

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

Government 1540/DPI-115

Roger B. Porter

Harvard University

Fall 2015

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Description

This course analyzes the development and modern practice of presidential leadership in the United States. It examines the evolution of the modern presidency, the process of presidential selection, and the structure of the presidency as an institution. It assesses the ways in which presidents make decisions and seek to shape foreign, economic, and domestic policy. It explores the relationship of the presidency with other major governmental institutions, organized interest groups, the press, and the public. Its primary concern is with the political resources and constraints influencing the president's ability to provide leadership in the U.S. political system.

Class Hours

Class sessions are scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:40 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in Harvard Hall 104. The time and location of weekly section meetings will be determined the week of September 7. Graduate students will meet on Friday, beginning September 11, from 3:00-4:00 p.m. in Littauer 332.

Requirements

Course requirements include: (1) assigned readings; (2) class attendance and appropriate contributions to section discussions; (3) two five-page papers; (4) a mid-term examination; and (5) a three-hour final examination or research paper.

Students may elect to write a 20-25 page research paper on a topic approved by Professor Porter in lieu of the final examination. Students electing to pursue this option are encouraged to consider writing a paper using primary documents in a presidential archive.

Graduate students wishing to write a seminar length paper should also see Professor Porter.

Grading

A student's grade in the course will be based on four elements: (1) 10 percent on participation in sections; (2) 15 percent for each of the two short papers; (3) 20 percent on the mid-term examination; and (4) 40 percent on the final examination.

Undergraduates, Kennedy School students, and GSAS students are graded separately according to the norms of the College, the Kennedy School, and the GSAS respectively.

Course Materials

The attached reading list outlines the readings for each class session. Four books have been ordered through the Harvard Coop:

Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents, 1990 edition, (The Free Press, 1990).

Michael Nelson, The Presidency and the Political System, 10th edition, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2014).

Samuel Kernell, Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, 4th edition, (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2007).

George C. Edwards and Stephen J. Wayne, Presidential Leadership, 9th edition, (Thomson Wadsworth, 2014).

A fifth book, Professor Porter's "Presidential Decision Making" is also a required text for this course. This book is distributed through the HKS CMO (in the HKS library) in order to offer it at a reduced price to students.

Copies of all five books are also available on reserve at the Lamont Library and the Harvard Kennedy School Library.

All additional readings will be available on the course page.

Appointments

Students may schedule appointments with Professor Porter through his faculty assistant, Alison Barron, who can be reached at 496-2454 or via email at alison_barron@hks.harvard.edu. Students should see their respective section leaders for information on leaving messages with them.

ASSIGNED READINGS

I. The Nature of Presidential Power

September 3: **Overview and Introduction**

James Fallows, "Obama, Explained," The Atlantic, March 2012.

The Federalist Papers #47 and #70.

The Constitution of the United States, "Provisions that Relate to the Presidency," (in George C. Edwards and Stephen J. Wayne, Presidential Leadership, Appendix C, pp. 505-514.)

September 8: **Presidential Power: The Framers' Design and Intent**

Akhil Reed Amar, "Presidential Powers," in America's Constitution: A Biography, (New York: Random House, 2005), pp. 177-204.

Jeffrey Tulis, "The Two Constitutional Presidencies," in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 1-32.

Gordon S. Wood, "The Greatness of George Washington," in Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), pp. 31-63.

September 10: **Presidential Power: An Imperial Presidency?**

Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents, all prefaces, chapters 1-5, pp. ix-xxiv, 1-90.

September 15: **Presidential Power: Rhetorical Power**

Roger B. Porter, "The Three Presidencies: Power and Policy," in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 500-524.

Samuel Kernell, Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, chapter 5, pp. 110-147.

September 17: **Presidential Power: Legislative Power**

Carl Hulse *et al*, “Obama is Seen as Frustrating His Own Party,” The New York Times, (August 19, 2014), pp. A1 & A14.

Matthew Dickinson, “The President and Congress,” in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 406-447.

September 22: **Presidential Power: Administrative and Executive Power**

Andrew Rudalevige, “The Presidency and Unilateral Power: A Taxonomy,” in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 473-499.

Julie Hirschfeld Davis, “Behind Closed Doors, Obama Crafts Executive Action,” The New York Times, (August 19, 2014).

II. The Road to the White House

September 24: **Getting Nominated**

Lara M. Brown, “The Presidency and the Nominating Process: Aspirants, Parties, and Selections,” in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 191-213.

Edwards and Wayne, “The Nomination Process,” Presidential Leadership, chapter 2, pp. 27-61.

September 29: **Getting Elected**

David R. Mayhew, “The Meaning of the 2012 Election,” in Michael Nelson, ed., The Elections of 2012, (CQ Press, 2014), pp. 203-222.

David R. Mayhew, “Incumbency Advantage in U.S. Presidential Elections: The Historical Record,” Political Science Quarterly (Vol. 123 Number 2 – Summer 2008), pp. 201-228.

Edwards and Wayne, “The Presidential Election,” Presidential Leadership, chapter 3, pp. 62-99.

October 1: **Taking the Reins - Presidential Transitions**

Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power, chapter 11, pp. 230-268.

Roger B. Porter, "Of Hazards and Opportunities: Transitions and the Modern Presidency," Paper prepared for Presidential Power Revisited Conference, Woodrow Wilson Center, June 1996, pp. 1-18.

