

Analyzing the Presidency
Political Science (PLSC) 497.6
Monday/ Wednesday/ Friday 2:30 pm. – 3:20 p.m.
Boucke Building 301

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3-4:30 and by appointment

Required Textbooks

Kearns-Goodwin, Doris. 2018. *Leadership in Turbulent Times*. Simon & Schuster: New York. Noted as DKG on the syllabus

Nelson, Michael. (Editor). 2018. *The Presidency and the Political System*. 12th Edition. CQ Press: Washington D.C.

Recommended Textbook

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2021. *An R Companion for the Third Edition of The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press: New York.

Course Description

The word “presidency” may conjure up thoughts of powdered wigs, secret service agents, or inspirational speeches. Whatever the specific images, much of what we associate with the presidency centers on the person behind the desk: the man or woman elected to serve as commander in chief of the United States, each with a unique set of goals, skills, experience, perspective, and idiosyncrasies that he or she brings to the job. The presidency, however, is also an institution, much larger than the human being who occupies the office. No matter who the president is, the executive branch of government is endowed with a

particular set of institutional powers and constraints that help provide and limit the president's ability to fulfill his or her agenda. Moreover, no presidency occurs in a vacuum. Each administration is indelibly influenced by the political, social, and economic conditions of that president's time in office. The balance between 1) the presidency as an individual entity (i.e., a person), 2) the presidency as an institution, and finally 3) the context of the time in which the presidency occurs, will form the central theme of our semester long study.

Broadly, this course is divided into topical units that touch on different aspects of the presidency as both an institution and as a person. We will begin by investigating the foundations of the office – what the framers intended when they created the presidency during the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and how the presidency has evolved over time not only from extensions of individual occupants but also delegation from the Congress. The modern presidency as an institution has become the most powerful political office in the world today. We will also discuss how political scientists study the institution of the presidency and the challenges it presents for researchers. Further, we will also study different approaches to governing that stems from the personality of individual occupants and also the constraints and opportunities that the office enables for governance. We will discuss what a presidential campaign entails and how much power the major political parties exert in choosing a nominee. Lastly, we will discuss inter-branch relationships between the Congress, the bureaucracy, the public, the media, and interest groups as they relate to the presidency and governance.

Who Should Take This Course

- This is a “data-intensive” seminar geared toward Political Science and Social Data Analytics BS majors
- You should have completed PLSC 309 or an equivalent course in introductory statistics
- You should have a working familiarity with R, it will be mandatory in this course
- You are able to bring a laptop to class which has R installed and working wifi

Course Objectives

This course is a survey class on the American presidency from a social scientific point of view. After completing this class, it is expected that students develop two sets of competencies. First, students who complete this course will demonstrate deeper knowledge about the development of and current state of the presidency. Second, students are expected to further develop their ability to think critically, write effectively, synthesize and analyze scholarly literature, and apply theoretical arguments to new situations.

Specific learning objectives include:

- Students will be able to apply in-depth knowledge about the American presidency to understand political processes and relationships today.
- Students will be able to understand how the presidency as an institution has evolved and changed since our nation's founding.

- Students will be able to think critically, write effectively, integrate arguments, and apply their own analysis to critique and amplify current scholarly literature.

Expectations

Attendance: Your attendance in class is assumed. Poor attendance highly correlates with low grades, and students who read the relevant material, come to class, and are engaged often have the highest grades. Attendance will be taken in every class. I expect that you will have read the class material in advance of our meeting and be prepared to ask questions and actively engage in critical analysis with your peers.

Laptops and phones: This is a seminar-style class with an emphasis on class discussion. I strongly encourage you to bring a **paper** copy of the articles to class; however, I fully appreciate that some people prefer to take notes and read on computers and tablets. You are welcome to do so. If, however, it seems as though your laptop is distracting you due to the intense desire to check email, post on Snapchat, or look at Facebook during class, I may ask you to take notes by hand and close your laptop. Out of respect for your peers and for me, you should silence your phones during class.

Course Requirements

The deliverables for this class consists of 2 short papers, 5 data exercises, two exams and class participation. I do not give grades; rather **you earn them** – exams, essays, projects, and classroom participation provide you the chance to exhibit your knowledge and command of the material. Your grade in this course will be determined with the following assignments. The total number of points possible for this class is 1000.

2 Papers	200 points each (100 points total)
Data Exercises	300 points (5 assignments, 60 points each)
2 Midterms	400 points (200 points each)
Participation	100 points

We will use the following grading scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	76 to 79
C	70 to 75

D	60 to 69
F	59 and below

Paper Reports (20%)

Students will write 2 reports on any two *empirical* articles of their choosing from the required materials. Each report will be worth 10% of your grade. These reports should answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the research question?
- 2) How does the article contribute to existing research?
- 3) What are the independent variable(s), dependent variable(s), and hypotheses?
- 4) How are the independent variable(s) and dependent variable(s) measured?
- 5) What control variables are included?
- 6) What is the unit of analysis?
- 7) What cases are included, and/or what sampling approach is taken?
- 8) What methods are used?
- 9) What are the substantive conclusions?
- 10) Are the conclusions convincing given the above? Are they generalizable? What are the limitations of the study? What should future research address?

