

The American Presidency

Western Washington University, Fall 2020

Professor: Dr. Catherine Wineinger

Course Number: PLSC 423 (3 credits)

Class Time: T/TH 10:00 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.

Room: Online – Synchronous

Office Location: Arntzen Hall 416

Office Hours: M 1-2 p.m., TH 12-2 p.m., or by appt.

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Course Description

This course examines the American presidency as a political institution. We will engage with current political science research to understand the presidential election process, the evolution of presidential powers, and the institutional and political constraints placed on U.S. presidents. Our goal is to move beyond personal critiques of individual presidents and toward more nuanced analyses of the presidency as an institution. What can presidential actions, leadership styles, and pathways to power tell us about the broader American political system? What is the president's role in American democracy – and what is the public's role in holding the president accountable?

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe the presidential nomination and election processes
- Understand and evaluate the institutional and political constraints placed on the presidency
- Analyze the evolution of presidential powers and policymaking
- Evaluate the causes and consequences of institutional changes over time
- Analyze current events related to the American presidency

Departmental Learning Objectives

- Possess substantive knowledge in their area of concentration (1)
- Exhibit analytical skills in interpreting data (2)
- Demonstrate writing proficiency (4)
- Demonstrate critical, independent thinking about politics and public life (6)
- Recognize the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of participating in, and contributing as a citizen in a diverse society (7)
- Understand and evaluate assumptions, values, and beliefs in context of diverse local, national and global communities (8)

Required Readings

All required readings and assignments – including articles, book chapters, videos, podcasts, etc. – will be posted on Canvas within the corresponding module/week.

Earning Your Grade

Short Analyses (x3).....	30%
Social Media Post.....	10%
Midterm Exam.....	20%
Letter to an Executive Agency.....	10%
Final Exam.....	20%
Participation.....	10%

Extra credit: You have the option to create up to 3 additional social media posts in line with the assignment guidelines. Each post is worth up to 1% extra credit. (Because of extra credit, your weighted group total on Canvas will read 200%. [Do not be alarmed by this!](#)).

Grading Scale

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
Below 60	F

Pass/No Pass Grades

Students opting for P/NP grading in Fall Quarter 2020 will receive a P for grades of **C- and above (note that this is a Political Science Department policy and may be different from other WWU classes)**. A grade of D+, D, or D- will be recorded as a NP, which will not earn credits or be reflected in the GPA. A grade of F will be recorded as NP on the transcript, will not receive degree credit, and will not be reflected in the GPA.

Important Dates:

Sept. 29 – Survey Due
Oct. 15 – Short Analysis #1 Due: Debate
Oct. 22 – Social Media Post Due
Oct. 29 – Midterm Exam
Nov. 12 – Short Analysis #2 Due: Race/Gender

Nov. 24 – Letter to Executive Agency Due
Nov. 26 – No Class – Fall Break
Dec. 3 – Short Analysis #3 Due: Accountability
Dec. 8 – Final Exam

A Typical Day

10:00-10:15am: Introduction/Prompted Free-Write
10:15-10:45pm: Lecture

10:45-11:00pm: Breakout Groups
11:00-11:20pm: Class Discussion

Class Conduct and Expectations

This is a **synchronous** online class, which means we will be meeting via Zoom during the assigned class times. This (virtual) classroom is a space in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. To enhance engagement and create a sense of community, **please turn on your camera if possible**.

In order for our class discussions to be meaningful and productive, it is essential that we treat one another with respect. This includes: recognizing that each person in this class is bringing with them unique life experiences and academic training; demonstrating self-awareness and a willingness to listen; and engaging in constructive critiques.

Attendance/Absences

A reminder: participation is 10% of your grade, so it is worthwhile for you to come to class each day! If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.

Office Hours/Contact Information

Office hours are for **you!** I want you to succeed (both in and beyond this class). If you have questions, would like to further discuss readings/assignments, or want to talk about politics, career goals, etc., please stop by during my (virtual) office hours on **Mondays from 1:00-2:00pm and Thursdays from 12:00-2:00pm**. You can also email me at cathy.wineinger@wwu.edu to schedule an appointment. I only read and reply to emails during regular business hours. Give me one full business day to respond to your email, but don't be afraid to follow up after that!

WWU Policies and Student Resources

Please visit syllabi.wwu.edu for a list of university policies and resources, including: plagiarism and academic integrity policies, disability resources, religious accommodation policies, etc.

A Note on COVID-19, Productivity, and Self-Care

You are taking this class under extraordinary circumstances, and I am teaching this class under extraordinary circumstances. I expect you to give your best effort, but I will also work to be flexible and accommodating (and I hope you will be patient with me as well!). **Your physical and mental health is always a priority.** Please stay in communication with me so that we can work together to find solutions to any issues that may arise this quarter.

The American Presidency: Fall 2020 Course Agenda

Below is the tentative schedule for this quarter. Please note that this course agenda is subject to change. If a change is made, I will send you an email and update the syllabus on Canvas.

