

Political Science 230 — American Presidency Fall 2014

Section 02
Mon & Weds 8:25-9:40pm, Room 208 HW
Office hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30pm & 6-7pm,
1719 HW

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Course description

Although the American system of government has been designed with three co-equal branches, it is arguable today that the presidency is the most powerful. How did this come to be? This course will trace the development of the American presidency, from its theoretical foundations as conceived by the founding fathers, who were concerned about the potential for tyranny and demagoguery, to today where the American public expects presidential intervention in almost any issue arising in politics.

Instead of following popular accounts of the presidency that see it as involving one man within a context of ever evolving issues and political crises, we will instead approach the presidency as an institution within the context of American government as a whole. The course proceeds from the foundations of the American presidency to its development over time. We will pay special attention to presidential conceptions of the role of the executive within government and their philosophical approaches to the office as an institution. The office has surged and declined through time and we will trace that trajectory to today, where many Americans are conflicted about the office: simultaneously demanding constraint and suspicious of tyranny while demanding presidential involvement in particular issues they find important.

Course objectives

This course will introduce students to different theoretical perspectives regarding the American presidency. Throughout the course, we will be giving substantive focus on particular issues while developing our skills to critically analyze and assess presidential power and involvement in American government as it has progressed over time. This is a writing intensive course, and as the semester progresses, students will receive feedback on their work with the goal of improving their own analyses. Students will be tasked with reading advanced, scholarly approaches to the executive branch. We will then examine the strengths and weaknesses of these assessments with the goal of accomplishing a more comprehensive understanding of the American presidency as an institution beyond the daily political battles that are the focus of the media and accounts of popular politics. By the end of the course, students will be able to make an argument and support it with evidence while considering the strengths and weaknesses inherent in their own approaches. The theories we will engage from political science will help us to that end by giving us the tools to develop our own critical views of America's most prominent office.

Accessibility

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/ or

Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212-772-4857)/TTY (212-650-3230).

Statement on Academic Honesty

Hunter College students are expected to do their own work and give attribution to works that are not their own or acknowledge any help received from others. I am committed to the principle of academic honesty and will pursue suspected violations in all written assignments through the university's formal mechanisms. Plagiarism is a serious issue and students are expected to do their own work. As the instructor, I reserve the right to request students to provide digital copies of any and all written assignments for submission on Turnitin.com, the plagiarism checking software the political science department utilizes, before a grade can be assigned.

Course Requirements

- 1) Attend class regularly and on time. Please do not arrive late. Attendance will be recorded at the start of each class period and any late arrivals will be counted as an unexcused absence.
- 2) Complete the weekly required reading assignments listed below. It is crucial that students come to class prepared to discuss the week's readings.
- 3) Participate in class. The productivity of our classroom depends on students to complete the work assigned each week in order to facilitate discussion.
- 4) Complete all written assignments. This is a writing intensive course. Your final grade, as outlined in the section below, is calculated by the completion of weekly writing assignments, two in-class written examinations (see point 5 below), as well as participation and attendance. Thirteen written response papers are proposed in the schedule below. You are required to write on 9 of the 13 topics of your choice throughout the semester (with the exception of the first writing assignment early in the semester required of all students). These are 1-2 page short papers. Please use the reading guide uploaded to Blackboard to assist you in completing these assignments. Please avoid extensive quotations from the readings.
- 5) Examinations are written blue book essays. There will be a midterm given over the material presented in the first half of the semester. The final examination will mostly center on material presented during the second half of the semester, but it will also involve a comprehensive element and students are expected to be conversant in the material covered throughout the whole semester in the final question. You will be asked to put only your CUNY EMPL ID on blue book exam covers and leave your name off of them so as to facilitate blind grading.

Grading

Participation will be graded based on timely attendance to each class meeting as well as completion of written assignments in order to participate when called upon in class to discuss the week's readings.

