Presidential Leadership at Historic Crossroads

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Fall 2022

Course Description

Starting with its inception in the eighteenth century, the American presidency has faced numerous inflection points that have reshaped the office. From its constitutional roots to Washington’s precedents, Jacksonian democracy, Lincoln’s Civil War power assertions, TR’s and Woodrow Wilson’s creation of the “rhetorical presidency,” FDR’s Great Depression and World War II presidency, the Cold War’s impact, Nixon and Watergate, the Global War on Terror, and Trump’s unprecedented tenure, the chief executive’s influence has waxed and waned depending on circumstances and presidential leadership. Using classic and new scholarship, as well as primary sources, this course will examine the challenges and responses of presidents when they have faced and sometimes constructed historic crossroads. Assigned scholarly literature will allow students to trace the development of presidential studies from a traditional emphasis on constitutional authority to the modern focus on political roles, which has produced a tension between the Founders’ concept of the executive branch and the contemporary “personal presidency.”

Course Readings


Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page paper or project of appropriate rigor

Learning Objectives

1. Understanding the concept of the crossroads metaphor as applied to the presidency.
2. Comprehending the meaning of leadership and how presidents have exercised it.
3. Examining why the Founders created a presidential system.
5. Determining how expansion of the electorate, from Jacksonian democracy through the twentieth century, changed the presidency.
6. Assessing the Civil War’s impact on presidential power.
7. Studying the rise of the “rhetorical presidency” in the early twentieth century and how it promoted the “personal presidency.”
8. Capturing how the presidency changed in response to the twentieth century’s economic crises and the rise of fascism/communism.
9. Understanding how the constitutional structure corralled Watergate’s excesses and deciding whether it remains strong enough to preserve the American democratic republic.
10. Contemplating presidents’ relationships with modern media.
12. Tracing how presidency scholarship has both reflected and captured the evolution of the office from its founding roots to its extra-constitutional contours.

Class Schedule

Week 1: September 22: The Crossroads Metaphor

Readings

- Barbara Perry, Jim Lehrer, and William Antholis, “The Presidency at a Crossroads: Understanding the Contemporary Executive,” recorded discussion, February 5, 2018, accessed on YouTube, (16:35-). (A link can be found in the Week 1 module.)
- Nelson, “Presidential Crossroads” and “Crossroads of the (c)onstitutional Presidency,” in Nelson and Perry, pp. 1–6, 28–48

Assignments

- Discussion Board One

Week 2: September 29: Presidential Leadership

Readings

- Greenstein, Chapter 1, “The Presidential Difference”
- Richard Neustadt, “Presidential Power,” recorded lecture, March 20, 1996, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, (7:48-). (A link can be found in the Week 2 module.)
- George C. Edwards III, “The Potential of Presidential Leadership,” 2016 Presidential Transition Project Paper, 2016, accessed on Texas A&M.edu. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.)
• Doris Kearns Goodwin, “Lessons in Leadership: Presidential Character and the Making of a Leader,” recorded discussion, March 11, 2019, accessed on YouTube, (24:00-). (A link can be found in the Week 2 module.)

Assignments

• Discussion Board Two
• Short Paper One due October 5
  • Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Week 3: October 6: The Founding of the Presidency and Beyond

Readings

• U.S. Constitution, 1787, Preamble and Articles I-III, accessed on the US Senate website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
• Alexander Hamilton, “Federalist Papers, Nos. 69 and 70,” New York Packet, 1788, accessed on the Library of Congress website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
• Saikrishna Prakash, “The Living Constitution: Always at a Crossroads,” in Nelson and Perry, pp. 7–27
• Bill Clinton, “President Bill Clinton’s Keynote Address at UVA’s 2019 Presidential Ideas Festival,” speech, May 23, 2019, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link can be found in the Week 3 module.)

Assignments

• Discussion Board Three
• Final Paper/Project Question due October 12
  • In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final paper or project will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular paper or project is worth pursuing.

