

Political Science 312: American Presidency Syllabus

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Office: Social Science Building, Room 2043
Office Hours: W 10:00am – 12:00pm, 1:30pm – 2:30pm, or by apt.
Course Website: vista.unm.edu

Spring 2012
TR 11:00am - 12:15pm
DSH 324

Scope and Purpose

This course is designed to meet two goals. First, I hope to increase your understanding of the presidency as an institution. Over the course of the quarter we will review how institutional rules influence presidential politics. For instance, how do electoral rules affect presidential candidates' campaign strategies? How does our system of separation of powers influence presidents' policy decisions? What role does the president play in the legislative and judicial processes? Though the focus of this course will be on presidential behavior vis-à-vis political institutions, we will be attentive to the lasting impact of individual presidents. Specifically, we will discuss how and why certain presidencies changed the executive branch more than others.

The second purpose of this course is to introduce you to important theoretical and empirical works in the US presidency. Each week we will discuss some of the most influential debates in presidential literature. I hope these topics will introduce you to how scholars think about the executive branch and familiarize you with important concepts and ideas in the political science discipline. For instance, are presidents single-minded reelection seekers or do other goals also drive their behavior? And which theories best explain how presidents make decisions?

Required Readings

Pika, Joseph A and John Anthony Maltese. 2010. *The Politics of the Presidency*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. 7th ed.

Ellis, Richard J. and Michael Nelson. 2010. *Debating the Presidency*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. 2nd ed.

Course Requirements

Participation

Regular attendance is expected of you for this class. Learning the material and performance in the course are both greatly affected by your attendance and engagement. Discussion and dialogue among students and the instructor about course concepts, current and past events related to the presidency, and course readings are strongly encouraged. Respect for others' opinions is an essential part of a university education – disagreements should be voiced in a courteous and civil manner.

Exams

There will be three exams, each worth 100 points. See the course plan below for the tentative exam dates. Make-up exams will be offered only for those students who cannot take the exams at the scheduled times for well substantiated reasons of health and personal emergency. Excuses must be cleared with the instructor prior to the exam. All make-up exams will be more difficult than regularly scheduled examinations. **Failure to take an exam or a make-up will constitute grounds for a failing grade for this course** (exams are not optional).

Your exams will be graded on three criteria: (1) the presence of a clear argument, (2) the degree to which your logic flows and is coherent, and (3) the degree to which your argument is supported by evidence presented during lectures and in the assigned books.

Writing Assignment: The Modern Presidency

For your writing assignment, your task will be to answer the following question: how would the Founding Fathers feel about the modern presidency? Your paper should contain the following three sections:

1. The Modern Presidency. In this section, you are to discuss the nature of the modern presidency. For example, what is the modern presidency? How is it different than the pre-modern presidency? And what are the most important reasons for why the modern presidency emerged?
2. The Founder’s Perspective of the Presidency. In this section, you are to discuss how the Founders envisioned and defined the presidency. For example, why did they feel it necessary to have a presidency? What were some their concerns about establishing a presidency? What were some of the central debates surrounding the office? Keep in mind there was significant disagreement over the nature presidency among the Founders. Be careful not to generalize them into one group – there were different perspectives, and varying voices on the issue.
3. The Founders and the Modern Presidency. In this section, you will present your argument (think of the previous sections as the “set-up”). Support your argument with examples and evidence.

The paper should be typed, double-spaced and include a reference page which cites resources used to research the question. The paper should be between 4 and 6 pages long. The format of the reference page and in-text citations should follow the *Style Manual for Political Science* published by the *American Political Science Association*. For information on the style, see <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html>.

The paper will be due following our discussion of our first topic, the “Changing Presidency.” It is due, in class, on September 13. It would be behoove you to get an early start on this paper, well before week four of the semester (it will be here before you know it!).

The papers will be graded on the following criteria:

- Clear and concise thesis statement in which you state your argument
- Use of evidence to support your argument and quality of research
- Clear, thoughtful and intelligent logic and argumentation
- Clean mechanics (grammar, bibliography, spelling, punctuation, etc.)