Written assignments are due at the beginning of each class. All assignments must be typed (1-inch margins, double spaced, normal font size and type). Handwritten assignments are not accepted. Weekly writing assignments will be assigned a point grade out of 10. Exams will be a percentage out of 100. If you miss an exam, you will be permitted to take a make-up test only when you have a valid excuse supported by written documentation. Late papers without a valid, documented excuse will not be accepted. Incompletes will be granted only with a documented excuse and only for a limited time (usually no longer than the time you were incapacitated), the duration to be set at the time the incomplete is approved.

Note on credit/no credit grading: College rules specify that to be eligible for credit/no credit, students must complete all course requirements. In this course, students who wish to be graded on the credit/no credit system must take both the midterm and the final as well as complete all written assignments, including case briefs and the moot court assignments. Failure to do all these things will void a credit/no credit request, and a conventional letter grade will be entered instead.

- 10% -- Attendance and participation
- 30% -- Weekly writing assignments
- 30% -- Midterm
- 30% -- Final

Required texts

- 1.) Milkis, Sidney. *American Presidency: Origins & Development*, CQ Press, either the 5th (2007) or 6th (2011) edition is acceptable.
- 2.) A Campus Coursepak with additional readings is also required for this course and is available at Shakespeare Bookstore on Lexington Ave.

(A copy of the 5th edition and the coursepak will be placed on reserve in the library.)

Schedule

The dates that follow are approximate and are subject to change (due to, for example, inclement weather). It is the responsibility of students to stay up to date on the schedule. If you are absent from class, please contact me to determine the next assignment due when you return. Due dates for response papers are listed each week. Please check blackboard regularly and check the email associated with your blackboard account for any potential announcements and updates. All Milkis chapters listed below follow the 6th edition.

Week 1 – Introduction and Syllabus

Wednesday, September 3rd

- Milkis *American Presidency*, chapter 1: “The Constitutional Convention”

Week 2 – Creating the Presidency: Development Since the Founding

Monday, September 8th and Wednesday, September 10th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 2: “Creating the Presidency”
- Greenstein, Fred I. “The Person of the President, Leadership, and Greatness,” in Aberbach, Joel D., and Mark A. Peterson. *The Executive Branch*. Oxford: University Press, 2005. [coursepak]

- Hamilton, Alexander. *Federalist 70* (1788) <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa70.htm> (Constitution Society)

Response paper due Wednesday, September 10th, **ALL STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO DO THIS ASSIGNMENT.**

Week 3 – The First Presidents: Washington & Adams

Monday, September 15th and Wednesday, September 17th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 3: “Bringing the Constitutional Presidency to Life: George Washington and John Adams.”
- Rockman, Bert. "Entrepreneur in the Constitutional Marketplace: The Development of the Presidency," in Peter Nardulli, ed., *The Constitution and American Political Development: An Institutional Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 97-120. [coursepack]

Response paper on Rockman due Wednesday, September 17th.

Week 4 – Jefferson & the Early Republic

Monday, September 22nd, NO CLASS on Wednesday, September 24th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 4: “The Triumph of Jeffersonianism”
- Fred I. Greenstein, “Presidential Difference in the Early Republic: The Highly Disparate Leadership Styles of Washington, Adams, and Jefferson,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (3) (2006): 373-90. (this is available through the Hunter Library. On the library front page go to “databases” and find JSTOR and type in the article title. <http://library.hunter.cuny.edu/>)

Response paper on Greenstein due Monday, September 22nd.

Week 5 – The Jacksonian Era

Monday September 29th and Wednesday, October 1st.

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 5: “The Age of Jackson”
- Bimes, Terry and Quinn Mulroy, “The Rise and Decline of Presidential Populism,” *Studies in American Political Development* 18 (2) (Fall 2004): 136-59.

Response paper on Bimes & Mulroy due Wednesday, October 1st.

Week 6 – Lincoln and the Civil War

Monday, October 6th and Wednesday, October 8th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 6: “The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln”
- Lincoln, Abraham. “Draft of Letter from Abraham Lincoln to Albert G. Hodges, April 4, 1864.” [coursepack]

Response paper on Lincoln due Wednesday, October 8th.

