey question regarding a topic pertaining to the American presidency. The USF Library hosts the Roper Center Public Opinion Archives. Through

this resource, students will search for a survey question regarding the American presidency, and perform a write-up about the demographic breakdown of responses to that question. In this paper, students should discuss why this particular survey question about the presidency is of interest to them, the specific dataset the survey question comes from, the time period in which the survey information was collected, and the number of respondents to the question. Lastly, the student should evaluate the responses to the question along demographic categories using the iPoll+ feature of the Roper Center online repository. The length of the paper should be about two to four pages.

Students must type the dataset analysis 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 evaluation. The student should cite any academic resources used by following the citation guidelines presented in the American Political Science Association Style Manual. **Every dataset analysis assignment must be checked for academic integrity by submitting the work to TurnItIn's plagiarism monitor via Canvas.** Refer to the class calendar at the end of the syllabus for due date.

Note: If you are in another one of my courses this semester, you are not allowed to submit the same dataset analysis for multiple classes.

The scoring of this assignment is based on the following (out of 8 points possible)

- 2 Points: The student describes the survey question they selected, and provides an explanation for why that specific question is of interest to them
- 2 Points: The student provides relevant information about the dataset the survey question is derived from
- 2 Points: The student describes the breakdown of responses to the survey question along major population demographic categories
- 2 Points: The writing has an easy to follow structure (introduction-body-conclusion). The student avoids frequent spelling and grammatical errors

Item #3: Literature Review on Selected Area of Research (20 points)

In this assignment, 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 their literature review using guidelines presented in the American Political Science Association Style Manual. **Every paper assignment must be checked for academic integrity by submitting the work to TurnItIn's plagiarism monitor via Canvas.** The length of the paper should be six to eight pages, not including the list of references at the end. At least ten sources should be incorporated in the literature review. Refer to the class calendar at the end of the syllabus for due date.

You must use scholarly, peer-reviewed resources when constructing your literature review. For example, acceptable scholarly research sources include the following academic journals: *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Congress & the Presidency*, *Review of Policy Research*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *American Political Science Review*, and *Political Research Quarterly*.

In terms of books and book chapters, works from university presses (Cambridge University Press, Princeton University Press, Oxford University Press, University of Chicago Press, etc.) are ideal. The following are NOT ALLOWED as scholarly research sources: blogs, websites, newspaper articles, popular novels, mainstream magazine articles, think tank reports, and interest group newsletters. The intention of this assignment is to summarize scholarly research, not to summarize examples written in non-academic outlets.

Note: If you are in another one of my courses this semester, you are not allowed to submit the same topic used for a project as the one selected for the literature review in this class. Also, if you have previously been in this class when I have served as instructor, you cannot submit a literature review about the same research topic.

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

- 8 Points: The student presents a thorough summary of past important/major works related to their research area
- 8 Points: The student gives a general assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the past important/major works related to their research area
- 4 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: Analytical Essays (20 points)

For this assignment, students will be presented with essay 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 responses 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 responses. The student should cite all resources used when constructing their responses using guidelines presented in the American Political Science Association Style Manual. **Every submission must be checked for academic integrity by submitting the work to TurnItIn's plagiarism monitor via Canvas.**

You can only use resources assigned in class when constructing responses. That means you cannot use reading materials not assigned in the course, and you cannot use lecture materials other than the slides provided in the course. No outside materials can be used.

You will have several days to complete the prompts once the assignment is posted on Canvas. 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 fourth 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.

Jones, Charles O. 2007. *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Reading Schedule

Week One

- Jones, Charles O. 2007. "Chapter 1 - Inventing the Presidency." In *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week Two

- Tulis, Jeffrey K. 2014. "The Two Constitutional Presidencies." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 1 - Resolved, the framers of the Constitution would approve of the modern presidency." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Three

- Jones, Charles O. 2007. "Chapter 2 - The Presidency Finds Its Place." In *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Landy, Marc, and Sidney M. Milkis. 2014. "The Presidency in History: Leading from the Eye of the Storm." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 8 - Resolved, Congress should be required to vote up or down on legislation proposed by the president." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Four

- Jones, Charles O. 2007. "Chapter 3 - Electing Presidents (and Other Ways to Occupy the Oval Office)." In *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 3 - Resolved, political parties should nominate candidates for the presidency through a national primary." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Five

- Brown, Lara M. 2014. "The Presidency and the Nominating Process: Aspirants, Parties, and Selections." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Edwards, George C. 2014. "The Faulty Premises of the Electoral College." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 4 - Resolved, the president should be elected directly by the people." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Six

- Quirk, Paul J. 2014. "Presidential Competence." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Nelson, Michael. 2014. "The Psychological Presidency." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 6 - Resolved, presidential success and failure have more to do with political time than with a president's character and leadership qualities." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Seven

- Jones, Charles O. 2007. "Chapter 4 - Making and Remaking a Presidency." In *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 5 - Resolved, the Twenty-second Amendment should be repealed." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Eight

- Jones, Charles O. 2007. "Chapter 5 - Connecting to and Leading the Government." In *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 12 - Resolved, presidential 'czars' undermine Congress and the Constitution." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Nine

- Lim, Elvin T. 2014. "The Presidency and the Media: Two Faces of Democracy." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Wattenberg, Martin P. 2006. "The Changing Presidential Media Environment." In *Readings in Presidential Politics*, ed. George Edwards. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- 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.

Week Ten

- Jones, Charles O. 2007. "Chapter 6 - Presidents at Work: Making Law and Doing Policy." In *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 11 - Resolved, presidential signing statements threaten the rule of law and the separation of powers." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Eleven

- Jones, Charles O. 2007. "Chapter 7 - Reform, Change, and Prospects for the Future." In *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yalof, David A. 2014. "The Presidency and the Judiciary." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 13 - Resolved, the president has too much power in the selection of judges." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Twelve

- Polsky, Andrew J. 2014. "The Presidency at War: The Window of Agency in Wartime Presidential Leadership." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 9 - Resolved, presidents have usurped the war power that rightfully belongs to Congress." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Thirteen

- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1998. "The Two Presidencies." *Society* 35 (2): 23-31.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. 2014. "The Presidency and Unilateral Power: A Taxonomy." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson. 10th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 2 - Resolved, the unitary executive is a myth." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Week Fourteen

Holiday. No readings

Week Fifteen

- 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.
- Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. eds. 2015. "Chapter 7 - Resolved, presidential power is (still) the power to persuade." In *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive*. 3rd Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Class Calendar of Important Dates

- September 26 - Item #2 Due at 11:59 p.m. EST on Canvas (Roper Center Survey Evaluation)
- November 14 - Item #3 Due at 11:59 p.m. EST on Canvas (Literature Review on Selected Area of Research)
- December 1 - Item #4 Posted on Canvas (Analytical Essays)
- December 5 - Item #4 Due at 11:59 p.m. EST on Canvas (Analytical Essays)

Syllabus subject to change at instructor's discretion