

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY

Political Science 3308: The Presidency

Lawrence Hall, 303
Class Time: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:00-11:50
Instructor: David Watson
Fall 2014

Contact Information

David Watson
Office: Lawrence Hall, room 203
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:15-5, and by appointment
Office Phone: 837-8742
Email: dwatson@sulross.edu

Course Description:

Presidents are often viewed as having limitless powers in the United States, and their influence is often considered to be unchanged from the origins of the executive branch. However, the roles and powers of the president have changed over time. Further, the additional branches of government, political parties and interest groups impose limits on presidential power. The conditions presidents operate in and the historical nature of the office will be analyzed during this course.

During this course we will examine the presidency throughout history and will identify the transformation of the office, both in terms of perception of the office and the power that the executive wields. We will analyze the details of the executive office described in the Constitution, as well as the factors that have led to deviations from the original framework. We will also focus on current and past presidents in relation to their influence in foreign and domestic policy and the processes by which presidents come to power.

Format: The size of the class permits me to forgo a pure lecture format. Instead, we will engage in a more collaborative environment. This means that student participation is a must in this class.

Expectations

The duty of the instructor for this course is to be prepared and on time for the lectures. In turn, the students' duty is to be on time and prepared for the lectures as well. "Prepared" means having completed the assigned reading prior to the lecture. This course will rely heavily on discussion between instructor and students; so advanced reading by the students will facilitate an active classroom environment. Keeping up with the readings is essential in order to actively participate in class and to help the instructor monitor the students' understanding of the material before the exams, rather than on exam days. Please turn off cell phones during class. Seriously.

Grading:

Participation: to be assessed based on the following criteria:

- 10% Daily attendance-participation
- 20% Debates
- 10% Chapter Summary/Presentation
- 10% Essays

Exams:

50% Midterms 1 and 2: an exam will be at near the midpoint and end of the semester. Expect essay questions on each. Exam 1 will cover all of the material up to the test date and exam 2 everything else. In other words exam 2 will not be comprehensive.

Debates:

Another component of your grade will be based on a series of debates regarding the American presidency. This will take place in the second half of the semester, once the foundation has been established. The debates will last approximately 25 minutes and each side will have a chance to respond to the arguments presented by the other side. You will have a partner during the debate and each person should contribute equally during the debate. You will write your own response memo, 3-4 pages, describing the positions you intend to present in class while detailing the basis for your arguments. The response memo will be worth 10% of your grade, and your performance during the debate is worth an additional 10%. The debate memo is due at the beginning of class on the day you debate. Students may turn in the debate memo early if they choose.

The students will be placed into groups of 2 and asked to select a pro/con from the following list:

1. Political parties should nominate candidates for the presidency through a national primary.
2. The president should be elected directly by the people.
3. A president's cabinet members should have a larger role in the formation of policy.
4. Psychological character is a powerful predictor of presidential competence.
5. The Media are too hard on Presidents.
6. Presidents have usurped the war power that rightfully belongs to Congress.
7. The framers of the constitution would approve of the modern presidency.

Chapter Summary:

During the 3rd week of class, each student will be assigned a chapter with the Pika and Maltese text to summarize and present to the class. The written summary should be 2-3 pages in length and will be worth half of the grade, while the presentation should last approximately 10 minutes and be worth the other half.

Essays:

From time to time, a Presidential topic will come up that is so timely, or conducive to discussion, that I will assign the class to write an analytical essay on the topic. This will generally be done on Fridays, with the essays due the following Monday. The essays, when assigned, should not

exceed three pages (double-spaced) in length. These cannot be made up, so be sure to turn them in on the Monday after they have been assigned.

Grade Scale: A: 100-89 B: 88-79 C: 78-69 D: 68-59 F: 58-0

Class Goals: To gain a broad understanding of the different explanations of political participation in the United States, how these arguments compliment/overlap with one another, and the current state of academic research. Also, the students should learn to comprehend the basic tenants of an empirical research paper.

Disability Policy: It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such an accommodation because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact Joyce Sesters (University Center 211), the coordinator for program accessibility 837-8178.

