

American Presidency

Vanguard University of Southern California

Class	Instructor
Semester: Spring 2016	Kevin Walker, Ph.D.
Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30-3:45	Office Hours: Mondays, 11-1; Thursdays, 10:30-1:30
Room: NMC 202A	Email: kevin.walker@vanguard.edu

Course Description

Throughout history and around the world, we find no political institution quite like the American presidency. The president executes both the laws of Congress and the very Constitution that creates it; he puts foreign and domestic policy into motion, and provides a sense of national identity. On the whole, the presidency drives American politics: it directly involves the American people and the attention of the whole world. Many believe, though, that it is an institution in trouble in modern times: the presidency appears unmoored from both the Constitution and ethical principle; it is at once powerful and destructive, and at the same time weak and ineffective; presidents themselves often find their office aimless, and their success as chief executives depends on superhuman abilities, which are far beyond them. This course is a study on these evolving features of the American Chief Executive. It will devote attention to the history, development and political significance of the presidency in the American constitutional system. We will study the original design of the presidency at the Founding, its development throughout our political history, and how the office might continue to develop in the future. Students will examine the uniqueness of presidential elections, and how they inspire so much of American politics; the importance of the president's role in a system of shared power with Congress, and how checks and balances are designed to bring out the very best of the institution; and how the executive relates to an independent and growing administrative state. The course will devote particular attention to the President's duties as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, and to what extent that duty is limited or granted by the Constitution. Lastly, the course will turn attention to the meaning of statesmanship, and the transformation of presidential "greatness" since the time of the founding. Throughout the course, we will learn to assess the success or failure of presidents, and their unique contributions, for better or for worse, for our regime, our liberty, and our national life.

Required Texts

Students are required to own the following texts (in order of reading):

- Nelson, Michael, editor. *The Evolving Presidency Landmark Documents, 1787-2014*. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, 2015.
 Jones, Charles O. *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
 Fisher, Louis. *Presidential War Power*. Third Edition. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013.
 Landy, Marc, and Milkis, Sidney M. *Presidential Greatness*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on the following:

- **Participation (10%)**. Be prepared to answer the reading questions. Inability to answer questions about the text will result in the loss of *one* percentage point; not having the book will cost *two* percentage points.
- **Constitution Quiz (5%)**. This is a brief quiz on relevant parts of the U.S. Constitution.
- **Minor Research Presentations (5%)**. These are short presentations on various historical, contemporary and scholarly studies on Congress.
- **Midterm Exam (25%)**. This is an exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the first half of the course.
- **Final Exam (25%)**. This is an exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the second half of the course.
- **Research Essay (30%, Phase I 5%, Phase II 5%)**. This is a 12-14+ page research essay on a topic of your choice related to Congress. There will be a prompt, and it will be due in two phases. Incorrect footnote and bibliographic citations will not receive higher than a B+. Late essays will receive no higher than a C-.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, or the use of someone else's text without quotes and proper citation, is considered a violation of the university's standards of academic integrity and will be grounds for serious disciplinary action. A first offense will be an F on the assignment; a second offense will be an F in the class and a referral to the Dean.

Disabilities

The Office of Disability and Learning Services provides reasonable accommodations for students who need assistance with learning, and for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your professor(s) and Disability and Learning Services. If you have a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include but not limited to; attention-related, learning, mental health, vision, hearing, physical or other health conditions), please contact The Office of Disability and Learning Services at 714-619-6550 or disabilityservices@vanguard.edu.

Note: See the syllabus on Moodle for further information about VU's policies and procedures.

Course Outline

I. The Executive Branch

Week 1 – The Founders' Presidency

January 11

The U.S. Constitution (in class)

January 13

Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency* – Chapter 1: Inventing the Presidency, and Chapter 2: The Presidency Finds its Place

Week 2 – Ratification Debates

January 18

Martin Luther King Day

January 20

Evolving Presidency – James Madison, *Notes on the Federal Convention*; George Mason, *Objections to This Government* and Cato, Letter #4 (1787); *Federalist* #69-73 (1788)

Week 3 – Appointments, Administration and Bureaucracy

January 25

Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency* – Chapter 4: Making and Remaking the Presidency
Evolving Presidency – *Myers v. U.S.* (1926); *Humphrey's Executor v. United States* (1935)