Week 7: From Restoring the Traditional Presidency to the Roots of the Modern Presidency

NO CLASS Monday, October 13th, return on Wednesday, October 15th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 7: “The Reaction Against Presidential Power: Andrew Johnson to William McKinley”
- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 8: “Progressive Politics and Executive Power: The Presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson”
- Excerpt from Taft, William Howard. *The President and His Powers*. New York, London: Columbia University press, 1967, pp. 125-157. [coursepack]
- Excerpt from Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt: Condensed from the Original Ed., Supplemented by Letters, Speeches, and Other Writings, and Edited with an Introd. by Wayne Andrews*. New York: Octagon Books, 1975, pp. 197-200. [coursepack]

Response paper on Taft and Roosevelt due Wednesday, October 15th.

Week 8 – Midterm

Monday, October 20th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 9: “The Triumph of Conservative Republicanism”

No response paper due this week.

Wednesday, October 22nd – Midterm in class

Week 9: Presidential Selection and Election

Monday, October 27th and Wednesday, October 29th

- Mayhew, David R. “Incumbency Advantage in U.S. Presidential Elections: The Historical Record,” *Political Science Quarterly* 123, no. 2 (Summer 2008), p. 201-228 (available through Hunter Library <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/stable/20203009>)
- Ellis, Richard J. *The Development of the American Presidency* (2012), chapter 2: “Selecting the President” (available on Hunter ereserves)

Response paper due Wednesday, October 29th.

Week 10 – Growth of Presidential Power

Monday, November 3rd and Wednesday, November 5th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapters 10 & 11: “Consolidation of the Modern Presidency” and “Personalizing the Presidency”
- Howell, William G. *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), chap. 1 “Presidential Power in the Modern Era,” pp. 1-23.

Response paper on Howell due Wednesday, November 5th.

Week 11 – Resurgence

Monday, November 10th and Wednesday, November 12th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapters 12: “A Restoration of Presidential Power?”
- Stephen Skowronek, “The Conservative Insurgency and Presidential Power: A Developmental Perspective on the Unitary Executive,” *Harvard Law Review* 122 (2009): 2070-2103.

Response paper on Skowronek due Wednesday, November 12th.

Week 12 – Mobilizing Public Support

Monday, November 17th and Wednesday, November 19th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapters 13: “Bill Clinton and the Modern Presidency”
- Tichenor, Daniel J. “The Presidency and Interest Groups: Allies, Adversaries, and Policy Leadership,” in Nelson, Michael. *The Presidency and the Political System*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: CQ Press, 2014. [coursepack]

Response paper on Tichenor due Wednesday, November 19th.

Week 13: The Presidency and the Bureaucracy

Monday, November 24th

- Waterman, Richard. W. 2009. “The Administrative Presidency, Unilateral Power, and the Unitary Executive Theory.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 1: 5-9.

Response paper on Waterman due Monday, November 24th.

(Thanksgiving Break)

Week 14 – George W. Bush and the Unilateral Presidency

Monday, December 1st and Wednesday, December 3rd

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 14: “George Bush and Unilateral Presidential Power”
- Rudalevige, Andrew. “The Presidency and Unilateral Powers: A Taxonomy,” in Nelson, Michael. *The Presidency and the Political System*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: CQ Press, 2014.

Response paper on Rudalevige due Wednesday, December 3rd.

Week 15 – Modern Presidency: Crisis and Recovery

Monday, December 8th and Wednesday, December 10th

- Milkis, *American Presidency*, chapter 15: “Barack Obama and the Dilemma of Modern Presidential Leadership” (6th edition only)
- Polsky, Andrew J., “Staying the Course: Presidential Leadership, Military Stalemate, and Strategic Inertia,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (1) (March 2010): 127-39.

Response paper on Polsky due Wednesday, December 10th.

Week 16

Monday, December 15th

Review

FINAL EXAM – Monday, December 17th, 7:30-9:30pm