

The American Presidency

Government 3161, Fall, 2016
Final exam Wed. Dec. 14, 7 pm
Elizabeth Sanders (mes14) White 314 (5-2305)

MWF 12:20-1:10, McGraw 165
Office Hours: MF 1:30-3+; W 1:20-2:30

2016 will be one of the most unusual presidential elections in modern U.S. history because of the characteristics of the nominees and the perceived stakes. Those stakes recognize that the American presidency is the most powerful political office in the world, and the actions and ideas propagated by the American president have great potential for both good and bad effects on the nation and the world. This course takes a critical, analytical view of the powers, temptations, and constraints of the office, as well as the political processes around it.

We will consider explanations for the unusual outcomes of this year's nomination process, and their reverberation with a wider international revolt against globalism evident this year. But we will also focus on long-term patterns of presidential behavior. The central task is to assess the performance of the 20-21st century presidency, focusing on its legal powers and institutional development, recruitment process (nominations and elections), personal psychology, relationship to social groups, economic forces, and place in "political time." We will examine the remarkable (though not unprecedented) expansion of presidential power in the G.W. Bush and Barack H. Obama administrations, with an eye toward similarities/continuities, and differences effected by changes in party control, personality, and circumstance.

There will be two short essays (c. 5 pp each) based on the syllabus readings (topic choices will be distributed). Each counts for 15% of the final grade. There will be an in-class midterm (30% of grade) and a final exam (40 percent). You are strongly urged to follow NYT or WP political coverage. Blackboard readings are indicated with an asterisk. There will also be interesting, optional (opt) items at the Blackboard site. Only readings listed on the syllabus are required.

Books used, in whole or part, in order of use (and available for purchase at the Campus Store):

- 1) Joseph A. Pika, John A. Maltese, Andrew Rudalevige, The Politics of the Presidency, 9th ed.
- 2) Michael Genovese, Todd Belt, and William Lammers, The President and Domestic Policy, 2nd
- 3) Irving Janis, Groupthink (2nd ed)

Class handouts or Blackboard items NOT on the syllabus are **strictly optional** reading, fyi.

CRITIQUES, THEORIES, PERSPECTIVES

- Wk 1 *James Pfiffner, "The Magna Carta and the Contemporary Presidency, 2015"
Aug 24-26 *Supplement this with the short ES powerpoint on presidential power
 *Frances Fukuyama, "Political Decay and the American Election"
 *Arlie Hochschild, "No Country for White Men," Mother Jones, August, 2015
- Wk 2 Pika et al, "The Changing Presidency, p. 1-top 29
Aug 29- *Theodore Lowi, The Personal President, 97-117
Sep. 2 Pika et al, "Presidential Character..." 170-76 (skim the rest of the chapter)
 *Ron Suskind, "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush,"
 New York Times Magazine, OCT. 17, 2004
 *Dan P. McAdam, "The Mind of Donald Trump," The Atlantic, June, 2016
 *David Remnick, The Bridge, 3-25, 436-55, bottom p.572-579 [fix pp]; Mathew Dallek, The Right Moment, ix-xi, 25-41, 240-42 (2 articles)
 *Stephen Skowronek, "Presidential Leadership in Political Time," Nelson, 5th ed.; and
 *"Politics of Leadership at the End of the 20th Century," 83-116. (2 articles)

THE ELECTION SYSTEM, PARTIES, AND PUBLIC OPINION

- Wk 3
Sep 7-9
- *Pika et al, "Election Politics," 38-90
 - *Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, John Zaller, The Party Decides, 277-303
 - *John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, The Gamble, 1-12, 222-42
 - *Campaign Finance Law (CRS 15)
 - *Sasha Issenberg, "Victory Lab," two Slate articles on 2012 Election
 - *Framing I: Jeremy Shapiro, "Republican foreign policy manifesto: Obama is weak and I am strong" New York Times, Aug. 7, 2015
 - *Framing II: Iraq war in the 2015-16 campaign: Jeb Bush, Peter Breitbart (2 arts)
 - *Trump and his Party: Why he got the nomination, why he still needs a party
 - *(Opt), E. Sanders, "Explaining Donald Trump: Institutions, Economics, Ideology"

- Wk 4
S 12-16
- *Daniel Galvin, Presidential Party Building, bottom p. 4-38
 - *McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, Polarized America (summary, chart)

***1st Short Essay on readings due Mon. Sept 19 (see note on papers, over, and on BB)**

IDEOLOGY AND THE PRESIDENCY

- Wk 5
Sep 19-23
- * Thomas Langston, Ideologues and Presidents, ix-29
 - *Ryan Lizza, "The Obama Memos," New Yorker, Jan. 30, 2012
 - *W. Lance Bennett et al, When the Press Fails, 14-29, 48-57
 - *(Opt)Langston and Sanders, "Explaining Ideological Intensity in the Modern Presidency: The Case of G. W. Bush" (APSA paper)
 - ** (Opt) Col. Gian Gentile, Wrong Turn, xiii-33, 137-41