January 27

Evolving Presidency – Report of the Brownlow Committee (1937); Lyndon B. Johnson, "Great Society" Speech (1964); Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address (1981); *National Labor Relations Board v. Noel Canning, et al* (2014)

Week 4 – Leadership, Power and Persuasion

February 1

Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency* – Chapter 5: Connecting to and Leading the Government
Evolving Presidency – George Washington, First Inaugural Address (1789)

February 3

Evolving Presidency – Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, Letters on Presidential Power (1913, 1916); Woodrow Wilson, Fourteen Points (1918); Dwight D. Eisenhower, Little Rock Executive Order (1957); Barack Obama, Healthcare Address (2009)

Week 5 – The Presidency and Congress

February 8

Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency* – Chapter 6: Presidents at Work, and Chapter 7: Reform, Change and Prospects for the Future

February 10

Evolving Presidency – Andrew Jackson, First Message to Congress (1832); Andrew Jackson, Veto of the Bank Bill (1832); Teapot Dome Resolution (1924); John F. Kennedy, Civil Rights Address (1963); *Clinton v. New York* (1998)

Research Essay Phase I Due Friday, February 12

Week 6 – Impeachment

February 15

President's Day – No Class

February 17

Evolving Presidency – Articles of Impeachment Against Andrew Jonson (1866); Proposed Articles of Impeachment Against Richard Nixon (1974); *U.S. v. Nixon* (1974); Gerald Ford, Nixon Pardon (1974) ; Articles of Impeachment Against Bill Clinton (1996)

II. Commander-in-Chief

Week 7 – The Founders' War Power

February 22

Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power* – Chapter 1: The Constitutional Framework, and Chapter 2: Precedents from 1789-1900

Evolving Presidency – The Pacificus-Helvidius Letters (1793); Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Albert Hodges (1864); *Ex Parte Milligan* (1866)

February 24

Midterm

Midterm Exam – Wednesday, February 24

Week 8 – Modern War Power in Crisis

February 29

Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power* – Chapter 3: America Steps Out, Chapter 4: The UN Charter and Korea; Chapter 5: Taking Stock

March 2

Evolving Presidency – *United States v. Curtiss-Wright Corp.* (1936); *Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. v. Sawyer* (1952)

Week 9 – Assessing War Power

March 7

Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power* – and Chapter 5: Taking Stock, and Chapter 6: Vietnam and the War Powers Resolution

March 9

Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power* – Chapter 7: Military Initiatives from Ford to Bush I, and Chapter 8: Military Actions by Clinton

Research Essay Phase II Due Friday, March 11

Week 10 – Presidential War Power Today

March 21

Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power*, Chapter 9: George W. Bush, and Chapter 10: Barack Obama

March 23

Evolving Presidency – The Bush Doctrine (2001); George W. Bush, Signing Statement for the Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act (2005); *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (2006)

Week 11 – War and the Constitution

March 28

Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power*, Chapter 11: Covert Operations, and Chapter 12: Restoring Checks and Balances

March 30

John Yoo, “The Continuation of Politics by Other Means: The Original Understanding of War Powers” *California Law Review* (March, 1996)

III. Leadership and Greatness

Week 12 – Leadership in Crisis

April 4

Evolving Presidency – James Bryce, Why Great Men are Not Elected President (1888)
Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (1960)

April 6

Jeffrey Tulis, et al, “Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Spring, 1981)
Evolving Presidency – Jimmy Carter, Crisis of Confidence Speech (1979)

Week 13 – The Founders’ Greatness

April 11

Marc Landry and Sidney Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* – Chapters 1-2
Evolving Presidency – George Washington, Farewell Address (1796)

April 13

Marc Landry and Sidney Milkis, *Presidential Greatness*, Chapter 3
Evolving Presidency – Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address (1801)

Research Essay Final Draft Due Friday, April 15

Week 14 – Democratic Greatness

April 18

Marc Landry and Sidney Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* – Chapter 4
Evolving Presidency – Andrew Jackson, First Message to Congress (1829); Veto of the Bank Bill (1832)

April 20

Marc Landry and Sidney Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* – Chapter 5
Evolving Presidency – Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (1863); Second Inaugural Address (1865)

Week 15 – Greatness Lost and Found

April 25

Marc Landry and Sidney Milkis, *Presidential Greatness*, Chapter 6
Evolving Presidency – Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address (1933)

April 27

Marc Landry and Sidney Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* – Chapters 7-8

Finals Week

Final Exam – Friday 3:30pm-5:30pm