

The Presidency

Political Science 312

Fall 2009
11:30 MWF
Chambers 3155

Dr. Susan Roberts

“He (Lincoln) saw no shame in the practice of politics, and experienced no priggish discomfort about what it takes to get great things done. Quite the contrary; for him, politics – ordinary, grimy, un-elevating politics – was itself a good and an instrument for good.”

- Sam Wilentz, “Who Lincoln Was”, The New Republic, July 15, 2009

“Obama’s urgency is being driven by politics. A president is best positioned to get big things done, such as health care reform, during his first year in office. That is when he is most likely to enjoy the people’s goodwill.”

- William Schneider, The National Journal, August 1, 2009

“Regardless of what any of us tells him, B (Bill Clinton) is still gravitating to another spot, a black hole whose pull is overwhelming. The hole doesn’t show up at any of our meetings, but its presence can be detected by watching the influence it’s exerting on the biggest planet of all. I can’t ignore it or rationalize it any longer. The black hole is Dick Morris.”

- Robert Reich, Locked In the Cabinet, 1997

“Americans awoke on November 8 [2000] to discover that a new campaign was just getting under way, one that would last five weeks and have as many ups and downs as the original campaign itself.”

- James Ceasar & Andrew Busch, The Perfect Tie, 2001

“Do you remember that I opposed a second term on the ground that, human nature being what it is, the president would work for his reelection instead of for the country’s good?”

- Grover Cleveland, from Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage

The election of Barack Obama in November of 2008 may prove to be as monumental to American government as it was historic to American presidential elections. Arguably, the economic crisis which began in October 2008 had an impact on the election. The more dramatic impact has been on the very real policy agenda of crisis. Efforts to rescue a myriad of industries both financial and manufacturing have drastically altered any agenda Obama may have anticipated. As we shall study, agenda setting is an important element in understanding the presidency and American politics in general. What does it mean when the bulk of agenda items are defined more by emergency than feasibility?

Of course, we will study the campaigns and the elections of 2008. While the benefit of hindsight may color our assessments of the Obama and McCain campaigns, we will try to avoid blindly accepting the views of pundits. Studying the campaigns and the elections provide insights into all aspects of the office – from the constitutional construction of the office and the Electoral College to the relationship between the President and the members of Congress.

Beyond any single election, the study of the presidency presents some intriguing and unique dimensions. First, the presidency has often been studied in a straightforward method, focusing on the individuals who occupy the nation’s highest office. Second, the presidency has been evaluated in terms of the long - term impact each occupant has on the office of the presidency. Third, the study of the presidency can take the form of empirical analysis, a valuable avenue of study but one with some hurdles with regard to the presidency. Fourth, the presidency has been evaluated in terms of his/her success with other branches of government. Tugs of war with the Congress and quarrels with Supreme Court decisions influence how the public and the pundits view the White House.

It is critical to make distinctions between the pre-modern presidency (viewed by most as George Washington to FDR) and the modern presidency (FDR and on). They are indeed very different creatures. For example, one must be cautious in comparing the numbers of vetoes employed by early presidents to contemporary presidents. For a host of reasons, the political arena is almost completely different. This translates into a rather small number of comparable presidencies. Nevertheless, we will not exclude empirical emphasis, or any of the other way, in our study.

Underlying all of these approaches will an effort to include the contemporary circumstances of the presidency to the design of the founders. What are the challenges of presidential – congressional policymaking? How can the administration reconcile the demands for solutions to domestic solutions for both economy and an assertive and controversial foreign policy? How do we investigate congressional and presidential leadership? How do agenda items gain priority? How do compromises come about?

In addition, we will devote time to analyzing presidential staff. Much was made of Obama’s choices for his White House staff. Was it a “Team of Rivals?” We will examine the dynamics of staffing and we will look at the Bush White House in a text and the Obama staff in journalist’s investigations.