Reports should be 1-3 double-spaced pages. Students should copy and paste the questions above to clearly organize their papers. These reports will be marked out of ten. Questions 1-9 will be worth 0.75 each and will either be correct or incorrect. Question 10 will be worth 3.25. Reports are due by midnight the day before the chosen reading is assigned.

Data exercises. This is a data intensive class, and as such we will work with data and improve our R coding with 5 homework exercises throughout the semester. If you have questions about coding, please contact the TA. If you have questions about particular statistical tests that should be run, please feel free to make an appointment to chat with me.

Exams. There will be two midterm exams given in this class. The material for each exam will be obtained from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussion. They are **not** cumulative. The exam format will consist of several short-answer questions that will be written to assess your understanding of the concepts and theories presented as well as your ability to integrate these ideas together and link them to practical politics.

Participation. You are expected to participate in a variety of formats in the class (please review the paragraph above on attendance policy). This includes active engagement with the reading material, asking your classmates questions, demonstrating to me that you have thoroughly thought through the readings and formed some of your own questions related to it. To that end, **I am requiring you to post 2 questions about each reading to the Canvas forum for that day.** Posting questions is a component of your participation grade. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in front of your peers, please contact me early in the semester so that we can strategize ways together for you to contribute to class discussions.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be docked one letter grade for every day that they are late. After five days, you will receive no credit for the assignment if it has not been turned into me. If there are extraordinary circumstances, I will consider accepting late assignments for full credit.

Academic Integrity: Please be vigilant about maintaining academic integrity. Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Note to students with disabilities: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services. For further information regarding policies, rights and responsibilities please visit the Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web site at: www.equity.psu.edu/ods/. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.

Cell phones: Turned off and put away. Texting during class is distracting to you and disrespectful to your professor and fellow students. You know this. So don't do it.

Course Calendar

You are responsible for reading the assigned pages **prior to** class. Each reading is due on the date that it is assigned. While we will adhere to this schedule as closely as possible, **I reserve the right to make changes and adjustments as needed during the course of the semester.**

Unit I: Powers of the Presidency: What did the Founding Fathers intend when they designed the presidential office? How and why have the president's power evolved over time? How do political scientists go about studying the presidency as an institution?

Week 1: Class introduction and Presidential Foundations

August 22nd: Class Introduction

August 24th:

- Article II, *United States Constitution* (1789) at <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>
- *The Federalist*, No. 68
<https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers>

August 26th:

- *The Federalist*, Nos. 70, 73 at <https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers>

Week 2: What is the basis of presidential power? How has the office evolved since our founding? How do political scientists study the presidency as an institution?

August 29th:

- Howell, William G. and David Milton Brent. 2015 “Constitutional Foundations.” In *Thinking About the Presidency: the Primacy of Power*. Princeton University Press: Princeton. pgs. 55-70.

August 31st :

- Nelson, Chapter 1 & 4 (we’ll probably only get through the 1st half of Chapter 4)

September 2nd :

- Nelson Chapter 4
- Howell, William G. 2006. “The American Presidency.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. Ed. R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert Rockman. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Unit 2: Governing Part 1. How do presidents govern the country? What tools do they employ to be successful? What leadership characteristics make some presidents more successful than others?

Week 3: Governing part 1: Governing as persuasion; Governing as a powerful individual

September 5th – LABOR DAY NO CLASSES

September 7th :

- Neustadt, Robert. 1980. *Presidential Power*. New York: Wiley Chapters 2 and 3.

September 9th :

- Greenstein, Fred I. 2005. "The Person of the President, Leadership, and Greatness." in *The Executive Branch*. Ed. Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A Peterson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pgs. 218-242.

Data Exercise #1 Due at 5pm in the Canvas Dropbox

Week 4: Transformational leaders and governing

September 12th :

- 21st anniversary of 9/11. Video of Chief of Staff, Andrew Card, on his reflections of 9/11.

September 14th :

- DKG Part I (including the Forward) Lincoln & T. Roosevelt

September 16th

- DKG Part I: FDR & LBJ

Week 5

September 19th : DKG Part II: Lincoln & T. Roosevelt

September 21st : DKG Part II: FDR & LBJ

September 23rd : DKG Part III: Lincoln & T. Roosevelt

Week 6

September 26th – NO CLASSES

September 28th : DKG Part III: FDR

September 30th : DKG Part III: LBJ (including Epilogue)

Data Exercise #2 Due at 5pm in the Canvas Dropbox.

Week 7

Unit 3 (mini-unit): Presidential Campaigns and Raising Money

What do campaigns accomplish? How much money does it take to run a campaign?

How important is the state of the economy on vote choice and election outcomes?

