

**GOVT 2464**

## **Presidency and the Executive Branch**

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 3pm-4pm.

Harvard University

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Tuesdays, 10:07am–12:00pm.

### **Course Description and Objectives**

The president is the single most powerful and visible individual in the American political system, and the expansion of the executive branch over the last 125 years is one of the most dramatic developments in American political history. Understanding the power of and the constraints on the individual who inhabits the White House and oversees the executive branch is a critical task for explaining our contemporary politics.

The primary goal of the course is to help graduate students develop active research agendas in the study of American political institutions. It aims to accomplish this goal in the following ways. First, the readings and discussion will familiarize students with the major theoretical perspectives that animate scholarship on the presidency and the executive branch. Second, we will evaluate dominant empirical approaches to the study of the presidency and the executive branch. By doing so, we seek to identify opportunities for theoretical innovation and refinement, explore new and/or alternative methodologies for studying the presidency, and develop research agendas that advance our substantive knowledge of American government and/or political institutions. While the

The course also aims to support graduate students' development as researchers and scholars. To do so, we will develop skills in identifying and framing research questions, writing literature reviews, and effective scholarly writing. We will also discuss various professional considerations, including navigating the peer review process as an author and providing publication recommendations as a journal reviewer.

The course will be useful for graduate students preparing for preliminary exams. Course material may support students' efforts in preparing for a major or minor exam in American politics; it may also provide the basis for a focus field exam. The course will also be useful to more advanced graduate students with research interests in American politics and presidential systems outside the United States, or who are interested in political institutions and political economy more generally.

## Course Meetings

The course meets once per week on Tuesday mornings. 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 meeting and students are expected to be active participants in each.

## Course Requirements

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

**Original research paper: 40%.** Due Friday, May 11. Specific requirements and benchmarks will be discussed in class.

**Short writing assignments: 40%.** Students will prepare four short writing assignments during the first part of the course. These assignments include:

- *Evolution in presidency research*, due February 8. Starting with the year 1950, identify and read the first article in the *American Political Science Review* that investigates a research question on the presidency. Do the same for each decade through the 2010s. In three to five pages (double-spaced), describe what trends you discern in research on the presidency over the last seven decades. You may focus exclusively on theoretical orientation, methodological developments, or shifts in approach or emphasis, or some combination of these. Be sure to identify each article in an attached references list.
- *State of contemporary research*, due February 20. Starting with the year 2010, identify and read each article on the presidency that has appeared in the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*. In three to five pages (double-spaced), describe the state of contemporary research on the presidency. For instance, you may consider evaluating the nature of the research questions, data and methods, and/or theoretical orientations. Be sure to identify each article in an attached references list.
- *Peer review*, due March 6. On February 20, I will circulate a manuscript of which you should prepare a peer review. In two to three pages (double-spaced), evaluate the paper's strengths, weaknesses, and note specific opportunities for improvement. Prepare an overall evaluation (accept, revise and resubmit, or reject) and note the journal for which your evaluation was prepared.

- *Response to reviews*, due March 20. On March 7, I will send you two to three reviews of a manuscript. Assume you are the author and have received an invitation to revise and resubmit. In three to four pages (double-spaced), prepare a memorandum that responds to the reviewers and explains how you have addressed their criticisms and questions. Your job in this memo is to convince the reviewers that your paper should ultimately be accepted.
- *Reflection*, due April 3. Reflect upon the readings for class and the additional articles you have read for the short writing assignment. In three to four pages (double-spaced), evaluate the following: What are the biggest or most important research questions that are unexplored or underexplored in current research? What question(s) should be prioritized by contemporary presidency researchers? What are the theoretical or methodological challenges for doing so?

**Participation and discussion-leading: 20%.** Each student is responsible for serving as a discussion leader for one of the week's readings. All students are expected to participate actively in each week's class meeting.

## Course readings

The books listed below are required for purchase. Journal articles can be accessed by university subscription. All other readings (book excerpts, typescripts, etc.) can be obtained from the course Canvas site.

David Epstein and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers: A Transaction Cost Politics Approach to Policy Making Under Separate Powers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

William G. Howell. 2003. *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

David E. Lewis. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ.

Richard Neustadt. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York: Free Press.

Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2017. *Rule-Breaking and Political Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

While the following book is not required, it is *strongly* recommended – it very likely will change your approach to writing for the better:

Francis-Noël Thomas and Mark Turner. 2011. *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*. Second Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

## **Course schedule**

### **January 23. Introduction and overview.**

### **January 30. Incentives and Responsibilities.**

David R. Mayhew. 1974. *The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction and chapter 1 (SKIM).

Woodrow Wilson. 1908. *Constitutional Government in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 3.

Richard Neustadt. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York: Free Press. Chapters 1-5.

William G. Howell. 2013. *Thinking about the Presidency*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-3.

### **February 6. Interbranch relations I: Veto powers**

Charles M. Cameron. 2000. *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-6.

Tim Groseclose and Nolan McCarty. 2001. "The Politics of Blame: Bargaining before an Audience." *American Journal of Political Science* 45:100–119.

