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Office Hours:
MW 3:00-4:30
T Th 1:00-2:00
and by appt.

Political Science 208 – The American Presidency

Alexander Hamilton's then-controversial assertion in Federalist #70 that "energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government" has become the conventional wisdom of our time. No other individual in our political system remotely approaches the powers accorded the American president.

In studying this unique and powerful institution, this class has six goals: (1) an understanding of the "institutional basics" of the presidency, (2) an examination of the Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian and progressive presidencies, chronicled by Raymond Tatalovich and Steven Schier, (3) an appreciation of the historical presidency as explained by Stephen Skowronek, (4) a comprehension of the powers and limits of the political presidency as analyzed by Richard Neustadt and William Howell, (5) an assessment of the psychological presidency as provided by Steven Rubenzer and Thomas Faschingbauer and (6) an exploration of presidential power and authority in the Obama presidency.

This class is owned by its students, and ownership has its share of obligations. You will set the discussion agenda through your discharge of these obligations. Beginning on April 14, class members will write a brief "critical analysis" of the readings for class sessions, responding to the questions about the assignments in the attached questionnaire for analyzing the logic of an assignment. I present at the end of the syllabus the first critical analysis on chapters from the Tatalovich and Engeman book, to show you how to do it. Over the term, each of you will write one critical analysis, worth 60 points toward your final grade.

In addition to completing a critical analysis, all students will write discussion questions or critical observations about the day's readings that constitute the agenda for each day's class. You will be organized into two "question writing groups." Each group will write discussion questions for about one-half of our class sessions, or about once a week. On your assigned days, you will need to email me at least three discussion questions or critical observations on the daily assignments. Each one of these must be longer than a sentence but no longer than a paragraph in length.

Your questions or observations must be submitted to me (via in-text e-mail – no attachments) by 4:30 PM Monday for Tuesday classes and 8:00 AM Thursdays for Thursday classes. This routine begins on April 4, when we consider institutional basics. Part of each class will involve discussion groups at which one group member will record group conclusions and post – within 24 hours of the end of class -- a brief report about them on our course's Moodle page. I will respond to the group reports with a Moodle posting once student reports have been posted.

We will begin most class sessions with a media article or poll analysis provided by a member of the class, preferably focusing on the current presidency. Each of you will contribute these over the course of the term. Please email your article or analysis to me by 8:00 AM on class day. Your discussion questions, media articles and actual class participation constitute 45 points of your overall grade.

You will write two papers, one on a debate topic and one final paper regarding our presidential power and authority project, explained later in the syllabus. The debate paper counts for 75 points and the final power and authority paper for 90 points.

300 total points are awarded for class work. 270 points (90%) earns an "A," 240 points (80%) a "B," 210 points (70%) a "C," and 180 points (60%) a "D."

Debate paper	25% (75 points)
Critical analysis of class reading	20% (60 points)
Class participation	15% (45 points)
Final group reports	10% (30 points)
Final paper	30% (90 points)
TOTAL	300 points

Course readings

The following course books are required reading. They are available in the bookstore and on closed reserve. BE SURE to bring your copy of any book assigned for a particular day to class that day. If using an e-reserve reading, also BE SURE to bring it to class for use.

- Joseph Pika and John Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency* (revised 8th edition, 2014)
- Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (1997)
- Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (1990)
- Steven Rubenzer and Thomas Faschingbauer, *Personality, Character and Leadership in the White House* (2004)
- Chuck Todd, *The Stranger: Barack Obama in the White House* (2014) (recommended)

Class Schedule

Mar 31 Introduction to the class and "Truman" video

April 2 Institutional Basics I

Pika, chs. 1, 6, 10; Michael Nelson, "Evaluating the Presidency" (on e-reserve) Media article day.

Debate team preferences MONDAY, APRIL 6 via email by 8 AM to sschier

April 7 Institutional Basics II

Pika, chs. 3, 5, 7 Media article day.

April 9 The Presidency and Political Science

Tatalovich and Schier, introduction, chs. 2, 4, conclusion (on e-reserve)

April 14 Presidential Selection

Pika, ch. 2; Barbara Norrander, "Fighting Off Challengers: The 2012 Nomination of Mitt Romney," Steven E. Schier and Janet Box-Steffensmeier, "The General Election Campaign," (both on e-reserve). Critical analysis and media article day.

April 16 Obama and the Progressive Presidency – Obama video

Tatalovich and Schier, ch. 10 (on e-reserve)

Andrea Katz, "The Progressive Presidency and the Shaping of the Modern Executive" (on e-reserve)

After viewing the video, organize yourselves into discussion groups to address the three discussion questions at the end of this syllabus. One group member should post a discussion group report within 24 hours of the end of class, to which I will respond.

April 21 Debating the Progressive Presidency

Eric Alterman, "Kabuki Democracy: Why a Progressive Presidency is Impossible for Now" (on e-reserve), Steven Hayward, THE POLITICALLY INCORRECT GUIDE TO THE PRESIDENTS, ch. 1, 3, 5 and 19 (on e-reserve; this book is also on closed reserve for the course)

April 23 The Historical Presidency I

Skowronek, Preface, pp. 1-85, 110-128 Critical analysis and media article day.

