

TO: GOVT 371 Students
FR: Larry Evans
DT: August 19, 2020
RE: Course outline

GOVT 371, *The Presidency*, is a comprehensive introduction to the politics of the U.S. presidency. There are no prerequisites and any student with an interest in American national political institutions, campaign strategy, or domestic and foreign policy making is more than welcome in the class. The presidency is a critical institution in American life, and the president as an individual is a pivotal player on the national political scene. As a result, we will consider the entire spectrum of relevant political actors and processes in this course, from campaigns and elections to the internal operations of the national executive and relations with other branches.

Given the magnitude of the political and policy challenges now confronting the U.S., as well as the ongoing 2020 election campaign, this is going to be a fascinating period to closely observe presidential politics and inter-branch relations. Not surprisingly, a major focus will be the historical meaning and likely consequences of the Donald J. Trump administration. But this class will touch on the full range of academic theories and empirical studies about presidential behavior and institutions, including the constitutional and historical underpinnings of contemporary disputes about procedure and policy. As much as possible, I also hope to expose you to the practical exigencies of electoral and presidential politics in 21st Century America.

Logistics

All students who signed up for the course should already be enrolled on the Blackboard site for GOVT 371. Details about assignments and other aspects of the course regularly will be updated on the Blackboard site. For Fall 2020, my formal office hours are Tuesdays, 2-5pm, and you can arrange an appointment with me via email at any time (clevan@wm.edu). On most days, I follow email closely between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m., and typically respond to messages within an hour or two.

Assignments and Grading

This semester, the readings for GOVT 371 will be structured around four books (all of which are available for purchase at the W&M bookstore or online in hardcopy or electronic form) and a number of shorter articles accessible online or via the Blackboard site. The books include:

1. *The Politics of the Presidency, 10th edition*, Joseph A. Pika, John Anthony Maltese, and Andrew Rudalevige, Sage/CQ Press, 2020.
2. *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*, John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, Princeton University Press, 2018.
3. *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America*, Naomi Murakawa, Oxford University Press, 2014.
4. *Unmaking the Presidency: Donald Trump's War on the World's Most Powerful Office*, Susan Hennessey and Benjamin Wittes, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

A schedule for the readings is provided below. Although course lectures and discussions will sometimes parallel, sometimes diverge from the reading schedule, you will be expected to have read the assignment for a particular day prior to the class meeting that day. Grading for the class will be based on four factors: a midterm exam (20%), a final exam (30%), a research essay (40 percent), and class participation (10%).

For the research essay, students will pick one significant policy/political challenge confronted by a modern president (FDR through Trump) and then write a paper (12-15 pages, double spaced) that addresses how core course themes can inform our understanding of what happened. As the course proceeds, I will provide a set of concrete questions to help structure the preparation of your essay, and all students are strongly encouraged to discuss their choice of topic with me individually by mid-October. Moreover, on or before October 16, students are required to submit (for my feedback) a three-to-five page proposal and summary of the likely contents of their research essays. The proposal will be considered as part of the overall essay grade.

Syllabus

8/19 No assignment

I. Constitutional Foundations

8/21 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 1: “The Changing Presidency”

8/24 William Howell and Terry M. Moe, “Why the President Needs More Power,” *Boston Review*, Summer 2019

8/26 Stephen Skowronek, “The Conservative Insurgency and Presidential Power: A Developmental Perspective on the Unitary Executive,” *Harvard Law Review*, 2009

II. Presidential Selection

8/28 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 2: “Election Politics”

8/31 Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, *Identity Crisis*, Chapters 1-2

9/2 Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, *Identity Crisis*, Chapter 3

9/4 Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, *Identity Crisis*, Chapter 4

9/7 Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, *Identity Crisis*, Chapter 5-6

9/9 Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, *Identity Crisis*, Chapter 7

9/11 Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, *Identity Crisis*, Chapter 8-9

III. Presidents, the Media, and the Public

9/14 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 3: “Public Politics”

9/16 Robert Zaretsky, “Trump and the Society of the Spectacle,” *The New York Times*, February 20, 2017

IV. Prefacing Presidential Performance

9/18 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 4: “Presidential Character and Performance”

9/21 Thomas B. Edsall, “The Fight over how Trump Fits in With the Other 44 Presidents,” *The New York Times*, May 15, 2019

9/23 Dan P. McAdams, “The Mind of Donald Trump,” *The Atlantic*, June 2016
Benedict Carey, “The Psychiatric Question: Is It Fair to Analyze Donald Trump From Afar?” *The New York Times*, August 15, 2016

V. The Institutional Context

9/25 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 5: “Legislative Politics”

9/28 Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins, “Trump isn’t changing the Republican Party. The Republican Party is changing Trump,” *Washington Post*, August 2, 2017
Ryan Lizza (2012), “The Obama Memos,” *The New Yorker*, January 30, 2012
George C. Edwards, “No Deal: Donald Trump’s Leadership of Congress,” *The Forum*, 2017, issue 3

9/30 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 6: “Executive Politics”

10/2 Midterm Exam

10/5 Peter Baker and Maggie Haberman, “For Trump, A War Every Day, Waged Increasingly Alone,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2018.
Anonymous, “I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration.” *New York Times*, September 5, 2018
David E. Lewis, “Deep State Claims and Professional Government,” *The Regulatory Review*, December 5, 2017

10/7 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 7: “Judicial Politics”

Sharice Thrower, “The President, The Court, and Policy Implementation,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 2017

V. Governance

- 10/9 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 8: “The Politics of Domestic Policy”
- 10/12 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 9: “The Politics of Economic Policy”
- 10/14 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 10: “The Politics of National Security Policy”
- 10/16 Pika, Maltese and Rudalevige, Chapter 11: “An Embattled, Defiant President”

Research Proposal Due

VI. Incarceration, Race, and Presidential Leadership

- 10/19 Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, Chapters 1
- 10/21 Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, Chapter 2
- 10/23 Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, Chapter 3
- 10/26 Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, Chapter 4 (first half)
- 10/28 Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, Chapter 4 (second half)
- 10/30 Murakawa, *The First Civil Right*, Chapter 5

VII. The Trump Difference?

- 11/2 Hennessey and Wittes, *Unmaking the Presidency*, Chapters 1-2
- 11/4 Hennessey and Wittes, *Unmaking the Presidency*, Chapters 3-4
- 11/6 Hennessey and Wittes, *Unmaking the Presidency*, Chapters 5-6
- 11/9 Hennessey and Wittes, *Unmaking the Presidency*, Chapter 7

Research Essay Due

- 11/11 Hennessey and Wittes, *Unmaking the Presidency*, Chapters 8-9
- 11/13 Hennessey and Wittes, *Unmaking the Presidency*, Chapter 10-end

TBA Final Exam