Martha Joynt Kumar, "The 2008 National Security Council Transition: Providing Continuity in a Bipartisan Environment," Presidential Studies Quarterly 43 No. 3 (September 2013), pp. 490-522.

III. Organizing the President's Domain

October 6: The President and the Executive Branch

Roger B. Porter, Presidential Decision Making (Cambridge University Press, 1980), chapter 1, pp. 5-29.

David E. Lewis and Terry M. Moe, "The Presidency and the Bureaucracy: The Levers of Presidential Control," in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 374-405.

October 8: The President's Domain I: The Executive Office of the President

Don K. Price, "The Institutional Presidency and the Unwritten Constitution," in James Sterling Young, ed., Problems & Prospects of Presidential Leadership in the Nineteen-Eighties, Vol. I, (University Press of America, 1982), pp. 57-84.

Roger B. Porter, "Presidents and Economists: The Council of Economic Advisers," American Economic Review, Vol. 87, No. 2 (May 1997), pp. 103-106.

Edwards and Wayne, "Domestic Policy Making [Excerpt]," Presidential Leadership, chapter 11, pp. 411-422.

October 13: The President's Domain II: White House Organization

John Burke, "The Institutional Presidency," in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 341-366.

Edwards and Wayne, "Presidents and their Advisors [Excerpt]" Presidential Leadership, chapter 6, pp. 221-225.

IV. Presidential Decision Making

October 15: **Presidential Decision Making Approaches and Models**

Roger B. Porter, Presidential Decision Making, chapter 8 and appendix, pp. 213-252.

Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power, chapter 7, pp. 128-151.

Roger B. Porter, "Gerald R. Ford: A Healing Presidency," in Fred I. Greenstein ed., Leadership in the Modern Presidency, (Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 199-227.

Jonathan Alter, "The Un-Bubba," in The Promise: President Obama, Year One, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), pp. 209-223.

October 20: **The President and National Security Policy**

Edwards and Wayne, "Foreign and Defense Policy Making," Presidential Leadership, chapter 13, pp. 461-486.

James P. Pfiffner, "Decision Making in the Obama White House," Presidential Studies Quarterly, (June 2011), pp. 244-262.

John P. Burke, "The Case for the Honest Broker Role," in Honest Broker? The National Security Advisor and Presidential Decision Making, (Texas A&M University Press, 2009), pp. 1-12.

October 22: **The President and Economic and Domestic Policy**

Edwards and Wayne, "Budgetary and Economic Policy Making," Presidential Leadership, chapter 12, pp. 438-460.

Stuart E. Eizenstat, "Economists and White House Decisions," Journal of Economic Perspectives VI, (Summer 1992), pp. 65-71.

Roger B. Porter, "Economic Advice to the President: From Eisenhower to Reagan," Political Science Quarterly, (Fall 1983), pp. 403-426.

Roger B. Porter, Presidential Decision Making, chapter 3, pp. 57-100.

October 27: **Mid-Term Exam**

V. **The President, the Political System, and Leadership**

October 29: **Shaping the National Agenda**

Roger B. Porter, "The President and the National Agenda," in James P. Pfiffner, ed., The Managerial Presidency, pp. 319-333.

James P. Pfiffner, "Moving the President's Legislative Agenda," The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running, second edition, pp. 111-127.

November 3: **The President and Congress: Who Leads?**

Edwards and Wayne, "The President and the Congress," Presidential Leadership, chapter 9, pp. 328-374.

November 5: **The President and Congress: Mutual Oversight**

Louis Fisher, "Congress as Co-Manager of the Executive Branch," in James P. Pfiffner, ed., The Managerial Presidency, second edition, pp. 300-318.

Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power, chapter 12, pp. 269-294.

November 10: **The President and the Courts**

David A. Yalof, "The Presidency and the Judiciary," in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 448-472.

Edwards and Wayne, "The President and the Judiciary," Presidential Leadership, chapter 11, pp. 375-410.

November 12: **Presidents, Parties, and Interest Groups**

Daniel J. Tichenor, "The Presidency and Interest Groups: Allies, Adversaries, and Policy Leadership" in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 272-303.

Sidney Milkis, "The Presidency and Political Parties," in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 304-348.

November 17: **The Presidency and the Press**

Elvin T. Lim, "The Presidency and the Media: Two Faces of Democracy," in Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 258-271.

Samuel Kernell, Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, chapter 4, pp. 74-106.

Edwards and Wayne, "The President and the Media," Presidential Leadership, chapter 5, pp. 159-201.

November 19: **The Presidency and the Public**

Samuel Kernell, Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, chapters 1-3, 6; pp. 1-72 and 148-177.

Edwards and Wayne, "The President and the Public," Presidential Leadership, chapter 4, pp. 100-158.

VI. Conclusions

November 24: **Presidential Style and Character**

Michael Nelson, "The Psychological Presidency," in Nelson, The Presidency and the Political System, pp. 167-190.

James David Barber, "Answering the Critics," in The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House, 3rd ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1985), pp. 521-528.

Edwards and Wayne, "Presidents and Their Advisers [Excerpt]," Presidential Leadership, chapter 6, pp. 202-214.

December 1: **Evaluating Presidents and the Presidency**

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Rating the Presidents: From Washington to Clinton," Political Science Quarterly, (Summer 1997), pp. 179-190.

December 3: **Summary and Conclusions**