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION

TH/ September 24 – Introduction: What Do You Want in a President?

- Cronin, Thomas and Michael Genovese. 2004. *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Excerpt.
 - Vaugh, Justin and Jennifer Mercieca. “Why presidents must play the hero.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, Feb. 17, 2014.
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WEEK 2 – STUDYING THE PRESIDENCY

T/ September 29 – Donald Trump and American Democracy

*DUE: Survey (Module 2 on Canvas)

- Drezner, Daniel W. 2020. *The Toddler in Chief: What Donald Trump Teaches Us About the Modern Presidency*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, Introduction
- Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. “This is how democracies die.” *The Guardian*, Jan. 21, 2018.
- Azari, Julia. “Forget Norms. Our Democracy Depends on Values.” *FiveThirtyEight*, May 24, 2018.

**Tuesday, September 29th – First Presidential Debate*

TH/ October 1 – Approaches to the Study of the Presidency

- Ragsdale, Lyn. 2018. “Studying the Presidency: Why Presidents Need Political Scientists.” In *The Presidency and the Political System*. Los Angeles: Sage. Michael Nelson, ed.
 - Duerst-Lahti, Georgia. 2008. “‘Seeing What Has Always Been’: Opening the Study of the Presidency.” *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 41(4): 733-737.
 - Sides, John. “Here are 5 keys to watching Monday night’s debate between Clinton and Trump.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, (Sept. 26, 2016).
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WEEK 3 – FOUNDATIONS OF THE MODERN PRESIDENCY

T/ October 6 – Constitutional Powers vs. Modern Powers

- Article II, *United States Constitution*.
- Federalist Nos. 68-70.
- Calabresi, Steven G. and Christopher S. Yoo. 2008. *The Unitary Executive: Presidential Power from Washington to Bush*. Yale University Press, Ch. “The Modern Debate”
- Weber, Jennifer L. “Was Lincoln a Tyrant?” *The New York Times*, March 25, 2013.

*Wednesday, October 7th – Vice Presidential Debate

TH/ October 8 – Contextualizing the 2016 & 2020 General Elections: The Electoral College

- 12th and 23rd Amendments, *United States Constitution*.
 - Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. 2017. “The 2016 Election: How Trump Lost and Won.” *Journal of Democracy*. 28(2):34-44.
 - Yoo, John and James Phillips. “Don’t demonize the electoral college – or the framers – as racist.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 2019.
 - Codrington III, Wilfred. “The Electoral College’s Racist Origins.” *The Atlantic*, Nov. 17, 2019.
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WEEK 4 – THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION PROCESS

T/ October 13 – Political Parties and the Invisible Primary

- Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. “Political Parties in Rough Weather.” *The Forum*. 5(4): 1-23.
- Silver, Nate. “We’re Tracking 2020 Presidential Endorsements. Here’s Why They Probably Still Matter.” *FiveThirtyEight*, Feb. 28, 2019.

TH/ October 15 – Caucuses, Primaries, and National Conventions

*DUE: Short Analysis #1 (Debate Analysis)

- Atkeson, Lonna Rae and Cherie D. Maestas. 2009. “Meaningful Participation and the Evolution of the Reformed Presidential Nominating System.” Symposium: Reforming the Presidential Nomination Process. *PS*: 59-64.
- Searles, Kathleen and Patrick Rose. 2019. “How the News Media Cover and Shape the Presidential Nomination.” In *The Making of the Presidential Candidates 2020*. Jonathan Bernstein and Casey B. K. Dominguez, eds. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 43-60.

****Thursday, October 15th – Second Presidential Debate***

WEEK 5 – THE PRESIDENCY AS A RACED-GENDERED INSTITUTION

T/ October 20 – Race and Presidential Politics

- Dyson, Michael Eric. 2016. *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Introduction: “The Burden of Representation.”
- Maxwell, Angie. “What we get wrong about the Southern strategy.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, July 26, 2019.
- Tesler, Michael and John Sides. “How political science helps explain the rise of Trump: the role of white identity grievances.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2016.

TH/ October 22 – Gender, Masculinity, and the Presidency

****DUE: Social Media Post***

- Beail, Linda, Lilly J. Goren, and Mary A. McHugh. 2019. “Madam President? Female Candidates, Masculine Norms of Executive Power, and the 2020 Nomination Contest.” In *The Making of the Presidential Candidates 2020*. Jonathan Bernstein and Casey B. K. Dominguez, eds., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1-23.
- Dittmar, Kelly. 2017. *Finding Gender in Election 2016: Lessons from Presidential Gender Watch - Highlights*. Barbara Lee Family Foundation and Center for American Women and Politics.

