

PSC 664, The American Presidency (Executive Process)



PSC 664, Fall 2011
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Wednesday evenings, 6-9pm

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“The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America....”

– Article II, Section 1 of

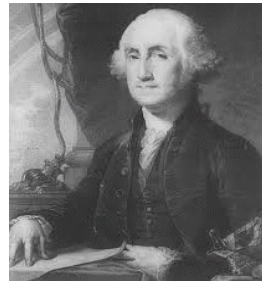
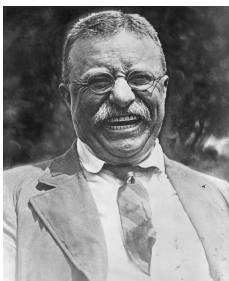
The Constitution of the United States of America

The President of the United States is the most powerful office in American government. It is the focal point of political leadership in the nation and, in many respects, in the world. It is an office with a wide range of responsibilities. Noted presidential scholar Clinton Rossiter (1956) in his classic study, *The American Presidency*, wrote of the president wearing a number of hats. These included being the symbolic head of state, the chief executive in the enforcement of laws, commander in chief of the armed forces, chief diplomat in foreign relations, chief legislator in the making of laws, leader of his or her political party, protector of the peace in times of national emergencies, manager of prosperity, world leader, and the nation’s chief political leader. The president has a major responsibility in dealing with every area of public policy and the processes for their development and implementation. President Harry Truman put the president’s job more succinctly when he placed a sign on his oval office desk that read: “The Buck Stops Here!” The purpose of this seminar is to increase your understanding of the presidency, how presidents have governed and represent Americans by critically examining important scholarship on the subject, and why some presidents have been considered more successful leaders than others.

There are three sections to this course. The first section covers two classic studies of the presidency—Neustadt’s *Presidential Power and the Modern President*, a study generally regarded by presidential scholars as a benchmark study, comparable in impact to *The American Voter* study in the field of voting behavior research, and Skowronek’s *The Politics Presidents Make*, a more recent study that is highly regarded by presidential scholars and widely cited in this field.

The second section of the course considers four studies and a new collection of studies that examine various aspects of the presidency with a particular focus of how the president influences and represents the public and his party. In this part of the course we will read and discuss two books by renowned presidential scholar George Edwards. These are his 2009 book entitled *The Strategic President* and his 2006 book *On Deaf Ears*. This will be followed by a consideration of Brandice Canes-Wrones’ 2005 book entitled *Who Leads Whom?* and Dan Woods’ *The Myth of Presidential Representation*. Finally, we will read a collection of articles just published on *The Obama Presidency* by a distinguished array of presidential and American politics scholars.

The third section of the course examines in some depth a topic of particular interest to me and concerns a recent project of mine. The subject is the rating of presidents. Since the 1940s, presidential scholars in history and political science as well as journalists have attempted to rank the presidents in terms of their overall achievements or “greatness.” We will read several of these studies and studies that attempt to determine what factors are associated with presidents being rated great, near-great, average, or failures. While this exercise might be dismissed as comparing “apples and oranges” or superficial entertainment, every president is evaluated and comparisons to other presidents are an unavoidable and helpful aspect in arriving at these evaluations. Presidents can only reasonably be compared to what is achievable rather than perfection and the comparisons to what other presidents have achieved is very useful in this regard. This line of research is also instructive in revealing what kinds of achievements, what aspects or types of presidencies, are most highly valued and admired.



Background Materials

There are several excellent overview books, websites, and documentaries on the American Presidency. Below are several that you should peruse:

Three expansive websites with many links to useful sources are:

- (1.) The American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>
- (2.) The Presidency Research Group at <http://cstl-cla.semo.edu/renka/prg/>, and
- (3.) U.S. Presidency Links at <http://cstl-cla.semo.edu/Renka/PresidencyLinks.htm>

Two websites with a good deal of basic history of the presidents (though you should not necessarily believe everything you read in these) are:

- (1.) The White House at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>
- (2.) The Miller Center at the University of Virginia at <http://millercenter.org/president>

Two very useful websites for presidential approval ratings are:

- (1.) The Roper Center at the University of Connecticut at <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>
- (2.) The Gallup Poll at <http://www.gallup.com/home.aspx>
(look especially under “More...” “Trends A-Z” and “Presidential Approval Ratings – (president’s name”))

Among the general historical books on the presidency that you may want to consult are:
(1.) Alan Brinkley and Davis Dyer (editors), 2004. *The American Presidency*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), and
(2.) Roger Matuz, 2009. *The Presidents Fact Book: The Achievements, Campaigns, Events, Triumphs, Tragedies, and Legacies of Every President from George Washington to Barack Obama*, (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers).

