COURSE DESCRIPTION

Contemporary American presidents are correctly labeled “the most powerful man in the world” during their time in office. Yet presidents are often shocked – not to mention frustrated – to find the Oval Office confers fewer powers than they had expected when moving to Washington. White House reporters tend to carp; members of Congress tend to look out for themselves; bureaucrats tend to drag their feet. Is it any wonder that experienced presidents often question their own influence? President Truman declared, “I sit here all day trying to persuade people to do the things they ought to have the sense to do without my persuading them. That's all the powers of the President amount to.” Lyndon Johnson went further: “Being president is like being a jackass in a hailstorm. There's nothing to do but stand there and take it.”

This course examines the US presidency’s place in contemporary American politics. For example, we will investigate how presidents decide their policy priorities; what factors affect presidents’ public standing; what conditions shape the president’s relationship with Congress; and so on. In each, our strategy will be to unpack various explanations political scientists have offered and assess those with evidence, and having carefully studied the presidency across these spheres, we will conclude the course by bringing our informed insights to bear on some of the most important questions confronting presidents and scholars alike: What makes a president “great?” What is leadership? Why do some presidents succeed and others fail?

REQUIRED READINGS

Matthew Beckmann, *Pushing the Agenda*
Brendan Doherty, *The Rise of the President’s Permanent Campaign*
Coursepack (available for download on course eee website)
COURSE EXPECTATIONS
I designed this course to introduce you to presidential politics, with a special emphasis on developing students’ analytical skills. Thus I hope you’ll finish this course better able to understand what politicians and pundits are talking about, better able to place their actions in a broader context, and better able to assess and evaluate their competing proposals, claims, and evidence. In short, this course helps you become savvy political consumers.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
I take integrity issues very seriously, largely because I trust you to act honorably. Suffice it to say, you should abide by the highest standards in this course. I expect you to act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can thrive through the fruits of their efforts. Cheating, plagiarism, or any other violations of these principles will result in a failing grade for the course and a referral to the Dean’s office.

Complementing the work we do in class, I have created a series of online modules that build upon particular lessons. These modules offer various analytical exercises that give students (and me) immediate, personalized feedback. The whole batch costs $20, which you pay when signing up at rocketmix.com. To get full credit, you must complete the module before lecture on the date it is due.

The five modules for this course are….

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Open Date</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recess Appointments</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>1/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Honeymoons</td>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>1/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Communicator?</td>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>2/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Johnson Treatment</td>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>2/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking Presidents</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>3/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES
If you have a special circumstance that affects your ability to meet the course’s expectations – e.g., a brother’s wedding, a learning disability, or anything else – contact me about it right away. So long as it does not compromise fairness for all, I am happy to help.

COURSE GRADING (I’ll provide more information about each as it approaches)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocketmix</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

T 1/6  Getting Started
  - Cronin & Genovese, ch. 1
  - Kennedy, *Speech: The Presidency in 1960*
  RCKETMIX MODULE (RECESS APPOINTMENTS) OPEN – DUE 1/13

Th 1/8  The Founding
  - Federalist Papers 69, 70
  - Tulis, “The Two Constitutional Presidencies”

T 1/13  The Myth of the “Great Man”
  - Beckmann, ch. 1

Th 1/15  Studying the Presidency
  - King, “The Methodology of Presidential Research”
  RCKETMIX MODULE (HONEYMOON) OPEN – DUE 1/22

FROM CAMPAIGNING TO GOVERNING

T 1/20  Video: *The War Room*

Th 1/22  On Mandates and Honeymoons
  - Brody, ch. 2

T 1/27  Hitting the Ground Running
  - Gergen, ch. 8
  - Edwards, “Why Not the Best?”

RUNNING THE WHITE HOUSE - POLITICS

Th 1/29  The Permanent Campaign
  - Doherty, ch. 1-3
  RCKETMIX MODULE (GREAT COMMUNICATOR) OPEN – DUE 2/5

T 2/3  Presidents and the Press
  - Doherty, ch. 4
  - Auletta, *The New Yorker*, 1/19/2004

Th 2/5  Presidents and Public Opinion
  - Green, “The Other War Room” in *The Washington Monthly*, 4/02
  - Klein, “The Unpersuaded” in *The New Yorker*, 3/19/12

T 2/10  ***** MIDTERM  xxx MIDTERM  *****
RUNNING THE WHITE HOUSE - POLICY

PART A: DEVELOPING THE POLICIES

Th 2/12  Research Day
ROCKETMIX MODULE (LBJ TREATMENT) OPEN – DUE 2/19

T 2/17  Drafting the President’s Policies
- Beckmann, ch. 6
- Doherty, ch. 5

PART B: PROMOTING THE POLICIES

Th 2/19  Promoting the President’s Policies: Positive
- Beckmann, ch. 4-5

T 2/24  Promoting the President’s Policies: Negative
- Cameron, “The Presidential Veto” in the Oxford Handbook

PART C: IMPLEMENTING THE POLICIES

Th 2/26  “Controlling” the Bureaucracy
- Lewis & Moe, pp. 374-405
- Baker, “The CIA Kept Bush Ill Informed” in NYT

T 3/3  The Battle over the Courts
- TBD

THE SECOND PRESIDENCY (FOREIGN AFFAIRS)

Th 3/5  Presidents in Foreign Affairs & Cheney’s Law
- Yoo, Wall Street Journal, 3/15/1999
ROCKETMIX MODULE (RANKING PRESIDENTS) OPEN – DUE 3/12

ASSESSING PRESIDENTS AND THE PRESIDENCY

T 3/10  Presidents, Budgets, the Fed, and the Economy
- Abrams, “How Nixon Pressured Burns” in JEP

Th 3/12  Meshing the Man, the Office, and the Historical Context
- George Washington, Farewell Address
- Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

Th 3/19  ***** FINAL 1:30 - 3:30PM ***** FINAL *****