

The American Presidency
Political Science 344
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Introduction

President Obama soared into office on a promise of hope by rejuvenating the economy to restore the American Dream, ending America's isolation after Bush's unpopular war on terror, and uniting the country behind a postpartisan agenda. Two years later, President Obama's approval has dropped. He promised unemployment would not exceed 8% if the stimulus package passed and unemployment hit a high of 9.9% and is now 9.5%. President Obama has largely ratified the Bush policies on the war on terror and has "surged" troops in Afghanistan promising to stay there until 2014 and beyond. And he has become the most partisan president, using public opinion polls, pursuing an ideological agenda and ignoring Republicans in Congress. The result was a "shellacking" that led to the largest congressional loss by his party since World War II.

Even without a Republican House of Representatives, Obama faces many serious problems. The economy is shedding jobs and people are discussing American "decline." Iran is building a nuclear weapon and becoming more powerful in the Middle East. Islamic terrorism is still a threat to the West. He expanded health care insurance to more people but did practically nothing about controlling costs. The US still relies on unstable nations to provide most of its energy needs. The budget deficits are soaring which mortgages the younger generation's future and that does not even include the unbearable financial burdens of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Almost makes you wonder why anyone would want to become president.

But Obama is president. And the US and the world are looking to Obama for leadership. The question becomes then: how can the president maximize his power to deal with these problems when others, whether congress or world leaders, have different interests and no reason to follow the president's lead? This is the question that this class will focus on this semester. In the coming months, we will examine why a president does what he does and how that affects his power. We begin by examining the formal, personal, and institutional sources of power. Next, we examine who is elected, why, and how that affects the president's ability to govern. We follow this with an examination of one of the president's most important resources -- public approval -- and how the media affects this. Then, we examine how the president uses his power vis-a-vis other institutions such as Congress, the bureaucracy, and the courts. Finally, we examine how to improve the presidency or whether we should. Along the way, we should learn how Obama can use the tools at his disposal to set the course aright and improve the country and the world.

Course Requirements

Assigned Readings. The syllabus designates the readings for each class period. The date of the reading indicates the day by which the reading should be completed. Usually, the readings come

from the assigned books. In a few instances, readings will be on reserve at Summar Library. The following are the required texts for this class:

Edwards, George C., and Stephen J. Wayne. 2010. *Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making*, 8th ed. Wadsworth.

Nelson, Michael. 2010. *The Presidency and the Political System*, 9th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

In addition, it is expected that students will keep abreast of developments in the presidency by reading a daily newspaper. While the local papers are adequate, I suggest reading a national paper, most of which are available on-line. My home page has useful links under News Links (http://www.uu.edu/personal/sevans/_private/news.htm) that might be useful.

Grading. Your grade for this course will come from three exams, participation in the presidency simulation (see below), a case study, and your class participation. Exams are composed of essay questions and cover lectures and reading assignments. There are three exams and each are worth 20% each. The final exam is cumulative. There are no make-ups for missed exams. If you miss an exam, the final will count twice.

This is an upper division course so I have high expectations for the quality of your work. This should be no surprise because as Christians we are “to do all things as unto the Lord” and thus we are held to a higher standard. Preparing for class each day shows respect for your professor, your colleagues who can learn from you, and Christ himself. Plus, the way that you work today will influence how you work in the “real world.” Moreover, those who prepare before class tend to get more out of it and do better on tests. So please put the time and effort into the class before the simulation, case study, and tests are due.

After exams are returned, you must wait 24 hours before discussing the exam with me. This serves as both a cooling off period and as a time for you to reflect upon the exam and what you may have done wrong. We will then sit down and discuss what is wrong, how we can correct this, and how you can improve over the course of the semester. If I make a mistake, I will rectify that, but I do not engage in point grubbing. Finally, your performance at the end of the semester is more important than your performance at the beginning of the semester. If you show *dramatic* improvement, I will grade you on how you ended the course rather than on how you began the course.

Simulation. This semester you will engage in a role-playing exercise that mimics the presidential advisory system. This simulation involves members of the class acting in the roles of presidential advisors and solving a crisis or problem of some sort. More information regarding this simulation will be discussed after the first exam. The simulation and its accompanying paper are worth 10% of your final grade. Finally, attendance on simulation days is *mandatory*. The simulation cannot function without your presence. If you know now that you will have a conflict with the simulation, please let me know soon so I can rearrange the schedule.