April 28 The Historical Presidency II

Skowronek, pp. 129-154, 177-285 Critical analysis and media article day.

Progressive presidency debate papers due at class today.

April 30 The Historical Presidency III

Skowronek, pp. 287-406 Critical analysis and media article day.

May 5 The Historical Presidency IV

Skowronek, pp. 407-464; Skowronek, "The Imperial Presidency Thesis Revisited" (on e-reserve); Daniel Cook and Andrew Polsky, "Political Time Reconsidered" (on e-reserve); Steven Schier, "The Political Authority Problem and the Presidential Power Trap" (on e-reserve)
Critical analysis and media article day.

May 7 The Political Presidency I

Neustadt, Prefaces, pp. 3-10, 29-90, 128-151. Critical analysis and media article day.

Obama Group Report preferences due FRIDAY, MAY 8 by 8 AM via email to sschier

May 12 The Political Presidency II

Neustadt, 167-318 Critical analysis and media article day.

May 14 Power Without Persuasion I

Howell, chs. 1, 5 (on e-reserve); Steele, Galen. "The Duration of Policy Adopted through Presidential Executive Orders," Fall 2008 (on e-reserve) Critical analysis and media article day.

May 19 Power Without Persuasion II

Howell, chs. 6, 7 (on e-reserve) Critical analysis and media article day.

May 21 Debating Presidential Power

Charles O. Jones, "Richard E. Neustadt: Public Servant as Scholar" (on e-reserve)

Richard W. Waterman, "Assessing the Unilateral Presidency" (on e-reserve)

Michael Nelson, "Neustadt's 'Presidential Power' at 50" (on e-reserve)

May 26 The Psychological Presidency I

Rubenzer and Faschingbauer, 3-137, 311-328 Critical analysis and media article day.

May 28 The Psychological Presidency II

Rubenzer and Faschingbauer, 174-184, 206-299, 309-310 Critical analysis and media article day.

Neustadt debate papers due at class today.

June 2 Group Reports: Presidential Power and Authority in Public Leadership, Foreign Policy and Domestic Policy

June 9 FINAL PAPERS DUE – hard copies delivered to 414 Willis by noon

Possible Media Article Sources

Realclearpolitics.com

Washingtonpost.com

Nytimes.com

Wallstreetjournal.com

Pew Research Center -- pewresearch.org

Gallup Surveys -- gallup.com

Public Policy Polling -- publicpolicypolling.com

Brookings Institution Governance Studies -- brookings.edu/about/programs/governance

American Enterprise Institute -- aei.org

The Monkey Cage political science blog -- washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/

Ruy Teixeira -- americanprogress.org/about/staff/teixeira-ruy/bio/

Jay Cost -- weeklystandard.com/author/jay-cost

William Galston -- brookings.edu/experts/galstonw

Sean Trende -- realclearpolitics.com/authors/sean_trende/

Class Debates

Each member of the class will serve on one debate team. The debate topics, the progressive presidency on April 21 and presidential power on May 21, invite contrasting opinions. In the April debate, one team will argue for the progressive presidency and another against it. In May, one team will support Neustadt's conceptions of presidential power and the other team will critique that approach and present rival approaches. Students need to mail me their debate team preferences in rank order by 8 AM MONDAY APRIL 6. You need to rank order four preferences: pro progressive presidency, anti progressive presidency, pro Neustadt and anti Neustadt.

Course readings will supply much substance for the debate, but debaters are encouraged to bring additional evidence and arguments to the debate beyond what they encounter in course readings.

Each debate team will have 45 minutes to explain and defend its position and to note the weaknesses of the rival team's position. For the first 20 minutes of its time, each group will defend its position and argue against its critics. The opposing group will then ask questions of the presenting group for the remaining 20-25 minutes. The affirmative side will begin each debate.

Each group may develop a handout, no longer than two sides of an 8 ½ by 11 inch sheet of paper for distribution to the class during your presentation. These handouts are DUE at my office by 8 AM on the morning of your presentations – preferably via email (no attachments). On the day of your presentation, each member of each group must SEND ME (via email, no attachments) an explanation of her/his role in the group activities and of the efforts of other members of the group.

As a debate team or audience member, you have the option of writing a paper in response to the debate. Each student must write one debate paper, which are due one week after each debate. Your paper should note the strong and weak arguments both for and against either Neustadt or the progressive presidency. What topics and arguments raised in the debate proved particularly persuasive? Why? Be sure to support your conclusions with references from class readings – the analyses we have read can help you sort out the more important aspects of the debate. Be certain to state your basic thesis at the outset and then present a thorough justification for that thesis. Your paper should be 5-7 pages in text length, printed with standard margins, double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font, and should include parenthetical references (author, page) in the text with a list of complete citations for those references at the rear of the paper.

