

POL 106: The Presidency

University of California, Davis

Spring Quarter, 2020

Mondays and Wednesdays

2:10-3:30pm (live online via Zoom)

Live lecture URL: <https://ucdavisdss.zoom.us/j/944191710>

Class YouTube URL: <https://bit.ly/3dAkH0H>

Instructor: Isaac Hale
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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 4-5 PM via Zoom.

Course Description

What is the American presidency? Is it a person? A branch of government? An institution with powers and constraints? The answer to all these questions is “yes”! Who the president is matters a lot: they control most of the federal bureaucracy, control most federal appointments, appoint judges, and have massive discretion over foreign policy. However, the presidency is also bigger than one individual: the office has changed significantly over time, both in terms of its powers and its constraints. In this class we will focus on the presidency at both an individual and institutional level. We will examine: 1) presidential nominations, 2) presidential elections, 3) presidential powers, and 4) the institutional presidency. We will look at how each of these facets of the presidency has evolved over time and how they manifest in modern presidential politics. The 2020 election and the Trump presidency will be central to this course.

Since this is an upper division course, it is my expectation that you have a baseline knowledge of the structure of American government. As such, we will not be devoting much time in class to basic civics (e.g. checks and balances, the three branches of government, etc.). If you do not feel comfortable with these subjects, I highly encourage you to brush up at the beginning of the quarter and sign up for my office hours if you have questions.

This is a challenging quarter for all of us. I do not expect this class to be your first priority. If you or your family are sick or struggling, let me know – I can help make sure you succeed in this class anyways. There is also no shame in taking this class pass/fail: do not hesitate to let me know if this would be your preference.

I also know that the transition to online courses means that the course structures you are probably used to at UC Davis are not appropriate this quarter. As such, I have taken several steps to make this course as engaging and accessible as possible. There will be no midterm or final exam for this course. Instead, the course will have brief weekly response papers and a short final paper. This will help ensure that students face less time pressure and that each graded assignment is worth less of the total grade.

The class will feature both live lectures on Zoom (at the regularly scheduled class time) and lecture recordings will be uploaded to YouTube. I encourage you to attend live lecture when possible –

there will be opportunities for Q&A and engagement every class. If you cannot attend class though, don't worry: you can watch the lecture recording at a time that works for you. Regardless, you are expected to keep up with the class material. The links for both the live lecture and the YouTube channel are posted at the top of the syllabus.

One final note – this course is meant to be fun! While the material in this class will often get into the weeds of the presidency, I will endeavor to make sure our discussions are relevant to current political events – particularly the 2020 election! If there is something happening in the news that is relevant to our class, I will be sure to allocate time to discuss it. I encourage you to apply current events to course material in class discussion as well. Major legislation, election news, scandals, executive orders, and policy debates are all fair game!

Class Expectations

Live Lecture

Because of the COVID-19 suspension of in-person classes, all lectures will be given digitally on Zoom. These lectures will be given live on Zoom during the normal class time. There will be opportunities for students participating live to ask questions during lecture. To join lectures throughout the quarter, use the following link: <https://ucdavisdss.zoom.us/j/944191710>

Lecture Recordings

Lectures will be recorded and posted to YouTube for students who are not able to attend lecture at the regular time. The YouTube link for class lectures is: <https://bit.ly/3dAkH0H>. You are responsible for keeping up with lecture and should take care not to fall behind.

Office Hours

My regular office hours will be from 4-5 PM on Mondays & Wednesdays (after class). You can book Zoom office hours using this link: <https://bit.ly/3agn46t>.

Once you have booked an office hour slot, you can join the Zoom meeting using this link: <https://ucdavisdss.zoom.us/j/461893641>.

Online Access

All readings and documents for this course (except the textbook) can be accessed through the Canvas website or via hyperlinks in the syllabus schedule. Messages will be sent by me via Canvas, so make sure you have email notifications for Canvas messages activated.

Participation

Because this class is fully online, “participation” will not be a part of your grade. However, I still encourage you to ask questions, and there will be opportunities to do so during the virtual lecture.

Online Discussion

There will be no formal online discussion expected in this course. However, I encourage you to use the Canvas forums and chat to discuss class material. I will monitor the Canvas discussion page and chime in where appropriate. While I encourage discussion, you are expected to do your own work for the response papers and the analytic essay.

Email

I welcome questions and comments, either by email or by Canvas message. When you email me, you should compose your email as you would any piece of professional correspondence. I will respond to your emails as quickly as possible, but please do not expect a quick response to email sent on weekends or after 5pm on any day.