There are several interesting documentaries on the American presidency and on individual presidents (e.g., HBO's *John Adams* based on David McCullough's Pulitzer Prize winning book). One good overview documentary is the History Channel's "The Presidents: The Lives and Legacies of the 43 Leaders of the United States." It ranges from George Washington to George W. Bush. It is available as a three dvd set.

Last, but definitely not least, you should at some point read Article II of the U.S. Constitution that created the office of the presidency. You should also read Madison, Hamilton, and Jay's Federalist Papers that concern the presidency. They explanation of the political theory that motivated the design of the office. The pertinent papers are the eleven papers from Federalist #67 to Federalist #77. Each of these papers are suspected to have been written by Alexander Hamilton.

Grades

Your grade will be based equally on two components. The first is the quality of your participation in the seminar discussions. Intelligent and insightful comments and questions will be rewarded. Confused ramblings or stony-silence will not be. The second component is your research paper.

1. Expected Participation

You are expected to have done the assigned reading, to have thought about it, and to participate actively in the seminar discussions. Each student will be assigned to be a **discussion leader** for two weeks. Depending on the final number of students in the class, there may be more than one discussion leader for a meeting. For the meetings in which you are the discussion leader you should be especially well versed about the week's reading and should help direct the class discussion, either through questions or comments designed to provoke further analysis of the reading, its methodological soundness, its theoretical contribution, its general importance, and implications for other research. While you have somewhat greater responsibility to help lead the discussion in weeks in which you are a discussion leader, every student is expected to participate actively in each seminar meeting.

2. Research Paper

The second part of your course grade will be based on a research paper written for the course. In the first three or four weeks of class, you should identify a research question (why X or what is the effect of X on Y?) and identify how (what specific data and methods) you will answer the question. The question must concern the presidency and, if you have questions about that,

you should ask me. You might look to recent volumes of professional journals, especially *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, to generate some ideas. The end product research paper should be in the form of a paper that could be presented at a professional political science meeting. That is, it should be professional in form (citations, tables, references, etc.) as well as in rigorous analysis and content. Again, if you have questions, ask. You should use papers presented at conferences as a template for your paper. Students will give brief presentations of their papers in the last meeting of the seminar which will be held when the final exam otherwise would have been held.

Books

There are nine books ordered for this course. In order of appearance, they are:

1. Richard E. Neustadt, 1991. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan, Revised edition*. (New York: Free Press). ISBN-10: 0029227968, ISBN-13: 978-0029227961
2. Stephen Skowronek, 1997. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership From John Adams to Bill Clinton, Revised Edition*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press Harvard University Press). ISBN 9780674689374
3. George C. Edwards, III, 2009. *The Strategic President: Persuasion and Opportunity in Presidential Leadership*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). ISBN-13: 9780691139470 ISBN: 0691139474.
4. George C. Edwards III, 2006. *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit*. (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press). ISBN-13: 9780300115819, ISBN: 0300115814
5. Brandice Canes-Wrone, 2005. *Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, and the Public*. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press). ISBN-10: 9780226092829, ISBN-13: 978-0226092829
6. B. Dan Wood, 2009. *The Myth of Presidential Representation*. (New York: Cambridge University Press). ISBN-10: 0521133424, ISBN-13: 978-0521133425
7. Bert A. Rockman, Andrew Rudalevige, Colin Campbell (editors), 2011. *The Obama Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects*. (Washington, D.C., CQ Press). ISBN-10: 1608716856 ISBN-13: 978-1608716852
8. James Taranto and Leonard Leo (editors), 2005. *Presidential Leadership: Rating the Best and the Worst in the White House*. (New York: Free Press). ISBN-10: 0743274083 ISBN-13: 978-0743274081
9. Alvin S. Felzenberg, 2010. *The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn't): Rethinking the Presidential Rating Game*. (New York: Basic Books). ISBN-10: 0465018904 ISBN-13: 978-0465018901

Class Assignments (and Discussion Leaders)

Week 1. August 31

No Class. American Political Science Association meeting.

Week 2. September 7 (Bauer and Kinderman)

Read: Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*.

Week 3. September 14 (Boston and Lines)

Read: Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership From John Adams to Bill Clinton, Revised Edition*.

Week 4. September 21 (Blackley and Kotlewski)

Read: George C. Edwards, III, *The Strategic President: Persuasion and Opportunity in Presidential Leadership*.

Week 5. September 28

No Class, Rosh Hashanah

Week 6. October 5 (Bryant and Ryan)

Read: George C. Edwards III, *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit*.

