

# **AMERICAN PRESIDENCY**

**POL: 790:306:01**

**Spring 2015**

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## **Class Time:**

Monday and Thursday  
11:30 – 12:50 pm  
Milledoler Hall 100

## **Office Hours:**

Monday and Thursday  
10:30 – 11:30 am  
Art Library/Milledoler

## ***Course Description:***

The American Presidency is one of the most important features of our political system, but also, one of the most poorly understood by the public. The President is expected to ensure peace and stability at home and abroad; to be a faithful steward of our laws, traditions, and values; to protect and advance our individual and collective economic well-being. Such expectations stand in stark contrast to the institution as it was envisioned by our founders and administered until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The transition from a relatively weak institution to the Presidency as it stands today is one of the most compelling narratives of American political history.

Understanding the changes which have occurred and their social and political implications requires an appreciation of historical context and trajectory. This course will begin with an analysis of the “Pre-Modern” Presidency: How did our constitutional architects envision the role of the executive? What power did they exercise and how did this affect their relationship to other institutions of government? The second part of this course will focus on the evolution to the “Modern” presidency and the dramatic expansion of both presidential power and public expectations. Why did this transition occur and what are the implications for our society and political system? Finally, we will engage in a more focused examination of how these changes have affected the public’s relationship with the president, its relationship to other institutions, and the functioning of the presidency itself. It is here that we may gain a more nuanced understanding of what *should* be expected of the President given the relative powers and constraints of the Modern Presidency.

***Required Text:*** “*The American Presidency: Origins and Development: 1776-2011*” (6<sup>th</sup> Edition) by Sidney Milkis and Michael Nelson. CQ Press (2011).

**Course Requirements:** The class periods will consist of lectures that emphasize both the assigned readings and relevant current events. Each scheduled lecture period will have a reading(s) assigned to it. The expectation is that you will have completed that assignment prior to the lectures. The lectures are designed to bring together the information presented in the textbook and summarize it in a sensible manner. The lectures will not replace the need to read the book, nor will reading the book replace the

material presented in lecture. Both will present novel information about the American Presidency that you will be expected to know.

**Grading:** Your final grade is a product of two components:

- **Exams:** Three (3) non-cumulative exams (25% each – total of 75%). They will consist of short and long answer essay questions drawn from the material covered since the last exam.
- **Critical Analysis Paper:** Students are required to complete a 10-12 page (double-spaced) paper which critically analyzes a topic related to the American Presidency. This paper will be worth 25% of your final grade and will be due towards the end of the term. More detailed instructions will be provided – but, the topic of your paper should relate to one or more of the issues covered in this course.

**Make-Up Exams:** If for any reason (medical or family emergency) you are unable to take an exam as regularly scheduled, you must obtain a note from your Dean in order to take a make-up exam and contact me immediately to let me know that you are unable to take the exam as scheduled. Absence from an exam because of travel plans will not be excused. No exceptions to this policy will be made.

**Class Conduct:** The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the right of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Student conduct, which disrupts the learning process, will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action or removal from class per university policy.

Behaviors that interfere with effective teaching and learning, such as late arrival, leaving for the bathroom, early departures without instructor permission, talking to each other during the lectures, sleeping, playing with cell-phones, etc. will not be tolerated.

**Absences:** Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

*\*Lecture Powerpoints will be posted on sakai, but you will need a password to access them. This password will be provided at the end of the lecture. This hopefully provides you with an incentive to attend class. DO NOT SHARE PASSWORDS!*

**Sakai:** Our class Sakai website will have a variety of resources to help you throughout the semester. You will find recommended readings, assigned readings that are not in the text book, and lecture notes (found in the “Resource” section). The Sakai site also contains a discussion forum and chat room. Please use these areas to post materials you may find to be helpful to others as well as any questions you may have about the course. If you have a question, chances are that other people will as well, so please post them in the chat room so everyone can benefit from them. I check the chat room periodically and

will answer any questions then. Please also scan through the chat room to see if others have already asked your question.

To access the class Sakai website, (1) sign on to sakai.rutgers.edu, (2) sign in using your RU screen name, and (3) click on the class tab at the top of the page.

**Syllabus**  
**(\*Subject to Change\*)**

**Thursday (1/22) – Introductions, Syllabus, and Basics of American Government**

**Monday (1/26) Foundations of the American Presidency**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 1 & 2
- Cato IV and Federalists 69-73

**Thursday (1/29) Federalist Presidency (Washington to Adams)**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 3
- Evolving Presidency – Pages 45-58 (Hamilton and Madison Debate)

**Monday (2/2) Anti-Federalist Presidency (Jefferson to J.Q. Adams)**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 4
- Evolving Presidency – Pages 75-79 (Monroe Doctrine)

**Thursday (2/5) Jacksonian Democrats (Jackson to Buchanan)**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 5
- Evolving Presidency – Pages 84-93 (Jackson Speeches)

**Monday (2/9) Civil War (Lincoln)**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 6
- Evolving Presidency – Pages 93-108 (Lincoln Speeches)

**Thursday (2/12) Reconstruction and Beyond (Johnson to McKinley)**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 7

**Monday (2/16) Theodore Roosevelt and Executive Power**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 8 (218-242)

**Thursday (2/19) Inching Toward the Modern Presidency (Wilson to Hoover)**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 8 (242 – 258)
- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 9

**Monday (2/23) Review and Catch-up**

**Thursday (2/26) Exam I**

**Monday (3/2) Politics Presidents Make**

- Skowronek – Chapter 2 and 3

**Thursday (3/5) Roosevelt's Reconstruction**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 10
- FDR Speeches (“DNC Acceptance Speech” and “Four Freedoms”)

**Monday (3/9) Bargaining President**

- Neustadt – Chapters 3, 4, and 5
- \*Note – In Chapter 4 you only need to read 50-55 and 68-72.

**Thursday (3/12) Expanding the New Deal (JFK to Ford)**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 11
- LBJ Speeches (“American Promise” and “Great Society”)
- *Term Paper Topic Due Today!!! (Recommended)*

**Monday (3/16) SPRING BREAK**

**Thursday (3/19) SPRING BREAK**

**Monday (3/23) Going Public and Jimmy Carter**

- Kernell – Chapters 2 and 3

**Thursday (3/26) Review and Catch-up**

**Monday (3/30) Exam II**

**Thursday (4/2) Reagan Revolution**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 12
- Reagan Speeches (“To Restore America” and “City on a Hill”)

**Monday (4/6) Interpreting Elections**

- Dahl – Myth of the Presidential Mandate (1990)
- Dahl – How Democratic is the Constitution (Chapter 4) – Electoral College
- Pika and Maltese (Chapter 2) – Election Process

**Thursday (4/9) Clinton and the New Democrats**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 13

**Monday (4/13) George W. Bush**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 14

**Thursday (4/16) The Imperial Presidency**

- Pious – Inherent War and Executive Powers
- Adler – Clinton's Legacy on Warming (Recommended)
- Adler – Bush as Commander in Chief (Recommended)
- Pious – Obama's War on Terrorism (Recommended)

**Monday (4/20) Obama**

- Milkis and Nelson – Chapter 15

**Thursday (4/23) Political Polarization and the Media**

- Lee – Presidential Leadership and Senate Partisanship
- Cohen – If the News is so Bad, Why are Presidential Polls so High?
- Recommended (Cohen – Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda)

**Monday (4/27) Review and Catch-Up**

**Thursday (4/30) *Term Paper Due!!!***

**IMPORTANT DATES AND NOTES**

Snow Closings – <http://campusstatus.rutgers.edu>