



# The American Presidency

Political Science 3300

Spring 2012

<http://www.umsl.edu/~poldrobe/3300/sy3300.html>

Clark 413

Monday/Wednesday 11:00 to 12:15

Instructor: Dave Robertson, 801 Tower  
Office Hours,

Monday & Wednesday, 10:30-11:30

Thursday, 9:00-12:00 noon

*& other times are easily arranged*

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## 1. *What is the Course About?*

How do you know a good president when you see one? Does the president have too much power, or too little? Why would anyone in their right mind subject themselves to the process we use for choosing presidents? In *The American Presidency*, we will search for answers to these vital questions, against the backdrop of the 112th Congress and the 2012 presidential election. We'll examine the job of the presidency, and the election process. We'll look at what kinds of people become president, and how they do it. We'll try to understand what the framers had in mind when they designed the presidency. We'll come to grips with the tools of presidential power, and the people who help the president exercise those powers. We'll look at way presidents influence and respond to public opinion, the media, interest groups and political parties. Finally, we'll study presidential effects on economic, domestic, and foreign policy.

## 2. *Our Contract.*

By enrolling in this course, you and I have agreed to a contract with each other. I'll work hard to be prepared, enthusiastic, fair and respectful of every student and their opinions. I'll be accessible and try my best to return graded materials after no more than a week. By enrolling in the class, you've agreed to (1) attend every class, (2) to participate by asking questions and joining in class discussions, and (3) reading the assigned material and completing written assignments on time. Of all the consumer purchases you make, don't let your University of Missouri education be the one purchase where you expect *less* for your money.

### 3. *How to Get a Good Grade.*

The grade for the course will be determined in the following way:

- Participation constitutes **10%** of the final grade.
- The Journal constitutes **15%** of the final grade
- Exam 1 constitutes **15%** of the final grade
- Exam 2 constitutes **15%** of the final grade
- Exam 3 constitutes **20%** of the final grade
- The memo constitutes **25%** of the final grade

NOTE: You are not are NOT competing with other students for a grade. There is no curve in this course. Each student can get an A, or can get a D. It's up to you.

### 4. *Exams.*

There will be three exams: **February 20, March 21, and May 9**. Each of the exams will consist of three parts: 20 true / false questions worth 2 points each, 3 identification questions worth 10 points each, and an essay worth 30 points. The final exam will include a second essay question that asks you to integrate the course material. Note that the final exam is scheduled to begin at 10 am on May 9.

### 5. *Books and Readings.*

The following books, which are required reading in this course, are available at the UM-St. Louis bookstore.

- Michael Nelson, ed. The Presidency and the Political System, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009, Paperback, ISBN: 978-0-87289-964-3
- Joseph A. Pika and John Anthony Maltese, The Politics of the Presidency, Revised 7th Edition, Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009, Paperback, ISBN 978-0-87289-469-3
- Stephen J. Wayne, *The Road to the White House 2012*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Cengage Learning 2011, ISBN: 1111341508

### 6. *Participation.*

You **must** participate in this course actively in order for it to work well. You must prepare for and **attend** class, and you must contribute thoughtfully to discussion. To ensure fairness in allocating this portion of the grade, sign-up sheets will be circulated during many of the classes.

Your reading assignments are listed on the detailed class schedule. You are expected to read the material before coming to class, and you are expected to be prepared to discuss the reading material in class. You may be asked to discuss a question regarding the reading during the class for which the reading is assigned.

I *very strongly* encourage you to ask questions, including questions about current events and politics.

## 7. Campaign Memo.

You will write a 10 to 15 page campaign memo for the class. Your memo will provide strategic campaign advice to the Republican or Democratic presidential candidate for winning the general election in 2012. This assignment aims to encourage you integrate everything you are learning about the presidency, particularly about presidential elections. You will have to do research on your candidate, some opposition research, become familiar with the key states, constituencies, tactics and strategies.

**Option 1, for an Obama challenger (Republican or Democrat):** Your memo should include a specific plan for helping your candidate to win the electoral votes of Ohio, Florida, Missouri and a state of your choice. Begin by describing your candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Your plans should be consistent with the candidate's record. Next, describe President Obama's strengths and weaknesses, including geographical areas of strength and constituencies where he is strong. Third, describe and discuss the key messages of your campaign and the way these messages will attract the votes of swing voters. Fourth, rank the four or five most important issues in the general election campaign, and the way your candidate can deal with them. Fifth, describe the way you will allocate campaign dollars and workers to increase the likelihood of winning the electoral college. Prepare for a good economy or a bad one.

**Option 2, for Obama:** Your memo should include a specific plan for helping President Barack Obama win reelection. It should include specific analysis of Ohio and the three Southern states Obama won in 2008. Begin by describing the strengths and weaknesses of . Your plans should be consistent with the candidate's record. Next, describe likely opponents' strengths and weaknesses, including geographical areas of strength and constituencies where the opponent is strong. Third, describe and discuss the key messages of the campaign and the way these messages will attract votes. Fourth, rank the four or five most important issues in the general election campaign, and the way Obama can deal with them. Fifth, describe the way you will allocate campaign dollars and workers to increase the likelihood of winning the electoral college.

Please send me an email that identifies your candidate by **February 8**. The memo is due no later than Wednesday **April 11, at 5 pm**.

You will be graded on (1) demonstrated effort and research, (2) thoughtfulness and creativity, (3) effective execution (good writing).

