

POSC 211

Presidency and Executive Leadership

Colgate University

Class

POSC 211 – Fall 2021

Persson 109

Section A MWF 10:20-11:10; Section B MWF 11:20-12:10

Instructor

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesdays 12:30-2 or by appointment on Zoom

Course Description

Throughout history and around the world, we find no political institution quite like the American presidency. The office has certainly changed over the last two hundred years, but each president's contribution to the republic remains the same: he "take[s] care that the laws be faithfully executed"; he leads his political party and shapes its agenda; he is the face of the nation in foreign affairs, and serves as the civilian Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. More broadly, each president takes the republic as he received it, and then passes it to his predecessor, forming the thread that connects all of American history. In this, each president provides a sense of national unity, identity, and purpose, and takes on a certain leadership role that commands the attention of the whole world. Many believe, though, that the presidency is an institution in trouble: presidents often seem unmoored from both the Constitution and ethical principle; the presidency has become at once powerful and destructive, but at the same time, weak and ineffective. Presidents often find their office aimless, demagogic one minute and bogged down by expectations the next; their success often depends on superhuman abilities, which are far beyond them. As a result, presidents are often forced to abuse power, side-step the Constitution, or simply lie. How did it get this way? How might we learn to judge presidents well? How might we identify their faults more accurately? How might we make the most of their teachings and examples, and maybe identify greatness when it appears? This course aims to answer those questions by examining the evolving features of the American Chief Executive, with special attention focused on the historical development of the presidency in the American constitutional system, from the time of the Founding to the present, with a special emphasis on the primary sources. Overall, the course will meditate on statesmanship, and the meaning of presidential "greatness" since the time of the founding. We will learn to assess the success or failure of presidents, and their unique contributions, for better or for worse, for our national life.

Required Texts

Milkis, Sidney, and Nelson, Michael. *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776–2018*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2020.

Readings on the Presidency (packet available in the bookstore).

Course Requirements and Grading

Class grades will be based on the following:

- **Attendance and Participation (5%).** Come to class every day with the readings done and be ready to contribute to the discussion. Also be ready to give short presentations on minor research.
- **Reading Quizzes (15%).** These are short Moodle quizzes on the readings for randomly selected days.
- **Four Reflection Essays (40%, 10% each).** Short essays on certain disputes about the American presidency.
- **Three Exams (40% - 15%, 15% and 20%).** These are exams on first, second, and final part of the semester. The Final Exam will have a small comprehensive part. There will be study guides.

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.

Learning Services

If you have a disability that prevents you from doing as well as you could in this class, be sure to contact Evelyn Lester, Director of Academic Support and Disability Services, to discuss your specific needs and set up arrangements with the professor. Lynn's office is in the Center for Learning, Teaching and Research, and you can email her at elester@colgate.edu, or call her at 315 228 7375.

The Writing and Speaking Center

All writers and public speakers can benefit from constructive feedback on their essays or presentations. At the Writing and Speaking Center, a free service for all students, peer writing consultants can help you with a draft's focus, organization, grammar, style, citations, and many other aspects. If you're preparing a speech or oral presentation, peer speaking consultants can help you organize your content or practice your delivery to an audience. All meetings are private, and you may visit at any stage of your process, from clarifying your initial ideas to reviewing a final draft or practicing a presentation. See <http://www.colgate.edu/writingcenter> for more information or to reserve an appointment. The center is located in 208 Lathrop Hall. Phone: (315) 228-6085.

Course Outline

Students are required to read the following readings for each day of class. If classes get behind schedule, we will just continue in order of the readings.

Week 1 – Introduction

August 26

Welcome and Introduction

Week 2 – The Founding and the Presidency

August 30

Presidency, Chapter 1 – The Constitutional Convention (1-29)

September 1

Presidency, Chapter 2 – Creating the Presidency (33-78)

September 3

Alexander Hamilton, Federalist Papers #1, 23, 70-73

Week 3 – George Washington and John Adams

September 6

Presidency, Chapter 3 – Bringing the Constitutional Presidency to Life (83-96); George Washington, *Rules of Civility*; Letter to John Adams (1789)

September 8

Presidency, Chapter 3 – Bringing the Constitutional Presidency to Life (96-109); James Madison, Speech on the Removal Power and Letter to Edmund Pendleton (1789); Pacificus-Helvidius Debates (1793)

September 10

Presidency, Chapter 3 – Bringing the Constitutional Presidency to Life (109-115); George Washington, Farewell Address (1796)

Week 4 – Thomas Jefferson and the Jeffersonians

September 13

Presidency, Chapter 4 – The Triumph of Jeffersonianism (121-133); Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address (1801); Letter to Elias Shipman and Others (1801) (26-28)

September 15

Presidency, Chapter 4 – The Triumph of Jeffersonianism (133-137); Letter to the Danbury Baptists (1802)

September 17

Presidency, Chapter 4 – The Triumph of Jeffersonianism (137-147); Letter to John B. Colvin (1810) (28-29)