Week 4: October 13: George Washington and the Lessons of Leadership

Readings
Lindsay M. Chervinsky, “George Washington,” all essays, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link to these readings can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Ron Chernow, “George Washington: The Reluctant President,” Smithsonian Magazine, February 2011. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Richard Norton Smith, “The Surprising George Washington,” Prologue 26, no. 1 (Spring 1994), accessed on the National Archives website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Elvin T. Lim, “Five Trends in Presidential Rhetoric: An Analysis of Rhetoric from George Washington to Bill Clinton,” Presidential Studies Quarterly 32, no. 2 (June 2002): 328–348, accessed on the Wiley Online Library website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
- Short Paper Two due October 19
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Week 5: October 20: Jacksonian Democracy: The First Step toward Universal Suffrage

Readings

- Daniel Feller, “Andrew Jackson,” all essays, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link to these readings can be found in the Week 5 module.)
- Harry Watson, “Andrew Jackson, America’s Original Anti-Establishment Candidate,” Smithsonian Magazine, March 2016. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)
- Carnegie Corporation of New York, “Voting Rights: A Short History,” Carnegie Corporation, November 18, 2019. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
- Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due October 26
  1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor’s feedback AND
  2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.
**Week 6: October 27: Lincoln and Presidential War Powers**

**Readings**

- Michael Burlingame, “Abraham Lincoln,” (all essays), accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link to these readings can be found in the Week 6 module.)
- Abraham Lincoln, letter to Albert G. Hodges, April 4, 1864, accessed on the Library of Congress website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)
- “Ex Parte Milligan, 71 U.S. 2 (1866),” accessed on Oyez. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Six
- Short Paper Three due November 2
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Week 7: November 3: Theodore Roosevelt/Woodrow Wilson and the Rise of the Personal/Rhetorical Presidency**

**Readings**

- Sydney Milkis, “Theodore Roosevelt,” (all essays) accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)
- Saladin Ambar, “Woodrow Wilson,” (all essays) accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)
- Theodore Roosevelt, “The New Nationalism,” speech, August 31, 1910, accessed on Theodore Roosevelt.org. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)
- Woodrow Wilson, “First Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1913, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.)

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Seven
Week 8: November 10: Franklin Roosevelt and the Modern Presidency

Readings

- Greenstein, Chapter 2, ”The Virtuosic Leadership of Franklin Roosevelt”
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “First Inaugural Address,” speech, March 4, 1933, accessed on The Avalon Project. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 module.)
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War,” speech, December 8, 1941, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link can be found in the Week 8 module.)

Assignments

- Paper/Project Preview due November 16
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper.
  - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

Week 9: November 17: The Cold War Presidency: Truman to Bush 41

Readings

- Greenstein, Chapters 3–6, ”The Uneven Leadership of Harry S Truman,” ”The Unexpected Eisenhower,” ”Coming to Terms with Kennedy,” ”Lyndon B. Johnson and the Primacy of Politics,” and Chapter 8, ”The Instructive Presidency of Gerald Ford”
- John F. Kennedy, ”American University Commencement (June 10, 1963),” speech, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link can be found in the Week 9 module.)
- Lyndon B. Johnson, “University of Michigan Speech, [on the Great Society], 5-22-7=64,” speech, May 22, 1964, accessed on YouTube. (A link can be found in the Week 9 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
- Short Paper Five due November 23
Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Week 10: November 24: Nixon and Watergate**

**Readings**

- Greenstein, Chapter 7, “The Paradox of Richard M. Nixon”
- "United States v. Nixon 418 U.S. 683 (1974),” accessed on Oyez. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 module.)
- Sam Ervin, “Senate Watergate Hearing,” clip, Senator Sam Ervin (D-NC) questions Nixon aide Bob Haldeman, accessed on the C-Span website. (A link can be found in the Week 10 module.)
- Alan J. Pakula, dir., *All the President’s Men*, clip, “Deep Throat” (Hal Holbrook) speaks to Bob Woodward (Robert Redford), Warner Bros. Pictures, 1976, accessed on YouTube. (A link can be found in the Week 10 module.)
- Richard Nixon, “Farewell to Staff,” speech, August 9, 1974, accessed on the C-Span website. (A link can be found in the Week 10 module.)
- Allida M. Black, “Championing a Champion: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Marian Anderson ’Freedom Concert,’” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 719–736, accessed on JSTOR. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 module.)

