THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

Government 1540/DPI 115

Roger B. Porter

Description

This course analyzes the development and modern practice of presidential leadership in the United States. It examines the evolution of the modern presidency, the process of presidential selection, and the structure of the presidency as an institution. It assesses the ways in which presidents make decisions and seek to shape foreign, economic, and domestic policy. It explores the relationship of the presidency with other major governmental institutions, organized interest groups, the press, and the public. Its primary concern is with the political resources and constraints influencing the president's ability to provide leadership in the U.S. political system.

Class Hours

Class sessions are scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:40 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in Harvard Hall 104. The time and location of weekly section meetings will be determined the week of September 7. Graduate students will meet on Friday, beginning September 11, from 3:00-4:00 p.m. in Littauer 332.

Requirements

Course requirements include: (1) assigned readings; (2) class attendance and appropriate contributions to section discussions; (3) two five-page papers; (4) a mid-term examination; and (5) a three-hour final examination or research paper.

Students may elect to write a 20-25 page research paper on a topic approved by Professor Porter in lieu of the final examination. Students electing to pursue this option are encouraged to consider writing a paper using primary documents in a presidential archive.

Graduate students wishing to write a seminar length paper should also see Professor Porter.

Grading

A student's grade in the course will be based on four elements: (1) 10 percent on participation in sections; (2) 15 percent for each of the two short papers; (3) 20 percent on the mid-term examination; and (4) 40 percent on the final examination.

Undergraduates, Kennedy School students, and GSAS students are graded separately according to the norms of the College, the Kennedy School, and the GSAS respectively.
Course Materials

The attached reading list outlines the readings for each class session. Four books have been ordered through the Harvard Coop:


A fifth book, Professor Porter’s “Presidential Decision Making” is also a required text for this course. This book is distributed through the HKS CMO (in the HKS library) in order to offer it at a reduced price to students.

Copies of all five books are also available on reserve at the Lamont Library and the Harvard Kennedy School Library.

All additional readings will be available on the course page.

Appointments

Students may schedule appointments with Professor Porter through his faculty assistant, Alison Barron, who can be reached at 496-2454 or via email at alison_barron@hks.harvard.edu. Students should see their respective section leaders for information on leaving messages with them.
ASSIGNED READINGS

I. The Nature of Presidential Power

September 3: Overview and Introduction


The Federalist Papers #47 and #70.


September 8: Presidential Power: The Framers’ Design and Intent


September 10: Presidential Power: An Imperial Presidency?


September 15: Presidential Power: Rhetorical Power


September 17: **Presidential Power: Legislative Power**


September 22: **Presidential Power: Administrative and Executive Power**


**II. The Road to the White House**

September 24: **Getting Nominated**


September 29: **Getting Elected**


October 1: **Taking the Reins - Presidential Transitions**


**III. Organizing the President's Domain**

**October 6: The President and the Executive Branch**


**October 8: The President's Domain I: The Executive Office of the President**


**October 13: The President's Domain II: White House Organization**


IV. Presidential Decision Making

October 15: Presidential Decision Making Approaches and Models


October 20: The President and National Security Policy


October 22: The President and Economic and Domestic Policy


October 27:   **Mid-Term Exam**

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**V. The President, the Political System, and Leadership**

October 29:   **Shaping the National Agenda**


November 3:   **The President and Congress: Who Leads?**


November 5:   **The President and Congress: Mutual Oversight**


November 10:   **The President and the Courts**


November 12:   **Presidents, Parties, and Interest Groups**


November 17: **The Presidency and the Press**


Edwards and Wayne, “The President and the Media,” Presidential Leadership, chapter 5, pp. 159-201.

November 19: **The Presidency and the Public**


Edwards and Wayne, “The President and the Public,” Presidential Leadership, chapter 4, pp. 100-158.

VI. **Conclusions**

November 24: **Presidential Style and Character**


December 1: **Evaluating Presidents and the Presidency**


December 3: **Summary and Conclusions**