

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 throughout America and the world, 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 know quite a bit about the presidency, so this course is taught at a more advanced level than most courses that I teach.

This course covers about everything pertaining to the presidency from the president as commander-in-chief to presidential personality types to why, for example, Obama (the thin man) likes to eat hamburgers and pizza in public, but sushi in private. To really understand the nuances of the presidency, nothing is too big or too little to discuss.

I am taking a unique approach in this class. I will not be using any textbook, but rather I will rely on Internet sources for articles, editorials, columns, polls, etc. on the American presidency. I will assign many readings from breaking news stories. Some news articles will be only hours old, not years old as is common in textbooks. Students have reported in the past on their evaluations of my presidency class that they like to discuss breaking news topics on the American presidency rather than to devote a lot of time on “textbook” materials. Consequently, I will accommodate the wishes of students, but I will still have to cover the basics of the presidency to place current news stories on the American presidency into perspective.

However, the basics of the American presidency, as covered in textbooks on the presidency, are important, so I will copy a limited amount of materials from textbooks on the American presidency so students understand the fundamentals concerning the American presidency. For example, we can put Obama’s present struggles with the Republicans in Congress in an historical perspective by understanding from textbook readings presidential-congressional relations and how presidents in the past have tried to deal with Congress. By analyzing Obama’s struggles with Congress, we can also learn much about the institutions and processes of the legislative and the executive branches, as well as the constitutional powers of each branch.

Since I want to have a lot of class discussions in light of assigned current articles, editorials, columns, etc., it is imperative that you read these articles in advance of the class discussions so you can participate. I will not overburden you with a lot of articles, but it is important that you read and understand the limited readings that I will assign. Informed, lively class discussions are fun and rewarding. To encourage your informed participation, your course grade will be based in part on your participation. Also, since this is an American Presidency course taught in Madrid, an attempt will be made to compare when appropriate the American political system to the Spanish political system.

Course Outline

- I. Introductory Comments
 - A. An Overview
 - B. Perspectives on presidential greatness/weakness
 - C. Placing the American presidency in context
- II. The American Presidency
 - A. Origins of the Office of President
 - B. His formal constitutional powers
 - C. His real, informal powers
 - D. Making some comparisons to the powers of the Presidente del Gobierno de Espana (the Prime Minister of Spain to Americans)
 - E. Summary and conclusions
- III. Presidential Politics and Elections
 - A. Running for the biggest political 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
 - G. Why Republicans face future problems in winning presidential elections
 - H. Making some comparisons to the process of electing the presidente in Spain
 - I. Summary and conclusions
- IV. The Media, Polls, and the President
 - J. Media politics
 - K. The role of public opinion and polls
 - L. Summary and conclusions
- V. Office of the President
 - a. Administrative structure and process
 - b. Administrative models
 - c. Managerial issues and controversies
 - d. Examples of presidential management styles
 - e. The White House Staff
 - f. The President's Cabinet
 - g. Comparisons to the Office of Presidente in Spain
 - h. Summary and conclusions
- VI. Presidential Character and Performance
 - a. Background
 - b. Presidential personality types
 - c. Psychological factors, world views and style influencing presidential behavior
 - d. Summary and conclusions

- VII. The President v. Congress
 - a. Overview
 - b. Constitutional standing before Congress
 - c. How the President tries to push his legislative agenda
 - d. Examples of presidential efforts
 - e. Comparisons to the parliamentary system in Spain
 - f. Summary and conclusions

- VIII. The President and the Judiciary
 - a. Judicial politics and the appointment process
 - b. The Supreme Court and presidential politics
 - c. The Roberts' nominations
 - d. Compliance with court decisions
 - e. Summary

- IX. Presidential Foreign Policy and National Security
 - a. The President's evolving role in foreign affairs
 - b. Presidential war powers
 - c. The foreign policy/defense bureaucracy
 - d. The military industrial complex and wars
 - e. The Iraq War in historical perspective
 - f. Fighting terrorism
 - g. U.S. relations with Spain
 - h. Summary

- X. The President and Domestic Politics
 - a. Domestic policymaking
 - b. OMB and the President
 - c. Issues in domestic policy
 - d. Summary

- XI. Abuses of Power and Presidential Scandals
 - a. History and examples of presidential scandals
 - b. How scandals have impacted presidential popularity and reputation
 - c. Future expectations of presidents
 - d. Summary

Required Readings

Assigned readings from the Internet and hand-outs of copied materials

Grading Policy

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Mid-term | 150 points |
| Position Paper | 50 points |
| Final | 150 points |
| <u>Class Participation</u> | <u>50 points</u> |
| Total | 400 points |

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

E-mail: warrenkf@slu.edu

Office: Unknown, will tell you in class

Office hours: MTWTH immediately after class and by special appointment

Attendance Policy

Regular, responsible attendance is expected. Classes should be missed only for very legitimate and compelling reasons. More than four unexcused absences will result in grade penalties. 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 reading assignments. I frequently lecture on “breaking news” pertaining to the presidency. Many times I supplement my lectures with handouts (e.g., current articles on the Obama administration). I guarantee that you will not do well on exams if you do not attend class because I intentionally ask a few questions on exams that you could only learn by attending class. Also, since 12.5% of your grade is based on participation, your final course grade will be affected negatively by skipping class since you obviously cannot participate if you are not in 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

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|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------|---|----------|
| 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 | | |

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, especially by comparing the American presidency with executive leadership in their native country (e.g., Spain).

Modes of Assessment and Skills/Knowledge Being Assessed

I want to encourage students to think objectively about the American presidency. I also want students to be able to assess in a scholarly manner how well Obama is performing (e.g., what are his strengths and weaknesses?; what have been his greatest accomplishments and failures?). I want students to be able to tell me in a scholarly manner why they would give Obama, say, an “Excellent,” “Good,” “Fair,” or “Poor” job performance rating – and in what areas. This would require that students know and apply the American governmental system to presidential performance. 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 so they can participate meaningfully in class discussions. Participation will constitute 50 points or 12.5% of a student’s final grade in this course.