

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 501  
THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY  
SUMMER QUARTER 2000**

Instructor: Scott Meinke  
2001 Derby Hall  
292-9496  
[meinke.3@osu.edu](mailto:meinke.3@osu.edu)

Office Hours:  
Monday 12:30-2:00  
Wednesday 12:30-2:00do...how is

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES:

This course is a survey of the American presidency. The objective of the course is to help you gain a better understanding of the presidency as a unique institution that shapes American politics; you will also learn about individual presidents and administrations in the post-World War II era. Majors in political science and related subjects will find that the class is designed to contribute to their courses of study. However, non-majors who have an interest in American politics will also find the course useful--since the presidency is at the center of the American system, comprehension of this institution is a crucial part of being an informed consumer of politics.

Among the topics the course will cover are presidential elections; presidential leadership style; the formal and informal power of the president; public opinion of the president; and the president's interactions with Congress, the Supreme Court, and the media. The course will also address the role of the presidency in domestic and foreign policy making. In addition to this series of set topics, class sessions will also involve discussions of current events and issues related to the president and the upcoming presidential election.

EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Your responsibilities for the course include regular attendance, daily preparation with the assigned readings, participation in class discussions, and timely completion of assignments.

**Preparation** for lecture and discussion is crucial. I expect you to read the material in the assigned texts for each day in advance of the class session. I also expect you to keep up with current events by reading the weekday *New York Times*. You are responsible for reading the major articles related to the president and the presidential election. On Wednesday of each week, you must turn in two one-paragraph summaries of major presidency-related NYT articles from the preceding 5 issues (Wed, Thurs, Fri, Mon, Tues). These short summaries must be typed and cannot be emailed.

Note: although I do not plan to give regular quizzes over the textbook readings, I reserve the right to give brief and basic reading quizzes if and when the class' participation does not indicate adequate preparation with the reading (any quizzes cannot be made up).

Each class session will involve some lecture and discussion. A small portion of your final grade (described below) will reflect the quantity and quality of your class participation. It should not be difficult for you to obtain full participation credit if you make an effort to contribute to class discussion at least on a weekly basis. If you are a person who prefers not to speak out in class, you may also earn participation credit by discussing class topics either via email or during my office hours.

With regard to **attendance**, I expect you to attend class regularly--lectures will contain new information in addition to reinforcing the readings, and the discussions in class are also central to the course. Attendance is not a formal part of your final grade, but I will keep record of attendance, and regular class attendance throughout the quarter can boost your final grade as much as 1/2 of a letter grade (i.e., a B could become a B+).

Finally, you will need to complete all course **assignments** in a timely fashion. Specific assignments include the NYT summaries, the midterm and final exams, the presidential election presentation, and the final paper.

The paper and presentation will involve an analysis of a presidential election, focusing on the issues, candidates, strategies, results, and political impact of the election. You will be divided into groups of 3 or 4 students to deliver a class presentation on an election, and you will be expected to meet outside of class to coordinate research and presentation on aspects of the election. *Each* student, however, will write an independent paper on the aspect(s) of the election that he/she presented in class. I will grade the presentations and papers individually. (A more detailed guide for the election project will be distributed early in the quarter.)

The midterm exam will be a combination of multiple choice and essays. The noncomprehensive final exam will be multiple choice only. I expect that all students (except graduating seniors on the final) will take exams at the time they are scheduled. If you cannot avoid missing an exam for a justifiable reason, you must tell me in advance, and I may allow you to take a make-up (essay only) exam without penalty. Others who miss exams will most often not be allowed to retake the exam; however, if there is a very good reason, you will be allowed to retake the exam with a grade penalty of 5 points for the number of days after the exam that you notified me, including the day of the exam. Note that a grade penalty of one letter grade per day late applies to the paper, and the election presentation cannot be made up.

#### ASSISTANCE

I want to help you to do well in this course, and I hope that you will feel free to contact me with questions about readings and assignments, concerns about the course, or for suggestions about studying and understanding the material. (Feel free to stop by just to chat about politics, too!) My scheduled office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus; these are the best times to find me, but I am always happy to arrange alternative times to meet if these are inconvenient. I also check my email and phone messages frequently.

Students with disabilities should talk to me *during the first week of the quarter* about their needs and any assistance or arrangements that may be necessary. Course materials are available in

alternative formats upon request. For such materials please contact Mr. Wayne DeYoung, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, 292-2880.