Presidential Power and Authority Group Reports

This final project involves all class members in applying the concepts of presidential authority (from Skowronek) and presidential power (from Neustadt and Howell) to the operation of the current presidency. How is presidential power and authority evident in current public leadership, foreign and domestic policymaking? Each group should define how Obama is employing power in the area of your topic. Each group should also assess Obama's presidential authority and how it affects his behavior in the area of your topic. You will want to look at current media sources (see the list in this syllabus) for evidence to support your conclusions about this. Each student will then write a final paper.

Final paper question: How is presidential power and authority manifested in the behavior of the current president regarding one of the following areas: public leadership, foreign policymaking or domestic policymaking? Illustrate with examples and with evidence from class readings and other scholarly and journalistic sources. The final paper should be 6-8 pages in text length, printed with standard margins, double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font, and should include parenthetical references (author, page) in the text with a list of complete citations for those references at the rear of the paper.

Template for Analyzing the Logic of an Assignment

- 1) The most important **information** in this assignment is _____.
(Figure out the facts, experiences, data the author is using to support her/his conclusions.)
- 2) The main **inferences**/conclusions in this assignment are _____.
(Identify the key conclusions the author comes to and presents in the assignment.)
- 3) The key **concept**(s) we need to understand in this assignment is (are) _____.
By these concepts the author means _____.
(Figure out the most important ideas you would have to understand in order to understand the author's line of reasoning.)
- 4) The main **assumption**(s) underlying the author's thinking is (are) _____.
(Figure out what the author is taking for granted [that might be questioned].)
- 5) a) If we take this line of reasoning seriously, the **implications** are _____.
(What consequences are likely to follow if people take the author's line of reasoning seriously?)
b) If we fail to take this line of reasoning seriously, the implications are _____.
(What consequences are likely to follow if people ignore the author's reasoning?)

The Tatalovich-Schier Argument in their Introduction and Chapters 2, 4 and Conclusion

INFORMATION: The most important information in this assignment comes in the authors' explanation of Hamiltonian (16-23), Jeffersonian (23-30) and progressive (78-81) approaches to the presidency. Hamilton believed in prerogative powers, force of presidential personality and rhetorical leadership, regime-building through presidential action, strong presidential leadership in foreign affairs, active presidential engagement in the legislative process and an executive branch well-organized to serve presidential leadership. Jefferson, in contrast, promoted a presidency based on strongly limited prerogative power, presidential action rooted mainly in partisanship, constrained presidential leadership reflecting historical conditions, limited presidential power in foreign and domestic affairs, presidential passivity toward the legislative process, and a small executive branch that does not aggrandize presidential power. The progressives preferred a political more than prerogative source of presidential power, presidential mobilization of partisans and public opinion, regime building through the president as an agent of social progress, presidential emphasis on domestic over foreign policy, strong presidential leadership of the legislature and a powerful presidential office.

INFERENCES: The authors infer that early American constitutional thought and development resulted from the battle between Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian conceptions of the presidency (30-32), and that by the mid-19th century, Jeffersonian principles held more sway. Progressives issued a modernizing critique of Jeffersonian principles that also rejected Hamiltonian constitutionalism (61-63).

CONCEPTS: Key concepts discussed in these chapters include prerogatives (xix), partisanship (xx), presidential powers (20-21), implied powers (21), Hamilton's "executive energy" (17-19), living or organic constitution (63,66), Theodore Roosevelt's stewardship theory of the presidency (72-73), presidential leadership (230-231), six concluding questions (293-303).

ASSUMPTIONS: The authors assume that early constitutional thought on the presidency largely fits within the debate between Hamilton and Jefferson. A third interpretation of presidential powers – that of the progressives – arose in response to their perception of the failure of the Jeffersonian presidency and their view that national institutions had to be reconfigured in response to the social and economic changes of an industrializing America. The authors also assume an organic growth of the debate over the presidency by arranging their account chronologically.

IMPLICATIONS IF TAKEN SERIOUSLY: We should understand the presidency in terms of the Hamilton-Jefferson-progressive debate about executive power and view much subsequent writing and analysis of that institution through this prism. Progressives reacted against the Jeffersonian presidency but also discounted the Hamiltonian presidency, arguing that a presidentially-led, much more expansive national government was necessary.

IMPLICATIONS IF NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY: The Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian and progressive approaches are all dated – normatively questionable and empirically dubious – for understanding the contemporary presidency. The presidency is now less restrained than either Jefferson or Hamilton desired, yet more constrained than the progressives wished. Recent scholarship mentioned in the book's conclusion presents this picture of a presidency enjoying much power but also facing considerable constraints.

April 16 Discussion Questions

What are the best and worst traits of the Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian and progressive presidencies?

To what extent is the Obama presidency a Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian or progressive presidency? Is it a mix? If so, describe the mix.

Which type of presidency – Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian or progressive – is best suited for presidential governance in the 21st century? Is one type the best or is some sort of mix of these types best for governance? If a "mix" is best, define its components.