****Thursday, October 22nd – Third Presidential Debate***

WEEK 6 – PRESIDENTS IN CRISES

T/ October 27 – Rally ‘Round the Flag? Leadership and Elections in Times of Crisis

- Feinstein, Yuval. 2016. “Rallying around the President: When and Why Do Americans Close Ranks behind Their Presidents during International Crisis and War?” *Social Science History*. 40(2):305-338.
- Inglehart, Ronald. “The coronavirus may trigger tribal instincts. In times of crisis, people want strong leaders.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*. April 10, 2020.

TH/ October 29 – MIDTERM EXAM

*EXAM: open-book/open-notes midterm

WEEK 7 – THE INSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENCY

T/ November 3 – Governing the Executive Branch: The White House and the Bureaucracy

- Neustadt, Richard E. 1963. “Approach to Staffing the Presidency: Notes on FDR and JFK.” *American Political Science Review*. 57(4):855-864.
- Pfiffner, James. 2017. “The Unusual Presidency of Donald Trump.” *Political Insight*: 9-11.

TH/ November 5 – Post-Election Analysis

- No readings; **come to class ready to discuss the election results!**
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WEEK 8 – PRESIDENTIAL POLICYMAKING

T/ November 10 – Unilateral Action: What Can Presidents Do on Their Own?

- Wilhelm, Benjamin B. “Presidential Directives: An Introduction.” In Focus, *Congressional Research Service*, Nov. 13, 2019.
- Bolton, Alexander and Sharece Thrower. 2016. “Legislative Capacity and Executive Unilateralism.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 60(3): 649-663.
- Prokop, Andrew. “How Barack Obama is expanding presidential power – and what it means for the future.” *Vox*, Sept. 9, 2014.

TH/ November 12 – Working With (or Against) Congress

*DUE: Short Analysis #2 (Race/Gender Analysis)

- Tama, Jordan. 2013. “From Private Consultation to Public Crusade: Assessing Eisenhower’ Legislative Strategies on Foreign Policy.” *Congress & the Presidency*. 40(1):41-60.
 - Sides, John. “Do Presidential Honeymoons Exist?” *The Monkey Cage*, Jan. 21, 2009.
 - Azari, Julia. “Trump is a 19th-Century President Facing 21st-Century Problems.” *FiveThirtyEight*, Aug. 28, 2017.
 - Potter, Rachel Augustine. “Member comments: The other (less visible) way Congress oversees rulemaking.” *Brookings*, November 21, 2019.
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WEEK 9 – CHECKING THE PRESIDENT: INTERBRANCH RELATIONS

T/ November 17 – The President and the Courts

- Thrower, Sharece. 2017. “The President, the Courts, and Policy Implementation.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 47(1):122-145.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. “The Supreme Court’s ‘travel ban’ decision is what you’d expect if this were a normal presidency.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, June 27, 2018.

TH/ November 19 – The President and Congress

- Clinton, Joshua D., David E. Lewis and Jennifer Selin. 2013. “Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 58(2): 387-401.
 - Kriner, Douglas and Dino P. Christenson. “Congressional critics do check presidential power – by leading public opinion.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, Feb. 16, 2017.
 - Rudalevige, Andrew. “Yes, Congress could give Trump a line-item veto. And it might want to.” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, April 9, 2018.
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WEEK 10 – IMPEACHMENT

T/ November 24 – Impeachment from Johnson to Trump

*DUE: Letter to an Executive Agency

- Horst, Patrick. 2020. “The Politics of Removal: The Impeachment of a President.” In *Mobilization, Representation, and Responsiveness in the American Democracy*. M. T. Oswald, ed.
- Whittington, Keith E. 2000. “Bill Clinton Was No Andrew Johnson: Comparing Two Impeachments.” 2 U. Pa. J. Const. L. 422-465.
- Azari, Julia. “Presidential impeachments are about politics, not law.” *Vox*, May 15, 2017.

TH/ November 26 – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

WEEK 11 – CHECKING THE PRESIDENT: THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC

T/ December 1 – The Media and the President

- Clayman, Steven E., John Heritage, Marc N. Elliott, and Laurie L. McDonald. 2007. “When Does the Watchdog Bark? Conditions of Aggressive Questioning in Presidential News Conferences.” *American Sociological Review*. 72:23-41.
- Hetherington, Marc and Jonathan M. Ladd. “Destroying trust in the media, science, and government has left America vulnerable to disaster.” *Brookings*, May 1, 2020.

TH/ December 3 – Public Opinion, Activism, and Accountability

*DUE: Short Analysis #3 (Presidential Accountability)

- Ansolabehere, Stephen D. and Jon C. Rogowski. 2020. “Unilateral Action and Presidential Accountability.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 1-17.
- Gause, LaGina. “Black people have protested police killings for years. Here’s why officials are finally responding.” *The Monkey Cage, The Washington Post*, June 12, 2020.

FINALS WEEK

T/ December 8 – 8:00-10:00am

- *Final Exam – open-book/open-notes. Have a great winter break 😊*