Presidential Case Study. Each student will conduct an in-depth examination of a topic regarding the presidency. Your goal is not only to describe but to explain. Your case study can disprove or refine an existing theory or identify hypotheses worthy of future testing by explaining some

phenomenon. If you compare two or more cases, you should choose cases that are similar yet different so that you can explain the similarities and differences. And please remember that you are not studying a president per se but some aspect of the presidency. The president you choose just provides the data from which you prove your point.

In researching your case study, please keep in mind that case studies do not report one point of view solely but rather researches all points of views so one can draw the appropriate conclusions. This means that you need multiple sources for your paper. Consequently, students may want to pursue a triangulation approach as one uses media accounts, documents, biographies, interviews (by someone else), your direct observation (if it happened when you were alive and paying attention), histories, archival data, journalistic accounts, etc. For a quick overview of case study methodology, students may want to read <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-2/tellis1.html>.

The format of the case study should be as follows. First, start with an introduction section which states your research question/hypothesis and why it is important to study. Second, provide a literature review that reviews previous work on your topic and how your work fits with it. This is important because it can help you identify the variables that may influence your phenomenon. Third, explain the relationship posited in your hypothesis and any other alternative explanations that may explain the phenomenon being studied. Fourth, provide the narrative of the report that proves your hypothesis or forces you to reject or revise it. Your narrative should trace the process to see whether the causal process your theory hypothesizes is evident in the sequence of events. This section should also disprove alternative explanations for the phenomenon. Fifth, provide a conclusion of what you found and the significance of it for presidential studies. The report is due May 9 and is worth 20% of your grade.

In writing your paper, please write in a clear and organized fashion. Be sure to include a thesis, topic sentences, introduction, conclusion, etc. While this is not a grammar course, an integral part of communication is good grammar. As such, I will stop reading any paper that has not been spell checked or grammar checked (it is usually easy to tell) and assign that paper an F. Since the simulation paper requires some outside research, proper citations are required and rules against plagiarism are enforced. The case study should be approximately 15 pages. And please do not play with the font sizes, the spacing, and margins nor put large quotes in the paper to reach the estimated allotted pages. It is very clear to see if you are padding the paper which will not be reflected well in your grade.

Participation. Participation is worth 10% of your final grade. Each student is expected to come to class prepared to integrate readings with lecture material and to apply presidential models to the Obama Presidency. I have found that your daily participation is essential to understanding the material and contributing to class discussions. Please do not feel inhibited about speaking. The best means of my determining how well you understand the material is through your discussion. Moreover, an important component of this participation is active feedback. If there are any suggestions that would help you understand the material more fully, please let me know.

Class participation is worth 10% of your grade. Please note that class participation is not attendance. Class participation refers to speaking in class with comprehension and clarity. Thus, it refers to quantity but more importantly quality. In assessing participation, students who attend class but do not participate receive a 0 because it is just as if you are not there. Those who show they read but demonstrate only a superficial understanding through their comments receive a minimum of 40. Those who read and show they understand the material in discussions receive a

minimum of 75 while those who excel by showing a thorough understanding of readings and an ability to connect concepts across lectures, readings, and discussions receive a 95. Please see this as the difference between a letter grade. Moreover, you facilitate participation by bringing the relevant reserve readings and textbook to class each day. Finally, when and/or if I curve test or final grades, I reserve the right to withhold the curve from students with poor attendance.

Cheating: University rules on cheating apply to this class. We are here to test your abilities and not your neighbors or friends. Anyone caught cheating receives an automatic "F" for the course and will be referred to the appropriate authorities for university review and punishment. The department's policy can be found at www.uu.edu/dept/politicalscience/PlagiarismPolicy.cfm.

Communication Devices. Please turn off all cell phones and other portable electronic devices while in my class. Your life is not so important that you need to answer the phone or text your friend immediately. If found using any such device, I reserve the right to answer the phone and/or read your text message to the class. Moreover, I will confiscate your communication device until the next class meeting. Therefore, if you have an emergency necessitating having the communication device on, please let me know before the class.

