

PLSC 380—The Presidency

Fall 2018
420 Pray Harrold

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Office Hours: 11-12:20 M&W

This course is concerned with the American presidency. We will examine the nature of presidential elections (paying particular attention to the current election cycle); sources of presidential power; relationships between the president and other actors in the political system and policy making in the executive branch.

With respect to our focus, we are living in unusual times. While I have always worked to make this course about the institution of the presidency, as opposed to the president of the moment, I will work particularly hard to do so the semester. To that end, please do not come to class ready to ridicule, demonize, or lionize the current president. We will not tolerate the polarization that characterizes our politics today to impact the civil discussion that is important to the learning environment.

Assigned Readings

The Gatekeepers: How the White House Chiefs of Staff Define Every Presidency, Paperback – March 6, 2018, by Chris Whipple.

The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity, Paperback – February 12, 2013, by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy.

How the Hell Did This Happen?: The Election of 2016, March 7, 2017 by P. J. 'Orourke.

Suggested

George Edwards and Stephen Wayne, *Presidential Leadership*, Wadsworth/Cengage.

Daily Newspaper. *The New York Times* provides a nice discount program for college and university students. Details can be found at newyorktimes.com/student, or by phone, 888-nyt-coll (698-2655).

Course Requirements

There will be one midterm exam, and two 6-10 page papers. All will be based on reading and class discussion. The exam will be of the essay variety. Each written assignment is worth 50 points.

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| Midterm Exam = | 50 |
| First Paper = | 50 |
| Second Paper = | 50 |

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| Total | 150 |
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The first exam will be based on the reading and on class discussion regarding the presidential election process. The papers will be based on the reading, class discussion. The papers will be concerned with various aspects of the environment in which the president must operate while in office. (If you are picking up a pattern that I expect you to do the assigned reading, that is very perspicacious of you.) There are three assigned books that speak to two broad themes that we will be covering. (There is a suggested text which can be purchased rather inexpensively online.) Since the exam and papers are based on readings and class discussion, it would be unreasonable on your part to expect to do well in this class without attending class.

You will also be expected to follow the current presidential politics and report on them in class.

There may also be occasions that will allow for extra credit points. They will be announced in class and cannot be “made up.” You are expected to come to class, do the assigned reading, and treat everyone in the room with respect. Arriving for

class late is disrespectful to everybody in the room. Arriving real late is real disrespectful.

Communication issues.

Email. If you would like me to read your email, please use your email address to communicate with me. Please put the Course # and meeting time in the Subject Line of your Email—and your name, first and last, at the bottom of your email. I have a strange desire to know who I am “talking” to, and who is “talking” to me. Feel free to call that a personality disorder. Do not continuously hit reply in a “conversation” with me. Renew the subject, which is a polite way of letting me know what we are talking about.

Please do not make or receive phone calls or texts during class. If your phone rings, I reserve the right to answer it and leave you with the consequences of whatever I tell the person calling you. (If you have a legitimate need to make or receive a call, family or health matter, etc, please let me know that to be the case, and, as inconspicuously as possible, leave the room and conduct your conversation.) Frankly, we are all best served if you keep your phones in your briefcase, backpack, or pocket. You may also feel free to leave them in your car, home, apartment, room...whatever...But please, holding them just below the table and looking down for 75 minutes is a waste of time. If that's your m.o, you're fooling no one and probably hurting your neck. If you are deciding between your phone and your class, then decide. If it's the phone, don't insult your classmates (or me) by being disengaged, find another place to be on your phone. If the decision is class, great, welcome.

It would be great if you also kept the following in mind:

Our classroom is not,

1. An Internet café
2. A piano bar
3. A place to snooze
4. A place to do work for other classes

Schedule of subjects and readings***

This is the place where I say please keep up with the reading, rather than trying to do it all at one time. It might actually inform to your class discussion and provide insight you might not otherwise have. We will discuss the paper assignments during the first couple of weeks of the term.

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| 9/5 - 9/12 | Intro-Studying the Presidency Begin reading O'Rourke now. |
| 9/ 17- 10/8 | Elections: The citizens' perspective Continue O'Rourke Begin Whipple |
| 10/15 - 10/29 | Elections: the candidates' perspective. Finish O'Rourke Continue Whipple |
| 10/31 | Midterm Exam |
| 11/5 - 11/19 | Presidential personality and non-governmental constituencies: the media, interest groups and political parties. Finish Whipple Begin Gibbs and Duffy |
| 11/19 | First Paper Due |
| 11/21** | Thanksgiving Recess |
| 11/26 - 12/3 | Governmental constituencies: congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy. Continue Gibbs and Duffy |
| 12/5- 12/10 | Presidential Policy Making Finish Gibbs and Duffy |
| 12/12 11:30 am | 2nd Paper Due |

* Dates are approximate.

** No class on 11/21, Thanksgiving Recess.

** I am not able to be in class on the following days.

9/10 & 9/19 Personal obligations

10/10 Out of town on University Business

11/7 Out of Town NE Political Science Assn Meetings