Upon Completion of this course:

1. Students will be able to describe the powers of the executive branch in the United States laid forth in the US Constitution and federalist papers.
Method of Assessment: Essay responses and Midterm Examination
2. Students will be able to describe the processes by which the US president is nominated and elected.
Method of Assessment: Essay responses and Midterm Examination
3. Students will be able to describe how presidents utilize their position, power and resources to influence foreign and domestic policy outcomes.
Method of Assessment: Midterm and Final Examination
4. Students will be able to describe how the executive branch interacts with the legislative and judicial branches of government.
Method of Assessment: Final Examination
5. Students will analyze the dynamics and effectiveness of presidential campaigns.
Method of Assessment: Final Examination
6. Students will examine how the media and public opinion influence presidential competency.
Method of Assessment: Debates and Final Examination
7. Students will be able to discuss the criteria for evaluating presidential greatness.
Method of Assessment: Essay responses and Midterm Examination
8. Students will examine the transformation of the US presidency through a historical perspective.
Method of Assessment: Midterm and Final Examination

Drop/Withdrawal Policy: November 16th is the last day to drop a course with a “W”. Once the deadline to withdrawal has passed, the student receives an ‘F’ for the course if he/she still chooses to withdraw. Thus, it is imperative for students to be cognizant of these dates to avoid earning an ‘F’ for the course.

Important Dates: September 21st is the last day to drop a course and receive a refund (Does not

apply to students who drop below zero hours).

Required Materials: There is one book that is required for this course. It is available at the campus bookstore, or online.

***Pika, Joseph and John Anthony Maltese, The Politics of the Presidency. Revised 7th edition. CQ Press, 2010.**

***All other reading assignments will be made available through blackboard.**

Class Outline:

The following represents a tentative class schedule.

Date	Topic	Readings
25-Aug	Course Overview	
27-Aug	Origins of the Presidency	*Federalist Papers #69 and 70 (articles 1 and 2)
29-Aug	The Presidency and the Constitution	*Article II of Constitution (article 3)
3-Sep	The Presidency in Comparative Perspective	*Pika and Maltese, Chapters 1 and 2
5-Sep	Approaches and the Nominating Process	
8-Sep	The Two Presidencies	*Article 4
10-Sep	Presidents and Bureaucracy	*Pika and Maltese, Chapter 6
12-Sep	Presidents and Interest Groups	**Chapter Presentations ***12 th Class Day
15-Sep	Presidents and Domestic Policy	*Pika and Maltese, Chapter 8
17-Sep	The President and the Legislative Branch	*Pika and Maltese, Chapter 5
19-Sep	The President and Divided Government	Article 5
22-Sep	The President and the Judiciary	*Pika and Maltese, Chapter 7
24-Sep	Review	
26-Sep	Test I	
29-Sep	Presidential Campaigning	
1-Oct	Campaigning (cont.)	
3-Oct	The Presidency and the Parties	*Article 6
6-Oct	Going Public	
8-Oct	The President and the Economy	*Pika and Maltese, Chapter 9
10-Oct	Economy (cont.)	Article 7
13-Oct	The President and the Budget	

15-Oct	Executive Orders	Article 8
17-Oct	Evaluating the Modern President	
19-Oct	Debates	
22-Oct	Debates	
24-Oct	Debates	
26-Oct	Review	
29-Oct	Test II	
31-Oct	The President and National Security	*Pika and Maltese, Chapter 10
3-Nov	The Cost/Benefit of War	
5-Nov	Commander in Chief/Foreign Policy	Article 9
7-Nov	Foreign Policy (cont.)	
10-Nov	The President and the media	*Pike and Maltese, Chapter 3
12-Nov	The President and the media (cont.)	Article 10
14-Nov	Political Strategy	Article 11 ***Last day to drop with a "W"
17-Nov	Strategy (cont.)	Article 12
19-Nov	Bureaucratic compliance	Article 13
21-Nov	Contemporary Issues, Conventions	
24-Nov	Contemporary Issues/Review	
1-Dec	Changes in the Presidency	
3-Dec	Review	

Final Exam: (May 10th at 10:15 AM in the same classroom)