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PO 300: SPECIAL TOPICS IN AMERICAN POLITICS

Executive Power and the Modern Presidency

Spring 2015 (20 January-30 April 2015)

Class time: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9:00 AM-10:00 AM, CAS 322

Office Hours: Thursdays, Fridays 2:30 PM-4 PM, or by appointment

This course applies theories and concepts from within political science to the office of the American presidency. The vast majority of the cases we will examine are modern presidencies (defined here as Reagan-Obama); however, because understanding the modern presidency without proper historical context is next to impossible, we will also utilize historical examples and examine the evolution of the executive office over time. The course is divided into three main sections: We will begin with theory—constitutional foundations of executive power, modern presidential powers, the development of the institutional presidency, and presidential leadership, rhetoric and personality in the modern era. Second, we will examine the strategies candidates employ when running for president, beginning in the primaries and continuing into the general election. We will consider a number of proposed reforms to the campaign process and analyze how campaigns affect presidents' performance in office. Finally, we will delve more deeply into how presidents actually govern—their relationships with Congress, the courts, the bureaucracy, and foreign governments/leaders.

This course is 300-level, so I assume most if not all students have some sort of academic background in political science or politics (an introductory course, for instance), though such a background is certainly not required. The course is writing-intensive, particularly given the qualitative nature of studying the presidency; you will write three short (3-5 pages) response papers throughout the semester as well as one final paper (9-12 pages). There will also be one midterm exam, in essay format. Over the course of the semester, I hope this course will instill a thorough understanding of how the American executive works and train you to think critically about presidential authority and capacity.

If you're having trouble with any aspect of the course, in any way, do not hesitate to come talk to me during office hours or by email. I'll try to stick to a 24-hour response time with emails, so if you don't hear from me within 24 hours, it's because I somehow missed the email. Write again.

Your grade for this course will be based on the following criteria:

- **In-Class Participation (25%):** Because this class is a seminar and is run accordingly, in-class participation will constitute a significant portion of your final grade. Try to see this as a good thing: This course is small enough to foster the kind of in-depth discussions that are not only intellectually and academically beneficial, but are certainly much more engaging than listening to me lecture at you 3 times a week. Thus, active participation is crucial for doing well in this course. I understand viscerally that certain students may be shy than others, and I encourage you to come talk to me if you feel you're unable to speak your mind or ask necessary questions in class. Also keep in mind that you will be assessed not based on the amount you speak but rather on the quality of your contributions.

It should go without saying, but keeping up with the reading for each class session is imperative. You should also be sure to regularly read a newspaper of record—either the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* or the *Wall Street Journal* (the *Post* provides free access online). We will refer frequently to current events to test and refine theoretical arguments discussed in the course.

At the beginning of each class, I will roll a dice to determine if a quiz will be administered that day (the probability of a quiz at any given class meeting will be 1/3). The quizzes will be very simple, just one or two very brief questions on the assigned reading—if you do the reading, you'll ace the quizzes. Your performance on the quizzes will be factored into your final grade for participation.

- **Midterm Exam (25%):** There will be one in-class midterm administered approximately halfway through the course; the exam will be open-note and will consist of three essay questions.
- **Book Review (20%):** For this assignment, you will write a 5-page book review of one presidential memoir of your choice from the following list:

- Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Bantam Books, 1982)
- Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (Simon and Schuster, 1990)
- George H. W. Bush, *All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Other Writings* (Scribner, 1999)
- Bill Clinton, *My Life* (Knopf, 2004)
- George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (Crown Publishers, 2010)
- Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope* (Crown Publishers, 2006)

In your review, you will a) summarize and b) critique the memoir. How does the president structure his personal narrative? What does he believe are his greatest accomplishments and disappointments? Who are the main figures of the book? To what or whom does the president attribute his successes? What motivated him to run for president? What does the president identify as the greatest problems facing the world at the time of his memoir's publication? How honest a portrait do you believe the president presents of his time in office? You may address these and/or other questions in your review, and you should make an overarching argument about a) the book's usefulness as a historical and policy document and b) the book's narrative and artistic merits (i.e., how good a job does the memoir do of presenting a favorable portrait of its author?)

