

### **Statement about the Course**

The American presidency has historically been one of the most popular courses in political science departments across the United States, as well as in many foreign countries. Why? The reason is because the study of the American presidency focuses on the most powerful leader in the world. Decisions by the American president always receive worldwide attention because his decisions necessarily impact other governments. This makes the study of the American president both important and exciting. Because the American president receives so much news coverage, most students know a lot about the American presidency before they enter my class. Consequently, when I teach this course I assume that students already possess basic knowledge about the presidency, so this course is taught at a more advanced level. This course covers about everything pertaining to the presidency from the president as commander-in-chief to presidential personality types to why, for example, Trump uses Twitter to tweet often “crazy” messages.

In this class we will discuss and debate many controversial things pertaining to the presidency. However, my experience has been that such can trigger some emotional partisanship. It must be appreciated that we all come from varied backgrounds that shape our political perspective/partisanship. Consequently, some of us are Democrats, Republicans, Independents, or other. I have polled my students in the past and have found that political party preference is about 60%/40% Democrat to Republican in my political science classes. Partisanship can be a good thing because it allows us to question and debate positions on issues, but we must respect the responsible political views held and expressed by everyone in our class. However, to command respect, partisan arguments must be rooted in reasoned positions and facts, not on irrational arguments rooted in closed-minded partisanship and falsehoods. We sometimes literally consult various political fact-checker sites.

The following course outline will not be rigidly followed because I have concluded that students show more interest in the subject and learn more about the American presidency if I apply “breaking news” on the American presidency to class discussions. Consequently, you will be held accountable for the chapters on your midterm and final, but I will not cover systematically or comprehensively the contents of each chapter, but I will cover the most important material in each chapter. You will be responsible for reading about the first half of the chapters for the midterm and the last half of the chapters for the final. By the end of the semester class discussions will address the general topics covered in each chapter, but as I said, not systematically.

I will assign many readings from breaking news topics. Some news articles will be only hours old, not years old as is common in textbooks. Students have reported in the past that they like to discuss breaking news topics on the American presidency rather than dwell on older materials. An inherent problem with textbooks is that the materials are old and outdated. This presents a serious problem in a course on the American presidency. However, the basics of the American presidency, as covered in textbooks on the presidency, are important, so the “textbook” basics will be covered, but often in the context of current news topics on the presidency. For example, we can place Trump’s unique style in the context of other presidents.

Since I want to have a lot of class discussions in light of assigned, current articles, it is necessary that you read these articles in advance of the class discussions so you can participate. Informed, lively class discussions are fun and rewarding. To encourage your informed participation, as noted, your course grade will be based in part on your participation.

## Course Outline

- I. Introductory Comments
  - A. An Overview of the course: highlights from the course syllabus
  - B. Lessons from *The American Voter*: We are what we are politically because we all have unique backgrounds
  - C. Shed your partisan biases and think like political scientists
  - D. Appreciate my problems teaching the American presidency; a higher partisan and sensitive subject: Explain
  - E. What we will learn about the American presidency: Edwards: Introduction
  
- II. The Powers of the Presidency
  - A. Constitutional powers/formal powers
  - B. Informal presidential powers and how they have grown
  - C. Trump's abuse of presidential power: his use of emergency powers and Executive Orders from a comparative perspective
  - D. Presidential power in foreign and domestic affairs
  
- III. Evaluating Trump's Presidency: An Overview
  - A. Trump and his base
  - B. Trump v. Congress
  - C. Trump v. the Courts
  - D. Trump v. the bureaucracy (the administrative state)
  - E. Trump and presidential character
  - F. Trump's administrative presidency: his struggles with his own people
  - G. Trump's disturbing presidency and why he is setting a dangerous precedent
  
- III. The Presidency: An Historical Perspective
  - A. Who were our best and worst presidents?
  - B. What makes a president strong or weak?
  - C. Why most of our modern presidents receive weak approval ratings?
  - D. The enormous role public opinion polls play
  - E. Why do presidents tend to get higher public ratings years after they serve?
  - F. How has the role and expectations of presidents changed since 1789?
  - G. How do partisans evaluate presidents v. the experts
  - H. Summary and concluding remarks
  
- IV. Presidential Politics and Elections
  - A. Running for the biggest prize in the world
  - B. Electoral realities pertaining to presidential elections