Course Requirements:

Midterm Examination	= 25% of final grade
Semester Paper	= 25% of final grade
Health Care Policy Simulation	= 15% of final grade
Discussion/ “5 Good Minutes”	= 5% of final grade
Final (cumulative) Examination	= 30 % of final grade

Examinations:

Both the midterm and the final examinations are essay in format, with some questions being short essay and the majority of the questions being long essay. A review sheet will be given out approximately one week prior to the examinations. Students are encouraged to work in study groups in preparation for these examinations. This is in no way a violation of the Honor Code. No materials will be brought into class for the exam.

Grading is done in a “holistic” manner. This means it is “bottom up” instead of “top down.” There is no rubric in which a set number of points are deducted for a specific mistake. The skill in which you present your argument is essential.

I will schedule several “in library” hours for students with questions to stop by and discuss materials.

Since you receive essay questions in advance, I have high expectations for your examinations.

Health Care Policy Simulation:

We will be working in conjunction with Dr. Sellers “Legislative Process” class. As members of the Executive Branch, we will work to coordinate our various internal constituencies to develop a health care reform policy. We will be attentive to the debates regarding health care proposals as well as a formal debate involving health care advocates. After developing a package which satisfies both the agencies and the Chief Executive, we will present our policy to the Congress and endeavor in a variety of ways to influence its passage. The 15% of your final grade will be broken down into 10% for policy development/debate performance/lobbying and 5% for a debriefing paper after the simulation. If the legislature passes 75% of the White House proposal, the entire class gets an A for debate/policy performance.

Semester Paper:

There will be one major paper in this class. It demands both research and analysis of concepts discussed in class. Rough drafts are accepted but, they can only be considered up until 4 days of the due date.

- This paper should be approximately 17 - 25 pages in length (reasonable font, double-spaced, executive summary (abstract) included).
- Footnotes (both documentation and explanatory) are required.
- A bibliography is mandatory.
- The bibliography and the executive summary are not included in the page limit.
- The paper is expected to offer a crisp and independent analysis.

- Effective writing is expected, and problems with writing will be reflected in the grade of the paper.

The following guidelines will constitute the description of the assignment. We will discuss in class any questions you may have concerning the assignment. I will make available copies of previous papers by students on this assignment.

- Select a presidency of the “modern” era (post FDR).
- Provide an overview of this presidency, with particular attention to how it relates to the writer of the memoir. (2 – 3 pages, length approximate).
- The major focus of your paper discusses this presidency as reflected in one memoir of figures/assistants/campaign consultants/Cabinet members of this president.
- You should include a description of these individuals as well as discuss/analyze their “recollections.”
- You may include some (limited) analysis by secondary sources, but your focus is more of a case study than a thesis driven research paper.
- Your concluding section should round out your analysis of this specific presidency, drawing conclusions from the memoir of the particular “insider” in this administration.

You should begin to work on this paper **EARLY** in the semester even though it due later in the term. I advise that you do so, given that books may be difficult to locate, and you may have to get books on inter-library loan or other means.

Again, the selection of the president and the memoirs you select must be cleared by me to avoid significant duplication by other members of the class.

Late work is subject to penalties. One half-letter grade will be deducted from the paper for every day the written assignment is delayed. This will be strictly enforced. No exceptions will be made without express and written permission from the Dean of Students Office.

The professor reserves the right to extend the deadline for the class. Students with special exceptions and extraordinary circumstances may be granted some leeway, but this is highly unlikely.

Every student has a heavy workload, and every student has demands in terms of examinations and papers in other classes. Giving extensions for these reasons is unfair to all students.

Should the professor extend the deadline, this will not delay any future testing dates or the deadlines.

Class Participation:

This is a mandatory element of the class. Students are expected to have read the materials before class and to be prepared to discuss and ask questions of the material. Discussion is expected throughout the class period. In addition to regular class expectations of discussions, we will try a “Pardon the Interruption” format to allow for and to encourage discussion and debate.