**Assignments**

- Rough Draft due November 30
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
  - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

**Week 11: December 1: The Media and Presidential Leadership: Carter v. Reagan**

**Readings**

- Greenstein, Chapters 9–10, “Jimmy Carter and the Politics of Rectitude” and “Ronald Reagan: The Innocent as Agent of Change”
- Jimmy Carter, “Address on Crisis of Confidence,” speech, July 15, 1979, accessed on C-Span website. (A link can be found in the Week 11 module.)
- Ronald Reagan, “First Inaugural Address,” speech, January 20, 1981, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link can be found in the Week 11 module.)
• Russell L. Riley, “The White House as a Black Box: Oral History and the Problem of Evidence in Presidential Studies,” Political Studies 57, no. 1 (March 2009): 187-206, accessed on the Wiley Online Library. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)

Assignments

• Discussion Board Nine

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**Week 12:** December 8: The Global War on Terror: Bush 43, Obama, and Trump

**Readings**

• Greenstein, Chapters 13–14, “George W. Bush and the Politics of Agenda Control” and “The Presidential Breakthrough of Barack Obama.”
• Jackie Calmes, “Donald Trump,” all essays, accessed on the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia website. (A link to these readings can be found in the Week 12 module.)
• Jennifer L. Lawless and Sean M. Theriault, “The People, the President, and the Congress at a Crossroads: Can We Turn Back from Gridlock?” in Nelson and Perry, pp. 72–85
• Lilliana Mason, Julie Wronski, and John V. Kane, “Activating Animus: The Uniquely Social Roots of Trump Support,” American Political Science Review 115, no. 4 (2021): 1508-1516, accessed on Cambridge Core. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 12 module.)

**Assignments**

• Final Paper/Project due December 14
Assignment Descriptions

Short Papers

Throughout each term students will complete five short papers. Each of these assignments should be 1–2 pages in length, in 12 pt. font, and double-spaced. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design. Prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings.

Discussion Board Posts

Students will respond to nine virtual discussion board posts for each course. Discussion boards are led by your section professor, who will provide an analytical prompt related to course material and instructions for participation. These prompts will give you the opportunity to interact with your fellow students and share your interpretation of course themes.

Question-and-Answer Sessions

Throughout the semester the lead scholar of each course will lead five Q&As. Students MUST attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must complete a 1-2 paragraph evaluation within 24 hours of participation. Note: If you cannot attend three of the five Q&A sessions, you may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 1–2 page review of topics covered for each missed Q&A.

Final Paper/Project

For the final assignment of each term, you will choose to complete either a 15-page research paper or a research project. The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts, documentary editing and transcription, podcasts, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans will not be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. Your section professor must approve research projects.

Both final assignment options require you to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that you do not yet know the answer to. You will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven answer. Regardless of whether you choose to pursue a paper or project, papers and projects are broken down into smaller assignments, or scaffolded, throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows students time to incorporate instructor feedback into their assignment.
Scaffolded Assignments

● Final Paper/Project Proposal (2%):

In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final paper or project. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information on and historical context for your topic (answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be very specific, but should outline how many weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing), and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (What is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?)

● Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (3.5%):

This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor’s comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan to use in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

● Paper or Project Preview (5%):

This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section professor. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in.

● Rough Draft (10.5%):

For a final paper, this should be, at minimum, the first ten pages of what will ultimately be your final submission. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in.

● Final Product (21%):

Final Paper: Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiographical essays.

Final Project: Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.