Week 7. October 12 (Hanson and Young)

Read: Brandice Canes-Wrone, *Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, and the Public*.

Week 8. October 19 (Kujawa and O'Connell)

Read: B. Dan Wood, *The Myth of Presidential Representation*.

Week 9. October 26 (Bauer and Ryan)

Read: Bert A. Rockman, Andrew Rudalevige, Colin Campbell (editors), *The Obama Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects*. Chapters 1 thru 7 (1. Rockman and Rudalevige, 2. Aberbach, 3. Edwards, 4. Campbell, 5. Jacobson, 6. Heith, and 7. Jacobs).

Week 10. November 2 (Boston and Kotlewski)

Read: Bert A. Rockman, Andrew Rudalevige, Colin Campbell (editors), *The Obama Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects*. Chapters 8 thru 14 (8. Rudalevige, 9. Sinclair, 10. Yalof, 11. Foreman, 12. Singh, 13. Weatherford, and 14. Rockman, Campbell, and Walterburg).

Week 11. November 9 (Blackley and Lines)

Readings

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. 1997. "Rating the Presidents: Washington to Clinton." *Political Science Quarterly*, 112 (2): 179-90.

Maranell, Gary M. 1970. "The Evaluations of Presidents: An Extension of the Schlesinger Polls," *The Journal of American History*, 57 (1): 104-13.

Murray, Robert K. and Tim H. Blessing. 1983. "The Presidential Performance Study: A Progress Report" *The American Journal of American History*. 70 (3): 535-55.

Lonnstrom, Douglas A. and Thomas O. Kelly, II. 2003. "Rating the Presidents: A Tracking Study," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 33 (3) 625-34.

C-SPAN. 2009. "2009 Historians Presidential Leadership Survey," <http://www.c-span.org/PresidentialSurvey/presidential-leadership-survey.aspx>

Siena Research Institute. 2010. "American Presidents: Greatest and Worst," Press Release of July 1, 2010.

Greenstein, Fred I. 2000. "The Qualities of Effective Presidents: An Overview from FDR to Bill Clinton," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 30, 1, (March) pp. 178-85.

Pious, Richard M. 2002. "Why Do Presidents Fail?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 32, 4, (December) pp. 724-42.

Week 12. November 16 (Bryant and Kinderman)

Read: James Taranto and Leonard Leo (editors), *Presidential Leadership: Rating the Best and the Worst in the White House*.

Week 13. November 23

No Class. Fall Recess. To the non-PC crowd, this is better known as Thanksgiving

Week 14. November 30 (Hanson and O'Connell)

Read: Alvin S. Felzenberg, *The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn't): Rethinking the Presidential Rating Game*.

Week 15. December 7 (Kujawa and Young)

Readings

Nice, David C. 1984. "The Influence of War and Party System Aging on the Ranking of Presidents," *Western Political Quarterly*, 37 (3): 443-55.

Kenney, Patrick J. and Tom W. Rice, 1988. "The Contextual Determinants of Presidential Greatness," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 18 (1): 161-9.

Ellis, Richard and Aaron Wildavsky. 1991. "'Greatness' Revisited: Evaluating the Performance of Early American Presidents in Terms of Cultural Dilemmas," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 21 (1): 15-34.

McCann, Stewart J.H. 1992. "Alternative Formulas to Predict Greatness of U.S. Presidents: Personological, Situational, and Zeitgeist Factors," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62 (3): 469-79.

McCann, Stewart J.H. 2005. "Simple Method for Predicting American Presidential Greatness from Victory Margin in Popular Vote (1824-1996)," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 145 (3): 287-98.

Simonton, Dean Keith. 1986. "Presidential Greatness: The Historical Consensus and Its Psychological Consensus," *Political Psychology*, 7 (2): 259-83.

Simonton, Dean Keith. 1988. "Presidential Style: Personality, Biography, and Performance," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51 (1): 149-60.

Simonton, Dean Keith. 1991. "Predicting Presidential Greatness: An Alternative to the Kenney and Rice Contextual Index," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 21 (2): 301-5.

Simonton, Dean Keith. 1993. "Putting the Best Leaders in the White House: Personality, Policy, and Performance," *Political Psychology*, 14 (3): 537-48.

Simonton, Dean Keith. 2006. "Presidential IQ, Openness, Intellectual Brilliance, and Leadership: Estimates and Correlations for 42 U.S. Chief Executives," *Political Psychology*, 27 (4): 511-26.

Week 16. Exam Week. December 14.

Paper presentations.