**To understand politics in specific states, I very strongly urge you to begin by looking at the relevant pages in *The Almanac of American Politics* or *Politics in America*. Both are available at many libraries in our area, and at the reference desk of the Thomas Jefferson Library.**

**LATE MEMOS LOSE 5 POINTS THE FIRST DAY AND 1 POINT PER DAY AFTER THAT.**

## 8. *Journal.*

You will keep a Presidential Leadership journal during the semester. You'll read 1 magazine or newspaper stories about the American presidency or the current president each week (you may also read an editorial, and extended blog entry, watch a TV show on a presidential topic or attend a special museum exhibit). Every two weeks, you'll hand in a notebook in which you have two entries. Each entry should spend no more than one paragraph summarizing the main points of one story, and at least on paragraph reacting to it by exploring its significance for understanding the presidency (not just an individual person who is the president). Be sure to draw on course readings and discussions where appropriate.

The object of this journal is to develop three of your critical thinking skills: 1), your ability to summarize succinctly exactly what someone else is saying; 2) your ability to connect material from outside the course to the key themes of the course; and 3) to provide a cogent, reasoned response to the things you read. Each entry should be about two paragraphs: one paragraph to summarize the article, editorial, or opinion piece, and one paragraph to react to it. Again, you will write about one entries a week, two entries in all for each submission, or a total of 10 entries.

You will hand in the journal about every other week until the late April. the journal is due on **February 1, February 27, March 12, April 4, and April 25.** Please leave room for comments after each entry. Each time you hand in the journal, please include all the previous entries and comments. The best way to include everything is in a spiral notebook.

LATE JOURNALS lose 1 point a day.

The journal assignment will require you to pay closer attention to presidential developments this semester. You can do this by reading the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* national news section more closely, and by scanning the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*, and the *St. Louis Beacon*. It is my understanding that the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the New York Times, and USA Today are available for students for free on campus through the newspapers in Education program (the Wall Street Journal is available for purchase or in the TJ Library). I urge you to start with the Washington Post's 44 Politics and Policy page. The Washington Times and Real Clear Politics provide more conservative perspectives on the Obama administration. I monitor polls at Pollster.com, Real Clear Politics Election 2012, and Gallup. Current polls are available The Lexis/Nexis service, available through the UMSL library website, includes articles from many newspapers. The *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* and the *National Journal* are weekly publications available in the reference area, and they are outstanding sources for national political and policy developments.

## 9. *Plagiarism.*

Plagiarism means taking the written ideas of someone else and presenting them in your writing as if they were your ideas, without giving the author credit. Plagiarism (a word which comes from the Latin word for kidnapping) is deceitful and dishonest. Violations that have occurred frequently in the past include not using quotation marks for direct quotes and not giving citations when using someone else's ideas; using long strings of quotations, even when properly attributed, does not constitute a paper of your own.

Plagiarism in written work for this class is unacceptable. The University's Student Conduct Code classifies plagiarism as a form of academic dishonesty. Depending on the severity of the plagiarism, punishment can include receiving no credit for the assignment, failing the course and referral for university disciplinary action.

## 10. *Other Stuff.*

When I return your exam, *please* check to make sure that I have computed your grade correctly. Please be in your seat by the time class begins. Please turn off electronic devices before class begins. *Please do not hold private conversations during class.* If you do not understand lecture, if you have further questions about lecture, please don't hesitate to interrupt and ask your question. If I speak too quickly and unintelligibly, please tell me to slow down.



February 27 (Monday)            The Public Spectacle  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 92-119  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 210-235 (Miroff)

**JOURNAL 2 DUE (two entries; please hand in entire journal)**

February 29 (Wednesday)    Presidents and the Media  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp.120-142  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 236-263 (Jacobs)

March 5 (Monday)                Presidents, Political Parties and Interest Groups  
 READ: Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 311-340 (Tichenor; Milkis)

March 7 (Wednesday)         Presidential Personality & Character  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 143-166  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 142-166 (Nelson)

March 12 (Monday)              Presidential Skill and Management Style  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 166-199  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 108-141 (Quirk)

**JOURNAL 3 DUE (two entries; please hand in entire journal)**

March 14 (Wednesday)        The Presidency in Political Time  
 READ: Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 68-107 (Milkis and Landy)

March 19 (Monday)              Presidents and Congress  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 201-244

☞ **MARCH 21 (Monday) EXAM 2**

***March 26 & 28      Spring Break - Class does not meet***

April 2 (Monday)                      Presidents and Congress  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 401-434 (Dickinson)

April 4 (Wednesday)                Executive Branch Politics  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 245-297  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 509-534 (Pika)

**JOURNAL 4 DUE (two entries; please hand in entire journal)**

April 9 (Monday)                    Executive Branch Politics  
 READ: Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 341-400 (Burke; Lewis & Moe)

April 11 (Wednesday)              Watergate  
 READ: Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 463-507 (Rudalevige)

**MEMO DUE**

April 16 (Monday)                  Presidents and the Courts  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 298-333  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 435-462 (Yalof)

April 18 (Wednesday)              Domestic Policy  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 334-368, 461-481

April 23 (Monday)                  Economic Policy  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 368-416

April 25 (Wednesday)              National Security  
 READ: Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, pp. 417-460  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp. 489-508 (Polsky)

**JOURNAL 5 DUE (two entries; please hand in entire journal)**

April 30 (Monday)                  Reforms: Should We Change or Eliminate the Electoral College (?)  
 READ: Wayne, *The Road to the White House 2012*, pp. 334-367  
 Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, pp.192-208 (Edwards)

May 2 (Wednesday)                Conclusion  
 READ: "In G.O.P. Field, Broad View of Presidential Power Prevails" (Course Documents)  
 "Obama Bucks Congress on Guantánamo in Signing Statement"  
 TBA

☞ **MAY 9 (Wednesday) FINAL EXAM, 10:00-12:00**