

PO 300: Special Topics in American Politics  
Executive Power and the Modern Presidency  
Prof. Claire Leavitt  
Midterm Exam Review (4 March 2015)

*General instructions:* You will have the entire class period, 50 minutes, to complete the exam. The syllabus says that the exam will have three essay questions; in fact, you'll only have to answer **two** questions, which allots you 25 minutes per essay. (I'll give you a choice of three questions and you'll answer any two.) The exam will be a standard blue-book exam and open-note, which means you may have access to **printed versions** of all notes/readings/supplemental materials you have acquired throughout the course. You may not use computers or phones during the exam.

Below, I've provided a few examples of the kind of questions I'm likely to ask. These questions all ask you to make critical arguments, not necessarily to show "how much you know" or how diligent a note-taker you are. That said, I of course expect you to use evidence to support your argument; just deploy that evidence judiciously and effectively.

1. In this course, we have discussed many problems with the presidential primary process—that is, the process by which the presidential nominees for the two major political parties are selected. In your opinion, what are some of those most crucial problems, and how would you reform the process if you were given the power to do so?
2. Imagine that you have just been elected president of the United States and you are in search of a chief of staff who will be most effective at achieving your goals. What kind of chief of staff would you choose, and why? Which prior chief of staff would you try to model your choice after, and why?
3. Throughout the course, we have discussed five major sources of presidential power: the Constitution's enumerated powers; the power to persuade (bargaining); "going public"; executive orders; and the more ineffable "power of personality." From which source do you think the president obtains most of his power? In your argument, you should address why the other sources are (comparably) insufficient.
4. Make an argument that explains why Barack Obama ultimately ended up winning the Democratic party's nomination for president over Hillary Clinton after an exceptionally prolonged primary process.
5. Imagine that you were elected president of the United States yesterday and your most immediate legislative goal is to get major health-care reform enacted into law. What steps would you take toward accomplishing this goal? Once a bill is introduced in Congress, what steps would you take to ensure that the bill is approved and makes it to your desk for your signature? (Structure your essay as a complete plan of action, from the day after the presidential election to the day you sign the legislation.)

6. Imagine that you are a delegate at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and are making an argument for a unitary executive—a single person to head the executive branch as opposed to a more democratic governing/executive council. What is your argument?

7. Which is the more powerful branch of the United States government, the executive or the legislative? Ground your argument in the Constitution and in the Federalist Papers, but also on how the presidency has evolved since Franklin Roosevelt's administration (the beginning of the "modern presidency").