Lecture Slides

Slides will be used in class on most days. Slides will be posted to Canvas following the class session.

Required Texts

There is a required textbook for this course.

- Textbook: William G. Howell, *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. 2003.
 - ISBN-13: 9780691102702

You may access all other readings through the Canvas portal for this class or via hyperlinks in the syllabus.

Grading

Grading for this course will be calculated as follows:

Response Papers (best 7 out of 8)	70%
<u>Analytic Essay</u>	<u>30%</u>
Total:	100%

All grading items listed above are detailed in the sections that follow.

Response Papers

There are no exams in this class. However, 70% of your grade will be determined by **eight (8)** short weekly response papers. The response papers are a means for you to engage on a deeper level with the (often complex!) articles and chapters we are reading for class.

Each response paper will be short (generally less than a page), though the exact length will vary from paper to paper. Each one should take you no more than an hour to complete. Your lowest scoring response paper will be dropped from your final grade.

There will be a response paper every week EXCEPT for weeks 9 and 10.

Prompts will be posted to Canvas around 5:00 PM every Wednesday. You will have 72 hours to complete each assignment, meaning submissions will close at 5:00 PM each Saturday.

Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, and double-spacing.

Analytic Essay

In lieu of a final exam, you are required to submit an analytic essay for this class. Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, double-spacing, and proper citation format (see section below). Additionally, please number each page. The essay should be 4 pages long (not including the bibliography). Essay prompts will be posted to Canvas early in the quarter.

Essays will be graded on content (evidence provided), analysis (claims drawn about the evidence provided), structure (clarity of thesis and logical “flow” of the essay), and mechanics (grammar, punctuation use, sentence and paragraph composition, etc.). The following elements are part of an A paper:

1. **A clear thesis** presented in the first paragraph and argued throughout. Include “In this essay I will argue that...” or something similar.
2. **Evidence to support your thesis** in the form of facts, ideas from existing research, and thoughtful, balanced analysis.
3. **Clear structure**, including an introduction, a conclusion, and reasonably sized body paragraphs. Each body paragraph should start with a topic sentence that introduces that paragraph.
4. **A bibliography** with a complete list of your sources. Some guidelines:
 - Include a **minimum of five (5)** sources total.
 - At least **three (3) academic sources** for each paper. These should be academic articles or university press books (the textbook is fair game).
 - At least **one (1)** of your three academic sources must be from outside the class (meaning that it is not on the syllabus).
 - Lectures may be cited, but do **not** count towards your required sources.
5. **Appropriate and sparing use of quotes**. Quotes do not speak for themselves. They should always be preceded by context and followed by analysis of that quote.
6. **Clear writing** with few grammatical errors.

Citations and Bibliographies

I am not a stickler for a particular citation format. What does matter is that you cite every source you reference and include a bibliography at the end of every paper you submit that references outside sources. You may use in-text parenthetical citations (e.g. [APSR style](#)) or footnotes (e.g. [Chicago style](#)), but you **MUST** be consistent and use citations every time you refer to an outside source rather than your own opinion.

Late Submissions

Do not wait until the night before it is due to begin to work on an assignment. Life is complicated and full of unexpected surprises. Plan for uncertainty by managing your time efficiently. Even if your work is not complete because something unexpected interfered, submit what you have accomplished prior to the emergency. After-the-fact extensions will be granted only under extreme circumstances, and at my sole discretion.

If you know in advance that you will miss an assignment deadline, you may submit a partially completed assignment early — and then appeal for an extension.

Essays submitted late will have 10% deducted from their final score for every day they are late. This penalty begins immediately following the day and time the assignment is due and will not be prorated. Late essays will not be accepted after the scheduled final exam date.

Grade Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the grade you receive on an assignment or exam, please take the following steps:

- 1) Review any comments/feedback I have provided.
- 2) If you still have questions, come to my office hours or contact me by email.
- 3) If you still believe the grade you received is in error, submit a one-paragraph written request for a regrade by email. If the request is approved, your work will receive a completely new evaluation by me. Your score may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

Disabilities

UC Davis encourages qualified students with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. I am strongly committed to the same policy. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Student Disability Center at (530) 752-3184 as soon as possible to identify and document your specific needs. Additionally, it is your responsibility to contact me privately immediately at the beginning of the quarter (i.e., within the first week) so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. Do not wait until just before an assignment deadline or an exam to inform me of a learning disability.