- C. The nomination process
  - D. The convention
  - E. The general campaign
  - F. Why third-party candidates can't win: Electoral College realities
  - G. Historical trends, election types, etc.
  - H. Can Trump win reelection in 2020?: An analysis
- V. The President: Serving the Public
- A. Ideally, how presidents should serve the public
  - B. Promoting the public interest or promoting interest groups
  - C. The public and presidential politics: the good, bad, and the ugly
  - D. In sum, how well have our presidents served the public interest?
- VI. Presidential Leadership
- A. Presidential leadership types
  - B. What are the characteristics of good leadership?
  - C. What are the characteristics of bad leadership?
  - D. Why presidential scholars are so critical of Trump's leadership
  - E. Evaluating Trump's leadership successes and failures
  - F. What role does skill and luck play in presidential performance
  - G. Should the Constitution be amended or rewritten to account for 21<sup>st</sup> Century realities?
- VI. Presidential Character and Performance
- A. Background: James Barber and others on presidential character/personality
  - B. Presidential personality types
  - C. Psychological factors, world views, style and other personal factors influencing presidential performance
  - D. A critique
- VII. The President and the Media
- A. The role of the media v. the role of the president: why presidents have always had an uneasy relationship with the media
  - B. Why presidents inevitably lose when they decide to fight the media
  - C. Why freedom of the press must be protected
- VII. Office of the President: Its Structure and processes
- A. Administrative structure and process
  - B. Key White House Offices
  - C. White House staff and its growth
  - D. The key importance of the Chief of Staff
  - F. The Cabinet and its declining role
  - G. The White House's communication bureaucracy tries to work the media and the public to the president's advantage

H. Large size does not in itself make a president powerful

VIII. The President, the Executive Branch, and Presidential Decision Making

- A. The president, his administration, and the giant, powerful administrative state
- B. Presidential decision making and the problems of implementation
- B. Why the president cannot really control his own executive branch
- C. Presidents have all tried to control or “deconstruct” the administrative state since TR, but they have all failed: Why?

VIII. The Emerging Importance of the Vice President

- A. The VP.s Constitutional powers
- B. The VP’s traditional role and the humiliation of the VP’s job
- C. Just a heartbeat away from the presidency
- D. The rise of the VP: from Mondale to Pence
- E. Why sitting VPs historically have had a hard time winning the presidency:  
G.H.W. Bush breaks the Van Buren curse

IX. The President v. Congress

- A. Overview: “Madisonian democracy works too well” (James M. Burns)
- B. Constitutional standing before Congress
- C. The president’s powers v Congress’ powers equals a standoff
- D. How safe seats and polarization have impacted presidential power
- E. How the president tries to push his legislative agenda
- F. Examples of presidential efforts
- G. Presidential frustration and the bold use of Executive Orders

X. The President and the Judiciary

- E. Judicial politics and the appointment process
- F. The Supreme Court and presidential politics
- G. Do judges legislate from the bench? Of course they do?
- H. Major examples of when they do: *Brown v. Bd.*; *Roe v. Wade*; *Citizens United v FEC*; *NFIB v. Sebelius*, and *King v. Burwell*
- I. Compliance with court decisions

XI. The President in Domestic and Foreign Affairs: Yesteryear and Today

- A. The Constitutional design on the President’s job description
- B. Presidential powers in domestic affairs and his weak team of players
- C. Presidential powers in foreign affairs and his usual strong team of players
- D. The president’s evolving powers in homeland security and fighting terrorism
- E. Trump’s domestic and foreign policies: what is he trying to do?

- F. As James M. Burns once noted: Madisonian democracy works too well. Do we need to reinvigorate the powers of our modern presidents so they can lead? Before Trump scholars said yes, but now they have their doubts

### **Required Readings**

George C. Edwards, III, Kenneth R. Mayer, Stephen Wayne, *Presidential Leadership, 10th edition* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018).