Specifically, we will employ a feature termed “five good minutes.” We will make every effort to devote the last five minutes of each class to a discussion of current presidential politics and policies, controversies relating to past presidents and current topics on politics.

Every student cannot participate in every “five good minutes” or every class, but you are expected to make an effort to “talk” during the semester. Students who never participate may anticipate a “D” or a “65” averaged into their final grade. If you feel uncomfortable discussing in class or intimidated by students who appear to a greater command of political opinion or information, I suggest you read The New York Times more closely. You might also investigate other political columnists on line or news periodicals.

Civility is expected in all discussions.

Should I conclude that students do not seem adequately prepared for class, I reserve the right to give “pop quizzes.”

Attendance:

Attendance also figures into your participation grade. Attendance will be monitored and tallied. Students are expected to attend class regularly. Students should feel free to contact me by e-mail if they are going to be absent. Students missing in excess of four (4) classes will have one half of a letter grade deducted from their final average.

You must produce an excuse from the Dean of Students office for any emergency.

You will receive one warning if you seem trending toward an excessive number of absences. I reserve the right to contact your adviser.

Attendance at functions or lectures outside of the class hour is strongly encouraged and expected but not required.

Office Hours and Consultations:

Office	2040 Chambers
Office Hours	10:30 – 11:20 WF 1:00– 2:30 W, Th Other days and times by appointment No scheduled hours on Tuesday.
Office Telephone	2458
Home Telephone	704.892.9874 (no calls after 9pm)

Electronic Mail

[suroberts@davidson.edu](mailto:suroberts@ davidson.edu)

- Students are *welcome to drop by my office at other hours. If I am not able to accommodate you at that time, we can schedule another time.* I will be available for discussions over lunch and coffee, either individually or in small groups. Planning in advance is preferable.
- Students will be on a distribution list for electronic communication, and you are expected to check regularly for updates and other assignment specifics. Response may not be immediate, but I will answer as soon as I am able. If you care to share you cell telephone with me, I will use it only if I cannot locate you by e-mail.
 - **Students are strongly encouraged to meet with me once during the semester. It should be prior to October 12. This provides both of us a chance to get to know one another.**

Honor Code

It is imperative that students acquaint and reacquaint themselves with the Davidson College Honor Code. Ignorance of the Honor Code is no excuse for leniency in this or any other class. The Honor Code must be *understood* rather than simply read. The Honor Code is the essence of life here at Davidson College. It extends beyond academic concerns to the fabric of our community. It is more of a *covenant* rather than a contract.

For this class, students should not view any collaborative preparation for the midterm and the final examinations as a violation of the Honor Code. Students may receive help through the Writing Center for assistance with their papers. Students may receive help through the Speaking Center for their presentations. Students may discuss their assignments (such as the paper) with other students, but they may not receive editing help from other students.

Since I believe that examinations should not be an exercise in surprise, it is not a violation of the Honor Code to see a list of examination questions from previous classes. There will, however, be no comparison with the grading of said examinations. Grading is done in the context of each specific class. Students are not really helped by seeking out sheets from previous midterm examinations as I myself will present some of the short essay questions to demonstrate the type of questions you might expect.

When you return your midterm sheet, the signature at the top of the sheet is your pledge. Failure to sign the sheet will indicate to me that you are not considering the Honor Code as you write your examination. On your papers you should sign your name and “Pledged” on the cover sheet of the paper.

Remember that the Honor Code goes beyond your adherence to this *covenant*. It extends to the most difficult of requirements, namely your obligation to divulge any knowledge of Honor Code violations.

Textbooks:

Cronin & Genovese	<u>The Paradoxes of the American Presidency</u>
Caesar, Busch & Pitney	<u>Epic Journey: The 2008 Elections</u>
Pfiffner	<u>Power Play: The Bush Presidency & the Constitution</u>
Thurber	<u>Rivals for Power</u> 4 th ed
Patterson	<u>To Serve the President: Continuity & Innovation in White House Staff</u>
<u>The New York Times</u>	Required. Available by subscription in bookstore

Various websites and links as they arise

TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments are due on the date listed.

