

# **The American Presidency**

Pol Sci-310, Fall 2005

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Office Hours:  
T TH, 9:30-11:30  
Wed., 10-12, 1-2  
And By Appointment

## **Introduction**

Our aim in this course is a deep understanding of the American presidency. In pursuit of this goal we will look closely at both the historical and contemporary dimensions of this political institution. At the start we will examine closely the founding of the American republic and the intense debates that swirled around the creation of an executive branch of government at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Next we will examine just how the nation's first several presidents shaped the office of the presidency. Another topic that we need to examine with care, apropos of the coming presidential election on 2 November, will be the politics of presidential elections. Next we will look at the close link that has developed between the presidency and the American people. We will also analyze the linkages that exist between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the national government. Finally, in this course we will take a look at the American presidency's role in the creation and implementation of domestic, economic, and foreign policy.

## **Required Texts**

S. Milkis and M. Nelson, The American Presidency (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (2003) CQ Press.  
J. Pika and J. Maltese, The Politics of the Presidency (Revised 6<sup>th</sup> ed.) (2006) CQ Press.  
S. Wayne, The Road to the White House 2004 (2004) Wadsworth.

## **Student Responsibilities**

I expect students (you all, that is) to keep up with assigned readings (!), participate in classroom discussions (in civil and spirited fashion, please), attend class regularly, and smile a lot. I would also like to see you shower the instructor with tens and twenties every once and again. I also expect all to keep up with current events as they relate to the American presidency. A part of this will involve reading articles that I will send out to the class on a regular basis. I would also like students to follow news related to the American presidency by any means necessary—try to catch political programs on the television, radio, news magazines, etc. I would strongly recommend listening to public radio, specifically Wisconsin Public Radio—I will be supplying you with a handout that lists the program schedule for 88.1 FM in Green Bay. You can also listen to the straight news programs on 89.3 FM—the morning program runs from 6 to 8 a.m., the afternoon one from 4 to 6 p.m. I will also be showing film clips in class—this is material that will be covered on examinations.

Grading in this class will be broken down in the following way: There will be three take-home essay examinations that will run about a dozen pages each. Each of these exams will count for 30% of your grade. The final 10% of your grade in this class will be based on your cumulative performance on five current-

events quizzes. I will base these quizzes on selected articles that I will be sending out to the class on a regular basis.

I also reserve the right to reward those students who participate actively and intelligently in classroom discussions. Absences will be treated in the following manner: I intend to take attendance at least once each week. Those students who register three to four absences will have their final grade reduced by 5%. Those students who register five to six absences will have their grade reduced by 10%. Those students who register more than six absences will have their grade reduced by 30%. This means, for example, that a student who earns a 90% in the course, but who has been absent five times will end up with a B/C (80%).

Finally, here is my grading matrix: A = 93-100%, A/B = 88-92%, B = 83-87%, B/C = 78-82%, C = 70-77, D = 60-69%, F = 0-59%.

## **Course Outline**

Week One: The Founding Period and the American Presidency

Readings: Pika and Maltese, chptr. 1; Milkis and Nelson, chptrs. 1 & 2;  
Wayne, pgs. 3-6 and 13-17.

Week Two: The First Shapers of the Office of the Presidency: Washington and Adams

Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chptr. 3.

Week Three: The First Shapers of the Office of the Presidency, Part Two: Jefferson and Jackson

Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chptrs. 4 & 5.

### ***Current Events Quiz One***

Week Four: The Politics of the Electoral College and Campaign Finance

Readings: Pika and Maltese, pgs. 43-46; 52-53; 67-70; Wayne, pgs. 23-25, 312-314, 321-328, and chptr. 2.

Week Five: The Political Environment of Presidential Elections

Readings: Wayne, chptr. 3 and pgs. 317-320; Pika and Maltese, pgs. 56-59.

## ***EXAMINATION ONE***

Week Six: Nomination Politics

Readings: Wayne, chptrs. 4 & 5 and pgs. 307-312; Pika and Maltese, pgs. 31-43 & 46-51.

### ***Current Events Quiz Two***

Week Seven: Presidential Campaigns: The General Election and Media Politics

Readings: Wayne, chptrs. 6 & 7 and pgs. 315-317; Pika and Maltese, pgs. 51-52, 53-56, and 59-66.

Week Eight: Making Sense of Presidential Elections

Readings: Wayne, pgs. 17-23 & 278-300; Milkis and Nelson, pgs. 405-411.

***Current Events Quiz Three***

Week Nine: The Link between the President and the American Public

Readings: Pika and Maltese, chptr. 3; Wayne, pgs. 269-278; Milkis and Nelson, pgs. 203-209, 270-278, and 350-353.

***EXAMINATION TWO***

Week Ten: The President and Congress

Readings: Pika and Maltese, chptr. 5; Milkis and Nelson, chptr. 7 and pgs. 209-212, 235-238, 330-337, 353-356, 390-392, and 395-400.

Week Eleven: The President and the Executive Branch Bureaucracy

Readings: Pika and Maltese, chptr. 6; Milkis and Nelson, pgs. 212-213 and 278-279.

***Current Events Quiz Four***

Week Twelve: The President and the Federal Courts

Readings: Pika and Maltese, chptr. 7; Milkis and Nelson, pgs. 279-281 and 364-367.

Week Thirteen: The Politics of Domestic and Economic Policy

Readings: Pika and Maltese, chptrs. 8 & 9 and Milkis and Nelson, pgs. 272-275.

***Current Events Quiz Five***

Weeks 14 & 15: The Politics of National Security

Readings: Pika and Maltese, chptr. 10; Milkis and Nelson, chptr. 6 and pgs. 213-219, 238-246, 289-296, and 414-419.

***FINAL EXAMINATION***