The review should be five pages (double-spaced with 1-inch margins) and need not cite any sources other than the memoir itself. You may turn in the review at any point throughout the semester—if you want to get it out of the way quickly, you may, or you may also turn it in toward the very end of the semester. It's up to you.

* Note: Obviously, President Obama has not yet written a memoir of his time in office; however, if you choose to read and write about *The Audacity of Hope*, you should instead make an argument about the merits of the book's policy proposals and how well it "sells" Obama to the electorate. You may also speculate about Obama's future memoirs by critically evaluating how effectively he has fulfilled the campaign promises he makes in *Audacity*.

- **Final Paper (30%):** For your final paper, you will critically examine one modern president's handling of one political event of your choice. For example, you may choose to focus on George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq in 2003, in which case you may choose to discuss which presidential powers Bush relied upon (including enhanced executive authority) as well as how he managed his relationships with administration officials, Congress, the American public and foreign leaders in order to achieve his goals. Why was Bush's strategy effective, and what does it say about the nature of executive power? (Other examples might include Obama's battle over the Affordable Care Act; Reagan and Clinton's weathering of the Iran-Contra and Monica Lewinsky scandals, respectively; or even negative policy choices—e.g., why *didn't* Clinton choose to intervene in Rwanda in 1994?) You will turn in your topic of choice on Monday, 6 April, and the paper will be due on Wednesday, 29 April (the last day of class). The paper should be 7-10 pages (double-spaced, 1-inch margins) and include a bibliography of all sources consulted.

Finally, you should familiarize yourself with Boston University College of Arts and Science's plagiarism policy: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>. I'm sure I don't need to say this, but don't plagiarize, and don't cheat; it's not worth it, and I assure you I'll be able to tell. Late assignments will not be accepted, except in extraordinary or documented circumstances. You will be docked 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from an A to an A-, or an A- to a B+) for every day that an assignment is late. Obviously, medical issues or extraordinary circumstances merit exceptions; please discuss with me if and when it's necessary. Please also let me know in the next few weeks whether you will require a laptop and/or additional time on the exam (you will need a certified note from the university's Office of Disability Services).

Course materials: There is one required textbook for this course:

James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency*, 6th edition (Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011)

Unfortunately, the BU library has not purchased the most recent edition. You may of course buy new or used copies of the print edition yourself or, to save on cost, you may decide to rent the textbook until 30 April. The digital edition is available for rent on Amazon.com; the digital version is an exact print replica of the book and is very easy to navigate and annotate. (If you don't have a Kindle or a tablet, you may download a Kindle or other e-reader application for free

onto your desktop and access the book from there.) You may also rent the print edition from BarnesandNoble.com. Either option will cost approximately \$25-40 until 30 April, versus the \$80 price tag of a new print edition.

All other reading materials will be made available via the course's Blackboard site.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Wednesday, 21 January 2015:

Introduction to the Study of the American Presidency

THEORIES OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER

Friday, 23 January 2015:

Constitutional Origins, Part I

- Articles of Confederation (1781) [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp]
- Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights (1789)
- Amendments 12, 20, 22, 25

Monday, 26 January 2015:

Constitutional Origins, Part II

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); chapter 1 [BB]
- *Federalist* 48
- *Federalist* 69
- *Federalist* 70

Wednesday, 28 January 2015:

Constitutional Origins, Part III

- David Nichols and Terri Bimes, "Resolved: The Framers of the Constitution Would Approve of the Modern Presidency." In *Debating the Presidency*, eds. Michael Nelson and Richard Ellis (2006) [BB]

Friday, 30 January 2015:

Evolution of the Executive Branch and White House Structure and Management

- Terry Moe, "The Politicized Presidency." In *New Directions in American Politics*, eds. John Chubb and Paul Peterson (1985) [BB]
- John Burke, "The Institutional Presidency." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson (2010) [BB]

Monday, 2 February 2015:

White House Structure and Management, continued

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 56-93

- Ryan Lizza, “The Gatekeeper: Rahm Emanuel on the Job,” *The New Yorker* (2009) [BB]

Wednesday, 4 February 2015:

Two Evaluations: Obama and Bush II

- James Fallows, “Obama, Explained,” *The Atlantic* (2012) [BB]
- “Farewell to All That: An Oral History of the Bush White House,” compiled by Todd S. Purdum (2009) [BB]

Friday, 6 February 2015:

Power as Bargaining, Part I

- Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (1960; 1991); chapters 1-2 [BB]

Monday, 9 February 2015:

Power as Bargaining, Part II

- Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (1960; 1991); chapters 3-5 [BB]

Wednesday, 11 February 2015:

Unilateral Action, Part I

- William Howell, *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action* (2003); chapters 1-2, 4 [BB]

Friday, 13 February 2015:

Unilateral Action, Part II

- Abraham Lincoln, “The Prerogative Presidency: Letter to A. G. Hodges” (1864). In *Understanding the Presidency*, eds. James Pfiffner and Roger Davidson [BB]
- Ryan Lizza, “Obama Breaks Up with Congress,” *The New Yorker* (2014) [BB]
- Sebastian Payne, “How Obama Has Used Executive Powers Compared to his Predecessors,” *The Washington Post* (2014) (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/07/10/how-obama-has-used-executive-powers-compared-to-his-predecessors/>)
- Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration” (2014) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/20/remarks-president-address-nation-immigration>)

Tuesday, 17 February 2015 (Monday-schedule substitution)

Going Public, Part I

- Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (1997), ch.1-3, 5 [BB]

Wednesday, 18 February 2015:

Going Public, Part II

- Brandice Canes-Wrone, “The President’s Legislative Influence from Public Appeals,” *American Journal of Political Science* (2001) [BB]

Friday, 20 February 2015:

Presidential Style, Part I

- Michael Nelson, “The Psychological Presidency.” In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson (2013) [BB]
- *Recommended:* Todd S. Purdum, “41+43=84,” *Vanity Fair* (2006) [BB]

Monday, 23 February 2015:

Presidential Style, Part II

- Carl M. Cannon, “Untruth and Consequences,” *The Atlantic* (2007) [BB]
- David Remnick, “Going the Distance,” *The New Yorker* (2014) [BB]

ELECTING A PRESIDENT

Wednesday, 25 February 2015:

The Primaries, Part I

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 19-26
- Barbara Norrander, “Democratic Marathon, Republican Sprint: The 2008 Presidential Nominations.” In *The American Elections of 2008*, eds. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Steven E. Schier (2009) [BB]

Friday, 27 February 2015:

The Primaries, Part II

- Barbara Norrander, “The Attrition Game,” *British Journal of Political Science* (2006) [BB]
- John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change* (2010); chapters 7, 15 [BB]

Monday, 2 March 2015:

The Primaries, Part III

- Cohen, Carol, Noel and Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (2008); chapters 1-2; 4-7 [BB]

Wednesday, 4 March 2015:

The Vice-Presidency and VP Selection

- Douglas Kriner and Joel Goldstein, “Resolved: The Vice-Presidency Should Be Abolished (Pro and Con).” In *Debating the Presidency*, eds. Michael Nelson and Richard Ellis (2006) [BB]
- John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change* (2010); chapters 19, 20 [BB]

Friday, 6 March 2015: MIDTERM EXAM (will include all material up to and including the vice-presidency)

March 7-15: SPRING BREAK

Monday, 16 March 2015:

General Elections, Part I

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010), pp. 26-45
- Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Steven E. Schier, “The General Election Campaign.” In *The*

American Elections of 2008, eds. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Steven E. Schier (2009) [BB]

- Kathleen Jamieson, “Do Campaigns Matter?” In *Everything You Think You Know About Politics...And Why You’re Wrong* (2000) [BB]

Wednesday, 18 March 2015:

General Elections, Part II

- Diana Owen, “The Campaign and the Media.” In *The American Elections of 2008*, eds. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Steven E. Schier (2009) [BB]
- Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order* (1993), chapters 1-2 [BB]
- *Watch*: “Daisy” (<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1964/peace-little-girl-daisy>); “Weekend Passes” (<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1988/willie-horton>); “Celeb” (<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2008/celeb>); “Clear Choice” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xsZ45Weng0>); “Right Choice” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F4LtTlktm0>)
- *Recommended*: James Fallows, “Slugfest,” *The Atlantic* (2012) [BB]

