

POLI 100A

THE PRESIDENCY

Summer Session I, 2019

Instructor: Huchen Liu	Lectures: Tue. & Thur. 2-4:50 PM @ WLH 2112
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Overview and Learning Outcomes:

The president is the single most powerful and visible individual in the American political system, and the presidency is a cradle of individuals of immense fascination, controversy, and lasting legacy. We do not, however, understand very well the basis for contemporary presidential power. The dividing and sharing of powers among the several branches of the federal government provides presidential authority with its basic institutional environment and stage for display, but also makes it analytically difficult to measure. Additionally, despite some caveats which are relatively inconsequential, the president is the only representative elected by the entire national electorate (the vice president is omitted for all practical purposes as an institutional actor in the modern era). This both provides presidents with a unique avenue of influence on policy and constrains them with a unique type of democratic accountability.

The presidency, therefore, is a difficult subject matter for research. This course is correspondingly somewhat reading-intensive, designed to provide a comprehensive but inevitably summary survey of fundamental political science scholarship on this institution. The course material consists of both important facts surrounding the presidency and works embodying different traditions, focuses, and methods that are more subject to debate and evaluation. Lectures will cover both of these portions. Reflecting the complexity of studying the presidency, the list of readings is designed to offer sophisticated, complementary, and perhaps contradictory perspectives on different aspects of presidential power. Some readings are difficult to grasp, and all may raise more questions than they answer. If they do, this is a good thing; ask those questions that they provoke! The selected readings are varied in flavor and include scholarly work (peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters), treatises during the founding of the republic, presidential papers, and some archival and journalistic material. Thematically, the course first covers the historical institutional development of the presidency and then focuses on different aspects of the president's formal and informal authority in relation to the other branches of the government. These discussions lead to one on the so-called "two presidencies," the idea that the president is much more powerful relative to Congress in foreign policy than in domestic policy. The course concludes by discussing the possible removal of the president from office via impeachment.

Successful completion of this course equips students with a strong familiarity with the past and present of the presidency, and exposes them to some of the best work on this institution. More generally, as an active learning experience this course trains students to think deeply and critically about social science topics, as well as to absorb knowledge efficiently. Students are expected to actively contribute to class discussions, which contain a great deal of flexibility, especially those on assigned readings. Graded assignments test students' factual knowledge as well as critical reading and writing skills. In-class reading quizzes capture the former, and take-home essays gear toward

the latter.

Required Reading:

All readings will be posted on the course web page on TritonEd.

Note: The course schedule displays readings that students are expected to complete before each lecture.

Grade Structure:

1. Attendance and participation (10%)

- Grades close to or equal to perfection are only given to reward exceptional records in attendance as well as active contribution to class discussion.

2. Reading quizzes (40%)

- Four short reading quizzes containing few and simple questions are given at the beginning of randomly selected lectures.
- Each one is graded Pass (10% of the overall grade) / No Pass (0%).

3. Critical essays (50%)

- Two take-home short essays are assigned, one at midterm and one at the end of the quarter, to evaluate students' ability to comprehend and critically discuss lectures and readings.
- Each one is worth 25% of the overall grade. The due dates and times are indicated in the course schedule below. Students will submit the essays via Turnitin exclusively. Prompts will be released a few days prior, as indicated in the course schedule.

Academic Honesty:

It is simple: Students must complete all graded assignments without collaboration with others.

Learning Disabilities:

Students with University-documented learning disabilities should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs.

Course Schedule:

Note: The course schedule may be continually updated as needed. Please check frequently for the latest version.

Date	Content	Reading
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July 2	Institutional development 1	Alexander Hamilton (1788a, 1788b)
July 4	<i>(Independence Day)</i>	-

July 9	Institutional development 2	Milkis and Nelson (2012), Chapter 2; Woodrow Wilson (1908), Chapter 3
July 11	The president and Congress 1	Neustadt (1990), chapters 1 and 3; O'Donnell (2014)

July 16	The president and Congress 2	Krehbiel (1998), chapters 2 and 7; Cameron (2009)
July 18	Essay 1 prompts released; Appointment power	Alexander Hamilton (1788c); <i>The Economist</i> (2018)

July 23	Essay 1 due via Turnitin at noon; Unilateral power	Eisenhower White House (1957a, b, c, d); Howell (2005)
July 25	The president and the public	Kernell (2006), Chapter 2; Kriner and Reeves (2015)

July 30	Essay 2 prompts released; Foreign and domestic policy	John F. Kennedy (1961); Wildavsky (1966); Canes-Wrone et al. (2008)
August 1	Impeachment	Gillman et al. (2013)

August 3	Essay 2 due via Turnitin at noon	-
