

RPOS 332

THE PRESIDENCY

Business Administration (BA) 130 - MWF 1:40 p.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Instructor: Tim Lindberg

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Office Location: Political Science Contact Office (HUM B16)

Office Hours: *Monday 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.*

Wednesday 2:45 – 4:00 p.m.

By appointment (e-mail me)

Course Description

This course is designed to provide you with a variety of intellectual tools to be able to assess theories of the United States Presidency, apply to them to historical cases, and analyze their explanatory power. Using a team-based approach to learning, you will utilize readings designed to present a chronological structure, intertwined with key modern debates, of the historical development of the Presidency of the United States. While we will spend significant time talking about individual Presidents, *the course is at its core about the evolution of the office of the Presidency.*

Goals of Course

When finished with this course, you will be able to do the following:

- Explain the historical progression of what is now considered the most powerful political office in the world and the foundations of key debates of the modern Presidency
- Assess modern presidential actions through the lens of historical precedent and development
- Demonstrate how history allows us to chart the development of a political institution
- Contrast theories of the Presidency that emphasize individual characteristics as important to success OR the limitations imposed by the broader political environment Presidents serve within
- Recognize and distinguish how political decisions are shaped and limited by circumstances
- Probe the significance of the Presidency as an institution rather than just as an individual

Course Structure

This course will be taught using a team-based approach that encourages collaboration and active learning for individuals and teams. Most in-class time will be spent working on team activities that will allow you to directly apply key course concepts to various tasks. Teams will each have their own team folder, where attendance will be recorded, as well as the scores of the team's RATs and other assignments.

The course itself is divided into six units which combine historical and thematic elements. Each unit will follow a sequence known as the Readiness Assurance Process. *The syllabus for each unit will be posted to Blackboard at least two class periods in advance.*

Readiness Assurance Process (RAP)

The RAP is an integral piece of a teaching approach called Team-Based Learning. This process allows you numerous opportunities to demonstrate your comprehension of the reading and the course concepts while receiving immediate feedback on your progress. The RAP takes place in a sequence containing the following components:

1) Readings

At the start of each unit, you will complete a number of readings outside of class. These readings will contain the core concepts and ideas of that particular unit. While these will not be the only reading for each unit, they will provide you with a foundation that will be built upon with supplemental readings later on in each unit.

2) Individual Readiness Assessment Test (I-RAT)

The first in-class activity of each unit is the I-RAT, based upon the assigned readings. These are in the form of a short quiz featuring multiple-choice questions focused on the key concepts and ideas of the readings. They are designed both to assess comprehension of these concepts as well as to maintain accountability for reading the assignments on time.

3) Team Readiness Assessment Test (T-RAT)

After finishing the I-RAT, you will take the *same test* as a team. You are allowed to discuss the questions as a team and decide on an answer for each question. You will know immediately how well you did on both of the RATs, receiving an individual and a team score. Individual scores will remain anonymous, but team scores will be posted on the whiteboard so teams can monitor one another's performance.

4) Appeals

After the T-RATs are completed, students can appeal any question they missed on the team test. This is an open-book process in which students can submit any reasons they want for arguing that their answer should be considered correct instead of wrong. Appeals are only granted when an argument is presented demonstrating comprehension of the concepts, but an incorrect answer due to a problem with the question itself, the readings, or the answers provided.

An appeal must be submitted in writing and explain in a couple short paragraphs why the team believes its answer to be correct. *Direct evidence from the reading must be used and cited.* Appeals are due by the end of the class period that the RATs were completed. I will provide time at the end of each session that involves RATs for teams that wish to appeal.

If an appeal is successful, the points will be added to the team score as well as for any individual that answered the same way as the team. Any team members who had the question correct initially will continue to receive credit on the question. ONLY the members of a team that appeal will be eligible for a change in score, meaning each team must complete and submit a separate appeal. If an appeal is unsuccessful (or your team does not submit an appeal) you will not receive points of the question, regardless of whether or not other teams successfully appeal the question.