Academic Dishonesty

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless otherwise specified by me. Any reference materials used to prepare an assignment must be cited. The following document contains specific guidelines for avoiding plagiarism: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf>. Generally speaking, you must cite the person at the end of the sentence in which you use another person's idea. When you use a specific phrase, you must put that phrase in quotation marks and cite the original author at the end of the sentence in which you use the phrase. If you wish to submit a piece of writing that you have used in another class, you must receive my permission before doing so.

Weekly Assignments and Topics

The list below indicates reading assignments, class topics, and essay due dates. All journal articles and other readings (excluding the required textbook) will be available on Canvas or linked below. You should do each day's readings before that day's class. I'll generally keep us on schedule but note that discussions may bleed over from one class to the next.

Part I. Electing the President

Date	Topic	Readings Due
Week 1		
Mon, Mar 30	Course Introduction & Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Syllabus
Wed, Apr 1	The Invisible Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Silver, Nate. "The Republican Party May Be Failing: What "The Party Decides" could get wrong about Donald Trump and the GOP." January 26, 2016. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-republican-party-may-be-failing/Azari, Julia. "The 2016 Primaries were weird. Will things get even weirder in 2020." https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-2016-primaries-were-weird-will-things-get-even-weirder-in-2020/Silver, Nate. "We're Tracking 2020 Presidential Endorsements. Here's Why They Probably Still Matter." February 28, 2019. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/were-tracking-2020-presidential-endorsements-heres-why-they-probably-still-matter/EXPLORE: 538 historical endorsement tracker: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-endorsement-primary/EXPLORE: 538 2020 endorsement tracker: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2020-endorsements/democratic-primary/

Week 2		
Mon, Apr 6	The 2020 Democratic Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory of the case – Biden, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-joe-biden-could-win-the-2020-democratic-nomination/ • Theory of the case – Sanders, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/bernie-sanders-2020-democratic-nomination-kickoff/ • Theory of the case – Warren, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-elizabeth-warren-could-win-the-2020-democratic-primary/ • Theory of the case – Bloomberg, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-michael-bloombergs-late-bid-for-the-democratic-nomination-could-go/ • Theory of the case – Buttigieg, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/pete-buttigieg-2020-democratic-nomination/ • Theory of the case – Harris, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/kamala-harris-2020-democratic-primary/
Wed, Apr 8	Caucuses & Primaries I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government 101: United States Presidential Primary, https://votesmart.org/education/presidential-primary • Yglesias, Matthew, “The US presidential primary process, explained.” https://www.vox.com/a/presidential-primaries-2016-republican-democrat/presidential-primaries-explained • John Oliver, Last Week Tonight, “Primaries and Caucuses.” https://youtu.be/S2G8jhhUHg • Morrison, Sara, “The Iowa caucus smartphone app disaster, explained.” February 6, 2020. https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/2/4/21122211/iowa-caucus-smartphone-app-disaster-explained

Week 3		
Mon, Apr 13	Caucuses & Primaries II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prokop, Andrew and Christina Animashaun, “The strange and crucially important order of the Democratic primary states, explained.” March 16, 2020. https://www.vox.com/2020/1/27/20686864/democratic-primary-calendar-2020-iowa-super-tuesday Skelley, Geoffrey, “We Re-Ordered The Entire Democratic Primary Calendar To Better Represent The Party’s Voters.” March 7, 2019. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-if-early-democratic-primary-states-looked-more-like-the-party/
Wed, Apr 15	The Presidential Election I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DeSilver, Drew. 2016. “Trump’s victory another example of how Electoral College wins are bigger than popular vote ones.” <i>Pew Research Center</i>. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/12/20/why-electoral-college-landslides-are-easier-to-win-than-popular-vote-ones/ Weigel, David. 2016. “How do other countries elect presidents without an electoral college? Pretty easily.” <i>The Washington Post</i>. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/12/20/how-do-other-countries-elect-presidents-without-an-electoral-college-pretty-easily/ (also on Canvas if paywalled) Inversions in US presidential elections, 1836-2016, https://voxeu.org/article/inversions-us-presidential-elections-1836-2016
Week 4		
Mon, Apr 20	The Presidential Election II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Erikson, Robert S. 2009. “The American Voter and the Economy, 2008.” <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 42(3): 467-471. Canvas: selection from Vavreck, Lynn. 2009. <i>The Message Matters</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wed, Apr 22	Presidential Forecasting I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas: Abramowitz, Alan I. 2008. "Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election with the Time-For-Change Model," <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i>. • Abramowitz, Alan I., "Forecasting the 2016 Presidential Election: Will Time for Change Mean Time for Trump?" August 11, 2016. http://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/forecasting-the-2016-presidential-election-will-time-for-change-mean-time-for-trump/ • Abramowitz, Alan I., "Assessing Trump's Chances: Forecasting the 2020 Presidential Election." April 4, 2019. http://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/assessing-trumps-chances-forecasting-the-2020-presidential-election/
Week 5		
Mon, Apr 27	Presidential Forecasting II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silver, Nate. "When We Say 70 percent, It Really Means 70 Percent." https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/when-we-say-70-percent-it-really-means-70-percent/ • EXPLORE: Silver, Nate. A User's Guide To FiveThirtyEight's 2016 General Election Forecast. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/a-users-guide-to-fivethirtyeights-2016-general-election-forecast/ • EXPLORE: 538 general election forecast: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-election-forecast/
Web, Apr 29	The 2016 & 2020 Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas: Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. "The 2016 U.S. Election: How Trump Lost and Won." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 28, no. 2 (2017): 34-44. • Edsall, Thomas B. "Opinion: The Deepening 'Racialization' of American Politics." February 27, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/opinion/trump-obama-race.html (also on Canvas if paywalled) • Peters, Jeremy, Annie Karni, and Maggie Haberman. "Trump Sets the 2020 Tone: Like 2016, Only This Time 'the Squad' Is Here." July 16, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/16/us/politics/trump-election-squad.html (also on Canvas if paywalled)