Hans H.G. Hassell and Samuel Kernell. 2016. "Veto Rhetoric and Legislative Riders." *American Journal of Political Science* 60: 845-859.

### **February 13. Interbranch relations II: The president's legislative success**

Frances E. Lee. 2008. "Dividers, Not Uniters: Presidential Leadership and Senate Partisanship, 1981-2004." *Journal of Politics* 70: 914-928.

Brandice Canes-Wrone and Scott de Marchi. 2002. "Presidential Approval and Legislative Success." *Journal of Politics* 64: 491-509.

Keith Krehbiel. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 2 and 7.

Matthew N. Beckmann. 2010. "Pushing the Agenda: Presidential Leadership in U.S. Lawmaking, 1953–2004." New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-3.

Christopher R. Berry, Barry Burden, and William G. Howell. 2010. "The President and the Distribution of Federal Spending." *American Political Science Review* 104:783-799.

Douglas L. Kriner and Andrew Reeves. 2015. "Presidential Particularism and Divide-the-Dollar Politics." *American Political Science Review* 109:155-171.

### **February 20. Interbranch relations III: Presidents and courts**

Justin Fox and Matthew Stephenson. 2011. "Judicial Review as a Response to Political Posturing." *American Political Science Review* 105: 397-414.

Craig R. Ducat and Robert L. Dudley. 1989. "Federal District Judges and Presidential Power During the Postwar Era." *Journal of Politics* 51: 98-118.

Michael A. Bailey, Brian Kamoie, and Forrest Maltzman. 2005. "Signals from the Tenth Justice: The Political Role of the Solicitor General in Supreme Court Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 72–85.

Richard Anderson, David Cottrell, and Charles Shipan. 2017. "The Power to Appoint: Presidential Nominations and Change on the Supreme Court." Typescript.

### **February 27. The Unilateral Presidency**

William G. Howell. 2003. *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Alexander Bolton and Sharece Thrower. 2016. "Legislative Capacity and Executive Unilateralism." *American Journal of Political Science* 60: 649–663.

Aaron Kaufman and Jon C. Rogowski. 2018. "Interbranch Conflict, Unilateral Action, and the Presidency." Typescript.

Dino P. Christenson and Douglas L. Kriner. 2017. "Mobilizing the Public Against the President: Congress and the Political Costs of Unilateral Action." *American Journal of Political Science* 61: 769–785.

### **March 6. Political control of the bureaucracy I: Delegation, discretion, and autonomy**

David Epstein and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers: A Transaction Cost Politics Approach to Policy Making Under Separate Powers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

John D. Huber and Charles R. Shipan. 2002. *Deliberate Discretion? The Institutional Foundations of Bureaucratic Autonomy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 3, 4, and 6.

Daniel P. Carpenter. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 5.

### **March 20. Political control of the bureaucracy II: Politicization**

Terry M. Moe. 1985. "The Politicized Presidency." In *The New Direction in American Politics*, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Sanford C. Gordon. 2011. "Politicizing Agency Spending Authority: Lessons from a Bush-era Scandal." *American Political Science Review* 105:717-734.

Simon F. Haeder and Susan Webb Yackee. 2015. "Influence and the Administrative Process: Lobbying the U.S. President's Office of Management and Budget." *American Political Science Review* 109: 507-522.

David E. Lewis. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ. Chapters 3, 4, and 6.

Hye Young You. 2017. "Ex Post Lobbying." *Journal of Politics* 79: 1162-1176.

### **March 27. Historical contingency and the presidency**

Stephen Skowronek. 1993. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*.

### **April 3. War, Foreign Policy, and the Two Presidencies**

William G. Howell, Saul P. Jackman, and Jon C. Rogowski. 2013. *The Wartime President: Executive Influence and the Nationalizing Politics of Threat*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-5. Available through HOLLIS.

William G. Howell and Jon C. Pevehouse. 2005. "Presidents, Congress, and the Use of Force." *International Organization* 59: 209-232.

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* 70: 1-16.

### **April 10. Presidents and the Public**

Justin Fox and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2009. "Delegates or Trustees? A Theory of Political Accountability." *Journal of Politics* 71: 1225-1237.

Samuel Kernell. 2006. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. Fourth edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Brandice Canes-Wrone, Michael C. Herron, and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2001. "Leadership and Pandering: An Equilibrium Theory of Executive Policymaking." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 532-550.

Brandice Canes-Wrone and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2004. "The Conditional Nature of Presidential Responsiveness to Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 48: 690-706.

Eric Maskin and Jean Tirole. 2004. "The Politician and the Judge: Accountability in Government." *American Economic Review* 94: 1034-1054.

Torsten Persson, Gerard Roland Gerard, and Guido Tabellini. 1997. "Separation of Powers and Political Accountability." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112: 310-327.

### **April 17. Reflections on the presidency.**

William G. Howell and Terry M. Moe. 2016. *Relic: How Our Constitution Undermines Effective Government—and Why We Need a More Powerful Presidency*. New York: Basic Books. Chapters 2 and 4.

Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2017. *Rule-Breaking and Political Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1–5.

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. Chapters 1 and 4.

### **April 24. In-class presentations of research progress.\***