Audio/Video Recording: No audio or video recording of classroom activity is permitted without my prior approval. This prohibition includes cellphone camera functions, laptop audio or video functions, and all other digital or analog recording equipment.

Lap top computers: Students are welcome to use lap top computers in my class as long as they are not a distraction to the user or others (e.g., noise, email, internet use not connected to the course, playing games) and it does not create a hazard to others (e.g., extension cord in the aisle).

Extracurricular. Students are expected to attend any special political events this semester.

Special Needs. If you have any special needs that will affect your ability to learn in this class, please inform me and I will take the appropriate steps to help you.

The Syllabus. I reserve the right and prerogative to modify the syllabus in accordance with student and professorial needs. The syllabus should not be construed as a contract.

Class Outline

Feb. 2 Introduction

Edwards and Wayne ch. 1

Feb. 4 Intellectual Origins of the Presidency

McDonald *The American Presidency: An Intellectual History*, Part I (on reserve)

Feb. 7 Intellectual Origins of the Presidency

McDonald *The American Presidency: An Intellectual History*, Part I (on reserve)

Feb. 9 Founders' View of Government

Federalists #10, 51 on reserve or <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>

Feb. 11 Founder's View of Presidency

Federalists # 70 on reserve or http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_70-2.html

Feb. 14 History of the Presidency

Tullis and Landy & Milkis in Nelson

Feb. 16 History of the Presidency

Feb. 18 Constitutional Powers

Article II of the Constitution; Edwards and Wayne, ch. 15

Feb. 21 Two Presidencies – Happy Presidents' Day

Feb. 23 Persuasive Presidency

Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidency* chs. 1-3 (on reserve)

Feb. 25 Persuasive Presidency

Neustadt chs. 3-6 (on reserve)

Feb. 28 Psychological Presidency

Nelson in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne ch. 8

March 2 Presidential Leadership Style

Fred Greenstein, "The Person of the President, Leadership, and Greatness" (on reserve); Quirk in Nelson

March 4 The Institutional Presidency

Burke in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne ??

March 7 Presidential Time

Skowronek in Nelson

March 9 Imperial or Imperiled Presidency?

March 11 First Midterm

March 14 The Nomination Process
Pious in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne ch. 2

March 16 Presidential Elections
Edwards in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne ch. 3

March 18 Presidential Transitions and Presidential Appointments
Edwards “Why Not the Best?” on reserve

March 21-25 Spring Break

March 28 Organizing the Presidency: EOP
Edwards and Wayne ch. 6

March 30 Organizing the Presidency: Executive Branch
Rudalevige in Nelson

April 1 The Vice Presidency
Pika in Nelson

April 4 The President and the Press
Martin Wattenberg” The Changing Presidential Media Environment” and Jeffrey Cohen “News That Doesn’t Matter” on reserve

April 6 The Media: Governing
Miroff in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne ch. 5

April 8 Public Opinion: Going Public
Jacobs in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne ch. 4

April 11 Public Opinion: Presidential Approval

April 13 Second Mid-Term

April 15 Presidential Decision Making
Edwards and Wayne ch. 7; Allison “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis” (on reserve)

April 18 Presidential Decision Making
Allison “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis” (on reserve)

April 20 President and Congress: Agenda Setting
Edwards and Wayne ch. 10

April 22 Good Friday – No Class

April 25 President and Congress: Making Laws
Dickinson in Nelson

April 27 Presidential Advisory Simulation

April 29 Presidential Advisory Simulation

April 27 President and Bureaucracy
Lewis & Moe in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne chs. 9 & 12

April 29 Judicial Selection
Yalof in Nelson and Goldman “Is There a Crisis in Judicial Selection?” on reserve

May 2 President and the Courts
Edwards and Wayne ch. 11

May 4 The Partisan Presidency
Skinner “The Partisan Presidency” on reserve; Milkis in Nelson

May 6 President and Foreign Policy
Polsky in Nelson; Edwards and Wayne ch. 14-15

May 9 Economic Policy Making
Edwards and Wayne ch. 13

May 11 Reforming the Presidency

May 13 Catch-up and Review

May 18 Final Exam 9am