Grading

The maximum grade you can receive is 400 points (3 exams each worth 100 points and 1 paper worth 100 points). The course grade breakdown is as follows:

<u>Point Breakdown</u>	<u>Percentage Breakdown</u>
387 – 400 = A+	97% – 100% = A+
370 – 386 = A	93% – 96% = A
358 – 369 = A-	90% – 92% = A-
346 – 357 = B+	87% – 89% = B+
330 – 345 = B	83% – 86% = B
318 – 329 = B-	80% – 82% = B-
306 – 317 = C+	77% – 79% = C+
290 – 305 = C	73% – 76% = C
278 – 289 = C-	70% – 72% = C-
266 – 277 = D+	67% – 69% = D+
250 – 265 = D	63% – 66% = D
238 – 249 = D-	60% – 62% = D-
Less than 238 = F	Less than 60% = F

Class Policies

- Please check the course website everyday. I will periodically place important announcements on the site. The course site is on webct.unm.edu
- My PowerPoint presentations are intended to facilitate your note taking and studying. During class, I will move at my own pace – if you have trouble keeping up with lecture, please see me for some helpful note-taking hints. My advice is to write down key concepts in class and fill in the blanks later.
- Please turn your cell phones off before coming to class. And please no texting in class.
- **The best way to talk about class issues is to drop by my office hours. Email is not a good way to contact me – please use it only for emergencies.**
- Email Policy: Email not to be used for substantive reasons. When sending me an email, please write “Student: POL 312” in the subject heading so it won’t get lost in the shuffle.
- If you have a serious problem, you should contact me IMMEDIATELY. I can do more to help you if you let me know what is happening before you miss deadlines.
- Re-grading Policy: If you have a question about a grade, you must provide me with a written explanation of your concerns. I re-grade the entire assignment/test. You will receive the new grade – higher or lower. You will have 7 days from the day the exam is returned to submit a request for a re-grade. Note that the clock starts on the day that the exam is returned in class – *not* on the day you actually receive the exam (in the event you miss that class). I will not accept requests more than 7 days after they are returned.
- Three points will be deducted for every day that an assignment is late.
- Questions are ALWAYS appropriate.
- I encourage students to challenge the ideas discussed in this class. In all discussion, everyone must provide his or her fellow students with full respect and courtesy.
- Cheating and plagiarism will be punished to the fullest extent possible.
- All lectures, handouts, assignments and exams are the property of the professor and may not be published on the web or in any other manner without permission.

Course Outline and Readings

- “Text” refers to *The Politics of the Presidency*; “Reader” refers to *Debating the Presidency*
- See the Reader’s table of contents for titles associated with the numbers below

I. THE PRESIDENT AND THE PUPBLIC

➤ TOPIC ONE: THE CHANGING PRESIDENCY

Required Readings: Text: Chapter 1
Reader: Chapter 1

****The writing assignment will be due September 13 (the end of the fourth week)**

- TOPIC TWO: ELECTION POLITICS
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 2
 - Reader: Chapters 2 and 3
- TOPIC THREE: PUBLIC POLITICS
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 3
 - Reader: Chapter 5
- TOPIC FOUR: PRESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AND PERFORMANCE
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 4
 - Reader: Chapter 12

****First exam will cover topics 2-4 and will likely occur around week eight**

II. THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOVERNMENT

- TOPIC FIVE: LEGISLATIVE POLITICS
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 5
 - Reader: Chapter 6
- TOPIC SIX: EXECUTIVE POLITICS
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 6
 - Reader: Chapter 9
- TOPIC SEVEN: JUDICIAL POLITICS
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 7
 - Reader: Chapter 10

****Second exam will cover topics 5-7 and will likely occur around week twelve**

II. THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOVERNMENT

- TOPIC EIGHT: THE POLITICS OF DOMESTIC POLICY
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 8
 - Reader: Chapter 9
- TOPIC NINE: THE POLITICS OF ECONOMIC POLICY
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 9
 - Reader: None
- TOPIC TEN: THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY
 - Required Readings: Text: Chapter 10
 - Reader: Chapter 7 and 8

****Third exam will cover topics 8-10 and is scheduled during finals week.**