

GOVERNMENT S-1540:
The American Presidency

Summer 2017

Instructor: Jon Rogowski
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Course time: Mon/Wed, 12:00pm-3:00pm

Location: CGIS South S020

Course description.

The president is the single most powerful and visible individual in the American political system. It has not always been this way. Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, British academic Lord James Bryce dedicated an entire chapter to explaining why, as he saw it, “Great Men Are Not Chosen President” but instead tended to be so ordinary and commonplace. Fifty years later, Richard Neustadt, aide to President Harry Truman and subsequent academic, wrote that the Constitution reduces presidents to “mere clerks.” Today, presidential power is as salient as it has ever been in our country’s history. Rarely does a day pass without finding an editorial in a major U.S. newspaper that laments the concentration of power in the presidency. And after one of the most divisive elections the U.S. has experienced, understanding the power of – and, just as importantly, the constraints on – the individual who inhabits the White House is a critical task for our contemporary politics.

This course surveys the politics of presidential power in a system where power is separated between but also *shared by* adjoining branches of government. At the macro level, increased presidential power would be expected to result in diminished power and influence for other political institutions, including Congress and the courts. What powers *do* presidents have? For what aims do presidents use them? When do presidents succeed and when do they fail? What are the implications of presidential power for policy outcomes and the American political system? Through answering these questions, the course provides a deeper understanding of the factors that shape presidential power, its exercise, and the nature of the American system of government.

Course meetings.

The course meets twice per week. Attendance at all class meetings is a natural expectation of the course and students are responsible for all assigned readings. All readings should be completed **prior** to that course meetings. Course meetings will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and small group activities, and students are expected to be active participants in each. All readings not contained in the textbook can be obtained via Canvas unless noted otherwise.

Course requirements.

Your evaluation for the course will be based on the following components:

Short response essays **20%**

In weeks 2, 3, and 4, students should submit a short response to articles from major news sources on some aspect of contemporary American politics. In 500 to 1,000 words, students should use the material from the course to engage the claims made in the articles. Based on our class discussions and readings, do you believe the author is right or wrong? What has the author missed, overlooked, or misunderstood? What have the authors of our readings missed, overlooked, or misunderstood? The goal for these assignments is to use and apply the material from the course to understand real-world politics. These assignments should be posted to the Discussions section of Canvas by 5PM on Friday, June 30; Friday, July 7; and Friday, July 14.

Research paper **30%**

It is likely our course will raise more questions for you than it will answer – and this is a good thing! Using the tools of social science inquiry, students should conduct an original research project on an empirically testable research question related to the American presidency.

► **Undergraduate credit:** Students may work in groups of up to five and should investigate one of the topics circulated by the instructor.

► **Graduate credit:** Students should identify a testable research question and prepare a solo-authored paper on a topic approved by the instructor.

The papers should be between 12 and 18 pages (double-spaced) which identify the research question; describe why the question is important; propose and defend a hypothesis related to the question based on your understanding of the presidency; and present data that test the hypothesis. Students are encouraged to consult closely with the instructor in working on this project. Papers should be submitted by email to the instructor (rogowski@fas.harvard.edu) by 5PM on Friday, July 28.

Final exam **30%**

Monday, July 31, 12:00PM.

Discussion Leader/Participation **20%**

Each student should prepare a short (5-10 minute) presentation of the readings that supplement the textbooks. These presentations should not be summaries of the readings, but instead should identify the main themes and points of agreement and disagreement between them. The presentations should interrogate how well the readings explain observed political phenomena. Finally, the discussion should identify a set of questions to motivate our conversation for the class. Discussion assignments will be made in class on June 21.

Late assignments.

Late assignments are extremely discouraged and will be heavily penalized without a note from a doctor or resident dean. Written assignments will be penalized two-thirds of a letter grade (e.g., from B+ to B-) for every day late. Students will be unable to make up the final exam without documentation from a doctor or university official.

Academic integrity.

You are responsible for understanding Harvard Summer School policies on academic integrity (<http://www.summer.harvard.edu/policies/student-responsibilities>) and how to use sources responsibly. Not knowing the rules, misunderstanding the rules, running out of time, submitting the wrong draft, or being overwhelmed with multiple demands are not acceptable excuses. To support your learning about academic citation rules, please visit the Resources to Support Academic Integrity (<http://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/resources-support-academic-integrity>) where you will find links to the Harvard Guide to Using Sources and two free online 15-minute tutorials to test your knowledge of academic citation policy. The tutorials are anonymous open-learning tools.

Accessibility.

The Summer School is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Accessibility Office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities. Please visit <http://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/accessibility-services> for more information. Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessibility Office in the Division of Continuing Education and speak with the professor by the end of the first week of the term.

Course schedule and assigned readings.