INSTITUTIONAL and LEGAL POWERS AND CONFLICTS

- Wk 6
Sep 26-30
- Pika et al book, "Legislative Politics," 210-58; "Executive Politics," 267-320; "Judicial Politics," 331-62
 - *Pfiffner, Power Play, 194-228 ("The Power to Ignore the Law")
 - *Robert Barnes, "Affordable Care Act Survives Supreme Court challenge," Washington Post, June 25, 2015
 - (Opt) Tim Dickinson, "The Spill, The Scandal, and the President," Rolling Stone
Why are executive agencies incompetent? Why aren't presidents good managers?

- Wk 7
Oct 3-7
- Finish Institutions Discussion * **MIDTERM in class on Friday Oct 7 ***

Fall Break Oct 8-11

PATTERNS IN POLICY: DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN

- Wk 8
Oct 12-14
- *Fred I. Greenstein, Inventing the Job of President, 1-top 5 (Opt) 63-83)
 - Genovese et al, President and Domestic Policy, (table), 24-26, 32-61, 88-135, 140-60, 215-35, 239-91, 316-43 [OPT 345-55]
 - *James Pfiffner, "Decision Making in the Obama White House"

THE PRESIDENT, INTEREST GROUPS, AND ELITE POWER NETWORKS

- Wk 9 *William F. Grover, The President as Prisoner, 1-13, 63-87
- Oct 17-21 *Thomas, R. Dye, Who's Running America? 1-5, 10-11, 55-60, 67-71, 78-81
- * Simon Johnson, "The Quiet Coup," The Atlantic, May 2009
- *Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," Perspectives on Politics 12(3) (April, 2014), pp.564-581.
- * Eric Lipton and Kevin Sack, "Big Senate Gift to Drug Maker," NYT, Jan 19, 2013
- * Ron Kampeas, "AIPAC kicks off major lobbying push against Iran pact," The Times of Israel, July 23, 2015
- * 3 Senators debate Iran Agreement Lugar/Bennett v. Schumer
- * 2 Senators voice opposition to Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade Agreement (TPP)
- * (Opt) Business contests new financial regulations (Reuters interview, Jan. 2013)
- * (Opt) Janine Wedel, The Shadow Elite, 1-21, 147-77
- * (Opt) Jacobs and Page, "Representation of Social Sectors in U.S. Govt" (table)

HOW AND WHY PRESIDENTS MAKE WAR, DOMESTIC AND INT'L CONSEQUENCES

- Wk 10 *Andrew J. Polsky, "The Presidency at War," in Michael Nelson, ed. The
Oct 24-28 Presidency in American Politics, 10th ed, 525-42
- *Linda J. Bilmes, "The Financial Legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan," Harvard, 2013
plus *graph "National Defense Budget Authority" in separate file
- *Sarah Kreps and John Kaag, "The Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Contemporary Conflict: Legal and Ethical Analysis," Polity, 2012
- * Julia Angwin et al, "AT&T Helped U.S. Spy on Internet on a Vast Scale,"
NYT Aug. 15, 2015
- Wk 11 *Alexander DeConde, Presidential Machismo, 3-14, 285-95
- Oct. 31- *Stephen Kinzer, Overthrow 1-6, 111-47
- Nov. 4 *Fredrik Logevall, Choosing War, 383-399
- *Iraq, Lie by Lie (Chronology of Iraq Decisions, Mother Jones, Sept-Oct '06
(Opt) E. Sanders, "Presidents, War, and Coercive Diplomacy"

Wk 12 Janis, Groupthink, 2nd ed., 1-13, 42-71, 97-158

Nov 7-11

Second Short Essay Due Nov. 21

Wk 13 Janis, Groupthink, 174-87, 242-71

Nov 14-21

Thanksgiving Holiday Wed. Nov. 23-27

Wk 14 *The Iraq War: A Result of Groupthink?

Nov 28- Dec.2 (Review for Final)

*Notes on papers/exams: Read the **writing pointers** carefully before starting; they are very important and familiarity will be assumed. Topic choices and instructions will be posted on BB and also discussed in class. Be aware that if plagiarism questions arise, the paper will be run through *Turnitin*. If you turn in your paper outside of class, deliver it personally to me. **Penalties for unexcused late papers** accumulate by day; a late paper submission or missed exam must be discussed with me before the due date and delays are granted only for documented illness, family emergency, or other crisis.

If there is anything that is interfering with your performance in this course, please feel free to talk with me, in complete confidence. I generally do not check email more than once a day, usually in the evening, so if you are experiencing a crisis and need to speak with me, you may call me at home.