

# **The American Presidency**

In a constitutional democracy as carefully designed as the United States, each institution is created with specific ends in mind. The American Presidency is no different, fashioned at the Constitutional Convention with a set of specific purposes the presidency has evolved over the centuries through the alteration of these purposes by important chief executives and political movements. This class offers students a thorough introduction to the study of the American presidency by examining its original purpose and following its history over the subsequent centuries. In doing so it gives students the knowledge not only to understand how the office of President has evolved over time but a better idea of the forces that drive institutional development in all aspects of American politics.

## **Required Texts**

Marc Landy and Sidney Milkis, Presidential Greatness.  
Michael Nelson and Sidney Mikis, The American Presidency.  
The Federalist Papers (any edition)  
All other readings will be uploaded onto blackboard

## **Evaluation**

### Course Requirements

Participation and Attendance – 25%  
Student Presentation – 25%  
Short Paper – 25%  
Final – 25%

### Class Participation and Attendance

This course requires that each student complete the readings each week to participate actively in class discussions. Students should read the material and review the reading questions prior to every class. Students will be called to answer questions if there are no volunteers. Perfect attendance is expected. If a student must miss due to an illness, death in the family, school function, or some other understandable reason they should get in touch with the professor to work out an alternative assignment.

### Student Presentation

Students are required to select a presidential power and discuss in 10 to 15 minutes how this power has evolved over time.

### Short Paper

Students are required to complete and turn in a short paper (3-5) pages early on in the semester where they analyze the policies of one president and the long-term effects these policies had on the institution of the presidency. Students may choose any president they wish excluding the most recent (difficult to judge long-term effects when it happened ten years ago).

## Final

Students will be required to take a final examination that will consist partially of multiple-choice and partially of short-answer questions. The exam will test students' retention of the information covered in the course.

## **Schedule of Readings and Class Topics**

### **Week 1 – Designing the American Presidency**

#### *Required Readings:*

The US Constitution  
Nelson and Milkis, *The American Presidency*, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2  
Federalist 51, 69-73

#### *Recommend Readings:*

Landy and Milkis, *American Government*, Chapter 8 “The Presidency.”  
Ahkil Amar, *America’s Constitution*, Chapter 5, “Presidential Powers”  
Charles Thatch, *The Creation of the Presidency*  
Thomas E Cronin, *Inventing the American Presidency*

### **Week 2 – Presidential Selection**

#### *Required Readings:*

James W Ceaser, “Presidential Selection”  
Herbert Storing, “In Defense of the Electoral College”  
Martin Diamond, “The Electoral College and the American Idea of Democracy”  
The Declaration of Independence

### **Week 3 – Consolidating Executive Power and the Importance of Character: The presidency of George Washington**

#### Required Readings:

Landy & Milkis, *Presidential Greatness*, Chapter 2  
Gordon Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, Chapter 1

#### Recommended Readings:

Washington, “Farewell Address”  
Washington, “Thanksgiving Proclamation”  
Jeffery Tulis, “On Presidential Character”

### **Week 4 – Democratizing the Presidency: Jefferson and Jackson**

#### *Required Readings:*

Landy & Milkis, *Presidential Greatness*, Chapters 3 & 4

Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address"  
Andrew Jackson, "Bank Veto Message"

### **Week 5 – Executive Statesmanship**

Required Readings:

Landy and Milkis, *Presidential Greatness*, Chapter 5  
Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Albert G Hodges  
Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural  
*Ex Parte Milligan*

Recommended Readings:

George Washington, "Farewell Address"  
George Washington, "Thanksgiving Proclamation"  
Jeffery Tulis, "On Presidential Character"

### **Week 6 – Progressive Politics and a New Conception of Presidential Leadership**

*Required Readings:*

Nelson & Milkis, *The American Presidency*, Chapters 8 & 9  
Woodrow Wilson, Constitutional Government in the US

### **Week 7 – Building the New Deal State**

*Required Readings:*

Nelson & Milkis, *The American Presidency*, Chapter 11  
FDR, "The Commonwealth Club Address"  
FDR, "State of the Union Address" (1944)

*Recommended Readings:*

Sidney Milkis, *The President and the Parties*

### **SHORT PAPER DUE**

### **Week 8 – Personalizing the Presidency**

*Required Readings:*

Nelson & Milkis, *The American Presidency*, Chapter 11 - 14

*Recommended Readings:*

James Bryce, "Why Great Men Are Not Chosen to be President"  
JFK, "First Inaugural Address"  
Nixon vs Kennedy Presidential Debate (Watch)

### **Week 9 – Obama and Trump: Modern Campaigns and Presidential Persuasion**

Required Readings:

Nelson and Milks, Chapters 13 & 14

Barack Obama, "Farwell Address"

Donald Trump, "Inaugural Address"

**Week 10 – The Modern Presidency: Executive in Chief or Persuader in Chief**

*Required Readings:*

James Yoo, Crisis and Command (Selections)

Herbert Storing, "Old and New Statesmanship"

Landy & Milkis, *Presidential Greatness*, Conclusion

**Week 11 – Student Presentations**

**Week 12 – Student Presentations**

**Week 13 – Student Presentations**