The following texts should be purchased:

Howell, William G. 2017. *An American Presidency: Institutional Foundations of Executive Politics*. Pearson. **[Howell]**

Milkis, Sidney M., and Michael Nelson. 2016. *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2014*. CQ Press. **[Milkis & Nelson]**

All other readings can be found on Canvas unless noted otherwise. The instructor reserves the right to modify the reading list and schedule if necessary given the pace of the course and significant current events.

Monday, June 19 Introduction; Approaches to Studying the American Presidency;
Constitutional Foundations

- Howell, Introduction and chapter 1.
- Milkis & Nelson, chapters 1 and 2.
- *Federalist Papers* #47 and 70.
- [James Fallows, "Obama, Explained," The Atlantic, March 2012.](#)

Wednesday, June 21 Historical Evolution of the Presidency I

- Milkis & Nelson, pp. 72-93; 104-115; 131-145; 165-179; chapter 7.

Monday, June 26 Historical Evolution of the Presidency II

- Howell, chapter 2.
- Milkis & Nelson, chapters 8, 10.

Wednesday, June 28 Presidential Power and the Modern Presidency

- Howell, chapter 3; pp. 198-211.
- Richard Neustadt. 1960. *Presidential Power*, chapters 1-3.
- William Howell. 2013. *Thinking about the Presidency*, chapters 1-3.

[2 discussion leaders]

Monday, July 3 Electing the President

- Howell, chapters 4 and 5.
- Jonathan Rauch. ["How American Politics Went Insane."](#) The Atlantic, July/August 2016.
- Ryan Lizza. ["Battle Plans: How Obama Won."](#) *The New Yorker*, November 17, 2008.
- Drew Desilver, ["Trump's victory another example of how Electoral College victories are bigger than popular vote ones."](#) Pew Research Center, December 20, 2016.

[1-2 discussion leaders]

Wednesday, July 5 Bargaining with Congress: Presidential Veto Powers

- Howell, pp. 182-197
- *Federalist Paper* #73, "The Provision for the Support of the Executive, and the Veto Power."
- Charles Cameron. 2000. *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*, chapters 1, 2, and 4.

- Charles Cameron. 2009. “The Presidential Veto.” In *Oxford Handbook of the Presidency*, ed. George C. Edwards III and William G. Howell.

[1-2 discussion leaders]

Monday, July 10

Acting Alone: Unilateral Powers

- Howell, chapter 8.
- Dino P. Christenson and Doug Kriner. 2015. “Political Constraints on Unilateral Executive Action.” *Case Western Reserve Law Review*.
- Adam Liptak. [“Focus of hearings quickly turns to limits of presidential power.”](#) January 10, 2006, *New York Times*.
- Lanhee Chen. [“Undoing the Unilateral Presidency.”](#) August 31, 2015, *Wall Street Journal*.

[2 discussion leaders]

Wednesday, July 12

Managing the Bureaucracy

- Howell, chapter 9.
- Sanford Gordon. 2011. “Politicizing Agency Spending Authority: Lessons from a Bush-era Scandal.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Elena Kagan. 2001. “Presidential Administration.” *Harvard Law Review*.
- Joshua B. Kennedy. 2015. ““Do This! Do That! and Nothing Will Happen:” Executive Orders and Bureaucratic Responsiveness.” *American Politics Research*.

[3 discussion leaders]

Monday, July 17

The President and the Judiciary

- Howell, chapter 10.
- Jon C. Rogowski and Andrew R. Stone, [“How Politicized Judicial Nominations Affect Attitudes toward Courts.”](#)
- Adam Liptak. January 23, 2017. [“Why Obama Struggled at Court, and Trump May Strain to Do Better.”](#) *New York Times*.
- Adam Liptak. [“What the Trump Presidency Means for the Supreme Court.”](#) November 9, 2016, *New York Times*.
- Jeffrey Toobin. [“The Supreme Court After Scalia.”](#) October 3, 2016, *New Yorker*.
- Alicia Parlapiano and Margot Sanger-Katz. [“A Supreme Court with Merrick Garland would be the Most Liberal in Decades.”](#) March 16, 2016, *New York Times*.

[2-3 discussion leaders]

Wednesday, July 19

The Two Presidencies: Domestic Policy and Foreign Affairs

- Howell, chapters 12, 13, and 15.

- 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." *Journal of Politics*.
[1 discussion leader]

Monday, July 24 The President and the Public

- Howell, chapter 11.
- Samuel Kernell. 2006. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*, chapters 1-2.
[1 discussion leader]

Wednesday, July 26 The Now and Future Presidency

- Chris Edelson. ["President Donald Trump versus the U.S. Constitution."](#) May 5, 2016, *TIME*.
- William G. Howell and Terry M. Moe. 2016. *Relic: How Our Constitution Undermines Effective Governance – And Why We Need a More Powerful Presidency*. Chapters 3 and 4.
- Charles Cameron. 2002. "Studying the Polarized Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.
[2 discussion leaders]

Monday, July 31 FINAL EXAM