GRADING:

The items above will contribute to your final grade as follows:

Participation:	5%
<b>Preparation (NYT article summaries and reading quizzes, if applicable):</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Midterm exam:</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final exam:</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Paper (6-8 pages):</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Presentation:</b>	<b>10%</b>

The scale for the letter grades for each exam will be determined after the exams are graded, and similarly the final grade scale will be determined after all of the points for the course are added. The scale will never be any more strict, though, than 90=A-, 80=B-, etc. (I will assign +1-grades.) I do not expect that there will be any extra credit opportunities--please be aware of this at the outset.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

George C. Edwards III and Stephen S. Wayne. 1999. Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making 5/e (St. Martin's).

The Edwards and Wayne book is the core textbook for the course. You should read the assigned chapters before you read the additional readings for each class. Since each chapter contains a good deal of factual information, I recommend outlining the Edwards and Wayne chapters to assist you in studying.

Pfifflier, James and Roger H. Davidson. 2000. Understanding the Presidency. 2/e (Longman).

This reader contains excerpts from scholarly and popular analyses of the presidency. For most class sessions, you will be responsible for several of the brief readings from this book, and much of the class discussion will center on these readings. I recommend writing brief paragraph summaries of each Pfifflier and Davidson reading to assist you in studying and comprehending these excerpts.

The New York Times weekday issues.

As outlined above, you are responsible for staying current with events related to the president and the presidential elections. The NYT readings will be the focus of some class discussions, and the NYT is the source for your weekly typed summaries.

Books are available at SBX. Other campus bookstores may also stock the texts, and several online booksellers, including amazon.com and bigwords.com also have the books in stock (last time I checked . .

You can order the *New York Times* weekday issues through *The Lantern* office at a very reasonable price. Weekday issues are also made available for free in OSU dorms for dorm residents. If you wish to avoid the cost of the NYT, you may choose to read the paper online at nytimes.com, but note that finding the relevant articles is somewhat more difficult in the online version.

Although there are no prerequisites for this course, I will assume a certain very basic (i.e., high school civics) level of understanding of the American political system. If you are concerned that you may need a little review on the foundations of government, I recommend consulting one of the following introductory American government texts: *Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy* (Edwards, Wattenberg, and Lineberry) or *We The People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics* (Patterson). Copies of both are available at the OSU main library.

#### COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS:

(All readings are required. This schedule is tentative progresses.)

#### *Week 1*

6/19/2000: Course introduction

6/21: Political executives

Origins of the American Presidency

Studying the presidency

(Edwards and Wayne: chapter 1 and Appendix A)

(Pfiffier and Davidson: #1, 3, 4)

#### *Week 2*

6/26: Uniqueness of the American Presidency

Expectations of the president

Formal and informal powers

(P&D: 6,7,11,35)

6/28: Selecting Presidents

Nomination stage: primaries, caucuses, conventions

(E & W ch. 2)

**(P&D: 12)**

*Week 3*

- 7/3: General elections  
Campaign finance  
(E&W: ch.3)  
(P&D: 14,15)
- 7/5: The War Room video and discussion (no reading)

*Week 4*

- 7/10: Presidential style and decision making (E & W: ch. 7-8)
- 7/12: Organizing the White House for decision making (E & W: ch. 6)  
**(P&D: 24)**

*Week 5*

- 7/17: Domestic policy leadership and decision: do individual presidents matter?  
Midterm Review  
(E&W: ch12)  
(P&D: 34,36)
- 7/19: MIDTERM EXAM (in class)

*Week 6*

- 7/24: Foreign policy leadership and decision (E&W: ch.14)  
(P&D: 39,42)
- 7/26: Congress and the presidency: how and when can the president be influential?  
(E&W: 10) (P&D:30)

*Week 7*

- 7/31: Conflict between the branches: impeachment and the politics of scandal  
(P & D: 21,47, 50, 51)
- 8/2: The president and the public (E&W: ch.4) (P&D:20,46)

*Week 8*

- 8/7: The President and the media  
(E&W: ch.5)  
(P&D: 18)
- 8/9: The president and the judiciary  
(E&W: ch.11)

*Week 9*

- 8/14: Class Presentations  
Elections of 1948, 1952, 1956, 1960, 1964, 1968
- 8/16: Class Presentations  
Elections of 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992

*Week 10*

8/21: *NO CLASS: work on election papers.*

- 8/23: PAPERS DUE at the start of class  
Course conclusions: What makes a "great" president?  
Exam review  
(P&D:43,48)

**The non-comprehensive final exam will be given on Tuesday, August 29, 2000 from 7:30-9:18 a.m.**

COURSE CONDUCT:

*A very important note on academic honesty:* All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. If you have concerns about whether your written work adequately meets standards of academic honesty, do not hesitate to discuss your questions with me. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy.

And, a few minor pet peeves:

Please turn off audible cell phones and pagers during class.

Do not read newspapers or materials for other courses during class.

It is rude to leave class early (unless there is an emergency) without notifying me in advance.