5) Applications

Most of the class meetings will involve short lectures and individual or team based activities that will allow you to apply the material learned from the readings. Participation is a key element of this and many of these activities will be graded.

6) Peer Evaluation

One of the most significant concerns with working in a group and receiving team grades is that some of the members of the team may work harder than others or “free-ride” off those in the group willing to put in more effort. You will be given multiple chances to evaluate your team member peers during the course. There will be an informal evaluation at the mid-term point, used as feedback for individual team members, and then a formal evaluation at the end of the course. Additionally, you will complete an evaluation following each debate your team participates in. All of these evaluations are completely anonymous and give you a chance to reward or punish teammates based upon their team efforts.

Course Requirements and Grading

The breakdown of the grading for the course will be as follows:

- 1) RATs – 30% (40% individual, 60% team)**
- 2) In-class activities – 15% (some individual, some team)**
- 3) Debate Response/Participation – 25% (mix of team and individual)**
- 4) Final Paper – 20% (individual)**
- 5) Peer Evaluation – 10% (team)**

1) RATs

There will be a RAT given at the start of each unit, plus an introductory RAT on the syllabus that will be given the second day of class, meaning a total of 7 I-RATs and 7 T-RATs. The I-RATs will count for 12% of your total grade, and the T-RATs 18%, for a total of 30% of your course grade.

2) In-class Activities

Activities will occur in nearly every class that we do not have RATs or a debate scheduled. While not all activities will be graded, many will be. Some of these activities will be partially or completely individual, others team-based. In total, the activities that are graded will account for 15% of your total course grade.

3) Debate Response/Participation

Every unit will have at least one debate associated with it from the debate reader for the course. There will be some days where the class will just hold one debate, while others will have two different debate topics scheduled. Two teams from the class will actively participate in each debate (randomly chosen), while the other teams will monitor the proceedings, give feedback, and assess the team efforts. Whether or not your team will be one of the participants in the debate, you are responsible for having read the debate material, as every member of the class will be required to submit a short three page analysis of the debate due approximately a week after the debate. The specific assignment and requirements for these papers will be handed out in class. Your participation in the debates and your response analyses are worth 25% of your total grade. Participation will be calculated based upon the evaluations of your peers following each debate.

4) Final Paper

You will be responsible for writing a final paper of 12-15 pages that responds to one of several major themes regarding the Presidency of the United States. After choosing a theme, you will be asked to highlight the actions of three Presidents from across American history and explain how the expanded, contracted, changed, transformed, etc. the abilities of the Presidency. Questions for the paper will be distributed near the middle of the semester, but you will have a choice of which topic to focus upon. This paper will be worth 20% of your total grade and will be due at the same time as the scheduled Final Exam time for the course (*there is NO Final Exam for the course*)

5) Peer Evaluation

The final peer evaluation will count independently toward the course grade, while debate evaluations will be counted as part of the debate participation and response grade. This evaluation will allow you to assess the contributions and effort of each of your teammates and as mentioned above will be anonymous.

Course Policies

1) Attendance

Attendance itself is not graded, but it is a crucial component of the course requirements and your overall grade. Since graded in-class activities constitute a significant part of your grade, frequent absences will affect your overall course grade. *There are no make-up opportunities for in-class activities.*

If you know that it will be difficult for you to consistently get to class on time and stay the entire period, you should drop this course and take it the next time it is offered, when you have more time.

Since I understand that emergencies may arise, you may fall ill, or just not be having a good day, this course does have two **built-in “safety-valves”**:

- The lowest I-RAT and T-RAT scores will be dropped from your final grade calculation
- Only 80% of in-class assignments will count toward your overall grade. Thus, if we do 20 total assignments, 4 will be dropped (these can be either assignments missed because of absence OR the lowest scores). **Debate activities and participation cannot be dropped**, which are a crucial part of the course (if most of a team is not present to debate, it puts a lot of pressure on the remaining teammates).