Assigned readings from the Internet and emailed articles to you

### **Grading and Attendance Policies**

Mid-term	150 points
Position Paper	50 points
Final	150 points
Class Participation	50 points
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Total	400 points

My phone, e-mail, office, and office hours:

314-977-3036 (office); 314-963-0451 (home – call when very important)

E-mail: [warrenkf@slu.edu](mailto:warrenkf@slu.edu)

Office: McGannon Hall, Room 135

Office hours: MWF, 11:00 -11:50 and by special appointment

Regular, responsible attendance is expected and your class participation grade is based in part on your attendance since you cannot participate if you are not in class. Classes should be missed only for very legitimate and compelling reasons. . A sign-in sheet will be passed around during each class. More than seven unexcused absences will result in grade penalties. Very excessive absences (9 unexcused absences or more) will result in an “F” grade. Skipping exams is absolutely forbidden unless a formal written medical excuse is submitted and accepted. Other excuses may be accepted, but you need to inform me. Note: I give a lot of material in my lectures that does not come from the book. I frequently lecture on “breaking news” pertaining to the presidency. The textbook provides the basics on each traditional area of the American presidency. For the mid-term and final, you will be responsible for book assignments, my lectures, and the recent articles about the Trump presidency. I guarantee that you will not do well if you do not attend class because I intentionally ask a lot of questions on exams that come only from the class discussions and lectures, so please come to class.

### **Academic Honesty Policy**

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared

material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to me and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts & Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University.

(See <http://www.slu.edu.colleges/AS/academichonesty.html>)

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities need to make arrangements with the Disabilities Coordinator, 977-8885, DuBourg, Room 36. The Americans with Disabilities Act will be honored completely.

<https://mail.slu.edu/cgi-bin/webmail.cgi?cmd=item-32&utoken=warrenkf40svd.slu.edu3...>  
8/24/2007

### **Grading Scale \***

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	68-70
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	below 60
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

\*An Incomplete for the course requires an agreement between the student and his/her professor with terms of the agreement submitted to SLU administrators.

### **Course Objectives**

Basically, I have a twofold objective in teaching this course. First, I want students to learn about the institution and practices of the American presidency. Secondly, I want students to learn to think critically about the American presidency/presidential performance.

### **Modes of Assessment and Skills/Knowledge Being Assessed**

I do not want political science students to just think through “partisan blinders” about, say, how well Trump is performing. I want students to be able to tell me in a scholarly manner why they would give Trump, say, an “Excellent,” “Good,” “Fair,” or “Poor” job performance rating. This would require students to know and apply the American socio-economic and political system to presidential performance, as well as presidential performance in light of the international setting.

Student knowledge and critical thinking skills pertaining to the American presidency will be assessed through a midterm and final exam, a position paper, and through their input in class discussions. I will look at not only a student's factual knowledge of the American presidency subject matter, but how sophisticated their conceptual or critical thinking skills are in addressing the subject matter of this course.

### **In-Class Activities**

In-class activities will consist of standard lectures combined with a lot of class discussions on topics related to the American presidency. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading assignments, especially the assigned current articles from the Internet and other articles sent to them via email so they can participate meaningfully in class discussions. Participation/class attendance will constitute 10% of a student's final grade in this course.

**To make certain I am including everything that is now required by SLU, I am simply attaching the entire syllabi statements, even though some statements are repeated.**

### **Syllabi Statements**

The Office of Academic Affairs and the Student Success Center encourage all faculty to review their undergraduate course syllabus and incorporate the following statements.

#### **Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement**

*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at:

[http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic\\_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf](http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf).

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

Specific College of Arts and Sciences Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures may be found at:

<http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

### **Title IX Syllabus Statement**

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; [akratky@slu.edu](mailto:akratky@slu.edu); 314-977-3886) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: <http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy> [www.slu.edu/here4you](http://www.slu.edu/here4you) .

### **Student Success Center Syllabi Statements**

In an effort to be inclusive of students' learning styles and needs with regard to academic support, the following statement has been developed for use in course syllabi which identifies resources for student support in various areas of learning. As faculty members construct their syllabi for future courses, it is requested that they update materials to include new language regarding academic and career related support offered to students through the Student Success Center.

The syllabus statement will be available throughout the year by visiting the following websites, but we encourage you to place these resources on any departmental websites you feel necessary:

- Student Success Center: [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success)
- Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching & Learning: [www.slu.edu/ctl](http://www.slu.edu/ctl)

### **Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

### **Disability Services Academic Accommodations Syllabus Statement**

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at [Disability\\_services@slu.edu](mailto:Disability_services@slu.edu) or [314.977.3484](tel:314.977.3484) to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.