October 3rd :

- Farhi, Paul. 2012. "Do Campaigns Really Change Voters' Minds?" *The Washington Post*. 6 July. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/do-campaigns-really-change-voters-minds/2012/07/06/gJQAEIjyRW_story.html?utm_term=.0528ad9ec757 (August 15, 2016).
- Wasserman, Gary. 2012. "Do Political Campaigns in the United States Matter?" *Al Jazeera*. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/10/20121021152413988754.html> (August 15, 2016).
- Tucker, Joshua. 2011. "Does Money Affect Election Outcomes in US Politics? A Quick Review of the Literature." *Monkey Cage*. 4 November. <http://themonkeycage.org/2011/11/does-money-affect-election-outcomes-in-us-politics-a-quick-review-of-the-literature/> (June 27, 2016).

October 5th – NO CLASSES

October 7th : **MIDTERM #1**

Week 8

October 10th : TBD

October 12th : TBD

October 14th : TBD

Unit 4: (mini-unit) The Two presidencies thesis: Does the president govern differently in foreign policy versus domestic policy? Does he have more influence in one area over the other?

Week 9

October 17th :

- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1966[1998] "The Two Presidencies." *Society*. 35(2): 23-31

October 19th :

- Brandice Canes-Wrone. William G. Howell and David E. Lewis. (2008) "Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Reevaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis." 70(1): 1-16.

October 21st :

- Howell, William G. 2011. "Presidential Power in War." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 14: 89-105.

Unit 4: The Electoral College, political parties, and securing the nomination. What is the electoral college and what are its continuing consequences for presidential elections? Do we still need it? What's the role of political parties in the nominating process? What was the McGovern-Fraser Commission and how are presidential primaries run?

Week 10

October 24th :

- Nelson Chapter 7 & 8 (we will likely only get through ½ of Chapter 8)

October 26th

- Nelson Chapters 8 (finish) and 12

October 28th :

- *The Party Decides*: Chapter 6

Data Exercise #3 Due at 5pm in the Canvas Dropbox.

Week 11

Political parties Continued. The 2016 Presidential Context: Assessing the Strength of Political parties in presidential nominations

October 31st :

- Kollman, Ken. 2018. "Who Drives the Party Bus". In *Readings in American Politics*. Ed. Ken Kollman. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Pgs. 558-560
- Gelman, Andrew and Julia Azari. 2017. "19 Things We Learned from the 2016 Election." *Statistics and Public Policy*. 4(1): 1-10.
- Cohen, Marty. David Karol, Hans Noel, John Zaller. 2016. "Party versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System." *Political Science & Politics*. 701-708.

November 2nd : Class discussion on the 2022 midterms and implications for Biden's presidency.

- Choose one election from the midterms that you're interested in/ followed and be prepared to present the results and your analysis to the class

Unit 5: Governing Part II: Institutionalization of the Office; The President's relationship with: the Congress, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the public (using the bully pulpit)

How has the presidency as an institution become institutionalized? What does that mean?

November 4th :

- Nelson Chapter 13

Week 12

November 7th :

- Ragsdale, Lyn and John J. Theis III. (1997). "The Institutionalization of the American Presidency, 1924-1992." *American Journal of Political Science*. 41(4): 1280-1318.

How does the president exercise control over the bureaucracy?

November 9th :

- Nelson Chapter 14

November 11th :

- Wood, B. Dan and Richard W. Waterman.1991. "The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review*. 85 (3): 801-828.

Week 13

November 14th :

- Clinton, Joshua D. Anthony Bertelli, Christian R. Grose, David E. Lewis, David C. Nixon. "Separated Powers in the United States: The Ideology of Agencies, Presidents, and Congress." 2012. *American Journal of Political Science*. 56(2): 341-354.

How does the president interact with the Congress? How do the president and the Congress jointly govern?

November 16th :

- Nelson Chapter 15

November 18th :

- Clinton, Joshua and David E. Lewis and Jennifer Selin. 2014 "Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52(2): 387-401

Data Exercises # 4&5 Due at 5pm in the Canvas Dropbox

Thanksgiving break – NO CLASSES

Week 14

November 28th :

- Wood, B.D., 2011. Congress and the Executive Branch: Delegation and Presidential Dominance. In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress*. 689-708.

How does the president interact with the federal judiciary?

November 30th :

- Nelson Chapter 16

December 2nd :

- Epstein, Lee and Jeffrey A. Segal. 2009. "Nominating Federal Judges and Justices." In *The Oxford Handbook of The American Presidency*. Ed. George C. Edwards III and William G. Howell. Oxford University Press: Oxford. Pgs. 625-645.

Week 15

Studying the Presidency: the state of scholarship and of the office

December 5th :

- Moe, Terry M. 1993. "Presidents, Institutions, and Theory." In *Researching the Presidency: Vital Questions, New Approaches*, eds. George C. Edwards III, John H. Kessel, and Bert Rockman. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press. 337-383

December 7th :

- Mayer, Kenneth. 2009. "Thoughts on 'The Revolution in Presidential Studies.'" *Presidential Science Quarterly*. 39 (no. 4): 781-785.

December 9th : Class wrap up. LAST DAY OF CLASS

FINAL EXAM – CHECK WITH THE REGISTRAR