2) **Late Assignments**

The only individual assignments you will be required to turn in outside of class are the debate responses and the final paper. If you turn these in on the due date by the time of class, you will be able to receive full credit. You can, with no questions asked, choose to submit the paper up to three days late for 80% credit. If you choose to submit the paper beyond that point, but prior to the last day of class, you will be eligible for 20% credit. The final paper can be turned in up to three days late for 80% credit, but keep in mind this may mean a temporary “Incomplete” grade for the course.

3) **Behavior**

Given the team-based approach and the number of students taking the course, the classroom will often be lively and noisy. I hope that you enjoy what we are doing in class and are able to get along with your teammates, but please keep in mind appropriate behavior and demonstrate courtesy and respect to the instructor and your peers. Some of the topics we will discuss are controversial and may produce emotional responses in some students. Although you may not agree with other viewpoints presented, it is essential that you respect those views. Personal attacks and offensive language will not be tolerated.

4) **Special Needs Policy**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring accommodations in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services.

Required Texts

There are three required texts. Two of these are very new, and you must purchase the noted editions, because they are updated with information on Obama’s administration that will not be available in previous editions, as well as updated information on Bush II. They are available at the campus bookstore, at Mary Jane Books, and online. The debate reader is a couple years older, so used copies should be available for cheap.

The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2011 by Sidney Milkis

Publisher: CQ Press College; 6th edition (July 5, 2011) ISBN-10: 1608712818

Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal by Stephen Skowronek
 Publisher: Univ Pr of Kansas; 2 Exp Rev Edition (February 2011) ISBN-10: 0700617620

Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive by Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson, eds.
 Publisher: CQ Press; 2nd edition (October 13, 2009) ISBN-10: 1604265655

Schedule

| Monday | Wednesday | Friday |
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| Aug 29 – Introduction to U.S. Presidency | Aug 31 – RAT: The Course Syllabus | Sep 2 |
| Sept 5 – NO CLASS – LABOR DAY | Sept 7 – Unit #1: Creating the Presidency (RAT #1) | Sep 9 |
| Sept 12 | <i>Sept 14– Debate #1: Framers would Approve of Modern Presidency</i> | Sep 16 |
| Sept 19 – Debate #1 Response Due | Sept 21 - Unit #2: Presidential Growth and the Party System (RAT #2) | Sep 23 |
| Sept 26 | <i>Sept 28 - Debate #2: Political Parties should nominate candidates through national primary Debate #3: Great Presidents are agents of democratic change</i> | Sept 30 – NO CLASS |
| Oct 3 - Debate #2/3 Response Due | Oct 5 | Oct 7 - Unit #3: Presidential War Powers and Backlash |
| Oct 10 | Oct 12 | <i>Oct 14 - Debate #4: Presidents have usurped the war power that belongs to Congress</i> |
| Oct 17 | Oct 19 - Debate #4 Response Due | Oct 21 - Unit #4: Progressive Politics and the Conservative Backlash |

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| Oct 24 | <i>Oct 26 - Debate #5: The Pres. should be directly elected Debate #6: President is a more authentic rep. of the American people than Congress</i> | Oct 28 |
| Oct 31 - Debate #5/6 Response Due | Nov 2 - Unit #5: Creation of the Modern Presidency | Nov 4 |
| <i>Nov 7 - Debate #7: The Media are too hard on Presidents Debate #8: The 22nd Amendment should be repealed</i> | Nov 9 | Nov 11 |
| Nov 14 - Debate #7/8 Response Due | Nov 16 – Unit #6: Dilemmas of the Modern Presidency | Nov 18 |
| Nov 21 | Nov 23 – NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break | Nov 25 – NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break |
| <i>Nov 28 - Debate #9: Fighting the war on terrorism requires relaxing checks on Pres. Power</i> | Wed 30 | Dec 2 - Peer Evaluations handed out |
| Dec 5 – Debate #9 Response Due | Dec 7 – Peer Evaluations due and Course Evaluations | Tuesday, December 13 Final Paper DUE by NOON |