Friday, 20 March 2015:

General Elections, Part III

- Andrew Gelman, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State* (2010); pp. 3-23; 179-196 [BB]

Monday, 23 March 2015:

Third Parties

- Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus, *Third Parties in America* (1996); chapters 1, 5, 9

FROM CAMPAIGNING TO GOVERNING

Wednesday, 25 March 2015:

The Aftermath: Mandates, Transitions and Promise-Keeping

- Michael Genovese, *Memo to a New President: The Art and Science of Presidential Leadership* (2007); chapters 16-17.
- Kathleen Jamieson, “The Morning After: Do Politicians Keep Their Promises?” In *Everything You Think You Know About Politics...And Why You’re Wrong* (2000) [BB]

Friday, 27 March 2015:

The President and Congress, Part I

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010), pp. 131-141
- Charles Cameron, “The Presidential Veto.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency*, eds. George Edwards and William Howell (2009) [BB]

Monday, 30 March 2015:

The President and Congress, Part II

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 141-180
- Matt Bai, “Obama vs. Boehner: Who Killed the Debt Deal?” *New York Times* (2012) [BB]

Wednesday, 1 April 2015:

The President and the Bureaucracy, Part I

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 97-127

Friday, 3 April 2015:

The President and the Bureaucracy, Part II

- David Lewis, *The Politics of Presidential Appointments* (2008); chapters 1-3; 6-7 [BB]

Monday, 6 April 2015:

The President and the Courts, Part I

Topics for final paper due

- David Yalof, “The Presidency and the Judiciary.” In *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson (2005) [BB]
- Jeffrey Toobin, “The Obama Brief: The President Considers His Judicial Legacy,” *The New Yorker* (2014) [BB]

Wednesday, 8 April 2015:

The President and the Courts, Part II

- Keith Whittington, “Judicial Checks on the President.” In *The Oxford Handbook of The American Presidency*, eds. George Edwards and William Howell (2009) [BB]

Friday, 10 April 2015:

Presidential Abuses of Power and the Politics of Impeachment

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 230-251
- Richard Pious, “Presidential Impeachment Politics.” In *Understanding the Presidency*, eds. James Pfiffner and Roger Davidson (2006) [BB]

Monday, 13 April 2015:

The President and Public Approval

- Paul Gronke and Brian Newman, “Public Evaluations of Presidents.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency*, eds. George Edwards and William Howell (2009) [BB]
- Adam Berinsky, *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq* (2009); pp. 179-206 [BB]
- *Recommended:* John Zaller, “Monica Lewinsky’s Contribution to Political Science,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* (1998) [BB]

Wednesday, 15 April 2015:

Foreign Policymaking and National Security, Part I

- “The Pacificus-Helvidius Letters” (1793). In *The Evolving Presidency*, ed. Michael Nelson [BB]
- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 186-196

Friday, 17 April 2015:

Foreign Policymaking and National Security, Part II

- Nancy Kassop and Richard Pious, “Resolved: Presidents Have Usurped the War Power that Rightfully Belongs to Congress.” In *Debating the Presidency*, eds. Michael Nelson and Richard

Ellis (2006) [BB]

- “The War Powers Resolution of 1973.” In *The Evolving Presidency*, ed. Michael Nelson [BB]

Wednesday, 22 April 2015:

Foreign Policymaking and National Security, Part III

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 196-224
- Ryan Lizza, “State of Deception: Why Won’t the President Rein in the Intelligence Community?” *The New Yorker* (2013) [BB]

Friday, 24 April 2015:

Domestic Policymaking: The Federal Budget

- Allen Schick, *The Federal Budget: Politics, Policy, Process* (2010) [BB]
- Keith Whittington, *Constitutional Construction: Divided Power and Constitutional Meaning* (1999); pp. 162-173 [BB]

Monday, 27 April 2015:

Domestic Policymaking: Health Care

- Larry Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2010) [BB]

Wednesday, 29 April 2015: FINAL CLASS MEETING AND FINAL PAPER DUE (at the beginning of class)

- James P. Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* (2010); pp. 252-260