Part II. The Presidency & Presidential Powers

Week 6		
Mon, May 4	Presidential Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article II of the U.S. Constitution: https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/article/article-ii Canvas: Rohde, David W. & John G. Greer. 2014. "The President and Congressional Parties in an Era of Polarization." In George C. Edwards III & William G. Howell eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2016.
Wed, May 6	Checking the President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howell, chapter 1 & chapter 2 (you can skip pages 31-52) Azari, Julia. "Trump Came in as a Weak President, He's Made Himself Weaker." August 1, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-weak-president/
Week 7		
Mon, May 11	The President & Congress I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Herrnson, Paul S., Irwin L. Morris, and John McTague. 2011. "The Impact of Presidential Campaigning for Congress on Presidential Support in the U.S. House of Representatives." <i>Legislative Studies Quarterly</i> 36(1): 99-122.
Wed, May 13	The President & Congress II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howell, chapter 5
Week 8		
Mon, May 18	The President & the Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howell, chapter 6
Wed, May 20	Presidential Revocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Thrower, Sharece. 2017. "To Revoke or Not Revoke: The Political Determinants of Executive Order Longevity." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. Conroy, Meredith. "Trump Hasn't Rolled Back Obama's Executive Orders (So Far)." February 8, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-hasnt-rolled-back-obamas-executive-orders-so-far/

Week 9		
Mon, May 25	The President & the Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Canes-Wrone, Brandice and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2004. "The Conditional Nature of Presidential Responsiveness to Public Opinion." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. 48(4): 690-706.
Wed, May 27	The President & the Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Cohen, Jeffrey. 2004. "If the News is So Bad, Why Are the Presidential Polls So High?" <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i>. 34(3): 493-515.
Week 10		
Mon, Jun 1	The White House Under Bush & Obama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Pfiffner, James P. 2009. "The Contemporary Presidency: Decision Making in the Bush White House." <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 39(2): 363-384. Canvas: Pfiffner, James P. 2011. "Decision Making in the Obama White House." <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 41(2): 244-262. Goitein, Elizabeth, "The Dangerous Powers Obama Left in Trump's Hands." January 18, 2017. https://fortune.com/2017/01/18/obama-trump-abuse-executive-powers-presidency/
Wed, Jun 3	The Trump White House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Pfiffner, James P. 2018. "The Contemporary Presidency: Organizing the Trump Presidency." <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 48(1): 153-167. Haberman, Maggie. "Book by Former Staff Member Describes a White House 'Out of Control.'" January 20, 2019. www.nytimes.com/2019/01/20/us/politics/book-trump-white-house.html (also on Canvas if paywalled) Rudalevige, Andrew, "As a candidate, Trump criticized Obama's use of executive power. So guess what powers President Trump has been leaning on?" January 20, 2018. www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/01/20/as-a-candidate-trump-criticized-obamas-use-of-executive-power-so-guess-what-powers-president-trump-has-been-leaning-on/ (also on Canvas if paywalled)

NO FINAL EXAM – Analytic Essay due by midnight, June 10th