Week 5 – Andrew Jackson and the Jacksonians

September 20

Presidency, Chapter 5 – The Age of Jackson (151-168); Andrew Jackson, State of the Union Address (1829); Henry Clay, Speech on the Removal Power (1833-1834) (30-33)

September 22

Presidency, Chapter 5 – The Age of Jackson (168-175); Andrew Jackson, Message to the Senate Protesting the Censure Resolution (1834) (33-35)

September 24

Presidency, Chapter 5 – The Age of Jackson (175-184)

Week 6 – Abraham Lincoln

September 27

Presidency, Chapter 6 – The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (186-199); Lyceum Address (1838); Fragments on Slavery; Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address (1861); Alexander Stevens, Cornerstone Speech (1961)

September 29

Presidency, Chapter 6 – The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (199-203); *Ex Parte Merryman* (1861); Message to Congress in Special Session (1861)

October 1

Presidency, Chapter 6 – The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (203-213); Letter to Horace Greely (1862); Final Emancipation Proclamation (1863); Gettysburg Address (1863); Second Inaugural Address (1864)

Week 7 – Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft

October 4

Presidency, Chapter 8 – Progressive Politics and Executive Power (261-271); Theodore Roosevelt, “The Strenuous Life” (1899)

October 6

Presidency, Chapter 8 – Progressive Politics and Executive Power (271-287); Theodore Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, Chapter X (1913)

October 8

Exam on Weeks 2-6

Exam I – October 8

Week 8 – Woodrow Wilson

October 11

Mid-Term Recess – No Class

October 13

Presidency, Chapter 8 – Progressive Politics and Executive Power (287-291); Woodrow Wilson, “Leaders of Men” (1890); “What is Progress?” (1913)

October 15

Presidency, Chapter 8 – Progressive Politics and Executive Power (291-310)

Week 9 – Franklin Roosevelt

October 18

Presidency, Chapter 10 – The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency (347-357); Herbert Hoover, Consequence of the Proposed New Deal (1932); Franklin Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address (1933)

October 20

Presidency, Chapter 10 – The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency (360-363); *Humphrey’s Executor v. U.S.* (1935); Brownlow Committee Report (1937); Fireside Chat on the Judiciary (1937); Address to the Young Democrats Club (1940)

October 22

Presidency, Chapter 10 – The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency (363-371); *U.S. v. Curtiss-Wright Export Co.* (1936)

Week 10 – Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower

October 25

Presidency, Chapter 10 – The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency (371-378)

October 27

Presidency, Chapter 10 – The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency (378-386); *Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. v. Sawyer* (1952)

October 29

Presidency, Chapter 10 – The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency (386-394); Dwight Eisenhower, Farewell Address (1961)

Week 11 – John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson

November 1

Presidency, Chapter 11 – Personalizing the Presidency (401-411); John F. Kennedy, The Presidency in 1960

November 3

Presidency, Chapter 11 – Personalizing the Presidency (411-424); Great Society Speech (1964)

November 5

Presidency, Chapter 11 – Personalizing the Presidency (419-424); Address on Vietnam (1964)

Week 12 – Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter

November 8

Presidency, Chapter 11 – Personalizing the Presidency (424-438); *U.S. v. Nixon* (1974)

November 10

Presidency, Chapter 11 – Personalizing the Presidency (438-447)

November 12

Exam on Weeks 7-11

Exam II – November 12

Week 13 – Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush

November 15

Presidency, Chapter 12 – A Restoration of Presidential Power (455-468); Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address (1981)

November 17

Presidency, Chapter 12 – A Restoration of Presidential Power (468-487); Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate (1987)

November 19

Presidency, Chapter 12 – A Restoration of Presidential Power (476-487)

Week 14 – Bill Clinton and George W. Bush

November 29

Presidency, Chapter 13 – Bill Clinton and the Modern Presidency (493-518)

December 1

Presidency, Chapter 14 – George W. Bush and Unilateral Presidential Power (523-538); Address on Compassionate Conservatism (2002)

December 3

Presidency, Chapter 14 – George W. Bush and Unilateral Presidential Power (538-547); John Yoo, On the President's Authority to Conduct Military Operations against Terrorists (2001); Graduation Speech at West Point (2002)

Week 15 – Donald Trump and Joe Biden

December 6

Presidency, Chapter 15 – Barack Obama and Presidential Leadership in Polarized Times (551-575); Speech on DACA (2012); Remarks on the Selma to Montgomery Marches (2015)

December 8

Presidency, Chapter 16 – The Trump Presidency and the Resilience of Constitutional Government (581-604); Michael Anton, "The Flight 93 Election" (2016); Donald Trump, Mount Rushmore Speech (2020)

December 10

Documentary Discussion and Conclusion

Final Exams – Section A on Thursday, December 16, 9-11am; Section B on Friday, December 17, 3-5pm