There may be fluidity in our calendar but no on testing/paper dates.

I. Introducing Presidency: Constitutional and Popular Expectations

M Aug 24	Introductory Remarks on class
W Aug 26	Introduction to studying the presidency <u>Paradoxes</u> Chapter 1 “Presidential Paradoxes”
F Aug 28	continued Assignment of <u>Federalist Papers</u> #s 10, 68, 70, 73 http://federalistpapers.com

- M Aug 31 Founders & Presidency
Discussion of Federalist Papers
- W Sept 2 Public Expectations: Public Opinion & Presidency
Paradoxes Chapter 2
“How “We Judge Presidents”
- F Sept 4 continued

II. Leadership in the Context of Separated Powers?

- M Sept 7 Paradoxes Chapter 4
“Presidential Power & Leadership”
- W Sept 9 continued
- F Sept 11 Paradoxes Chapter 5
“Presidents in a System of Shared Power”
- Thurber:
Ch 2 “Partisan Polarization, Politics &
Presidency: Structural Sources of Conflict
- M Sept 14 continued

III. Staff & the Powers Behind the “Throne”

- W Sept 16 Paradoxes Chapter 7
“President as Chief Executives”
- Discussion of “White House Transition Project”
<http://www.whitehouse2001.org/>
Burke, Kumar
<http://whitehousetransitionproject.org/resources/briefing/PAR2009/kumar.pdf>
- <http://whitehousetransitionproject.org/resources/briefing/PAR2009/johnson.pdf>
- <http://whitehousetransitionporject.org/resources/briefing/PAR2009/wellford.pdf>
- F Sept 18 continued

	Patterson	Part 1: The White House Overall Part 2: Top Leadership
M Sept 21	Patterson	Part 3: The Policy Bloc
W Sept 23	Patterson	Part 4: Strategic Initiatives Part 5: The Communications Bloc
F Sept 25`	continued	
M Sept 28	Patterson	Part 6: Special Counselors Part 7: The Operations Bloc
W Sept 30	Patterson	Part 8: Physical White House Part 9: Looking To Future <i>Questions distributed</i>

IV. Both Ends of the Avenue

F Oct 2	Catch up day
M Oct 5	Presidents as Partisans or Bipartisans? <u>Paradoxes</u> Chapter 10 “Presidents & Political Parties”
W Oct 7	Midterm Examination (I, II, III)
F Oct 9	Thurber Ch 4 “President & Congressional Party Leadership..” <u>Paradoxes</u> Ch 6 “Presidents & Congress”

M Oct 12	<i>Fall Break</i>
W Oct 14	Thurber Ch 5 “Understanding Presidential Relations With. Congress”
F Oct 16	Thurber Ch 6 & 7 “The Presidency & Congressional Time” “The Legislative Presidency in Political Time: Unified Government, Divided Government, & Presidential Leverage in Congress”
M Oct 19	Discussion of Lobbying & interest groups Health Care Policy: Guidelines for debate, lobbying Bureaucratic assignments
W Oct 21	Thurber Ch 10 & 11 “The President’s Budget vs. congressional Budgeting: Institutionalizing the Adversarial Presidency?” “Congress & the president: ‘Yes We Can!’ or ‘Can We?’”
F Oct 23	Catch up Day
M Oct 26	Health Care Policy: Class discussion/debate of content of health care policy options
W Oct 28	Health Care Policy:

Continued debate and drafting

F Oct 30

Health Care Policy:
Develop Lobbying strategy

VI. The Constitution, Controversies, & Executive Authority

M Nov 2

An Imperial Presidency?
Thurber 8, & 9
“The Imperial Presidency vs. the Hill”
“Executive Privilege & the Unitary Executive
Theory in the George W. Bush Administration”

W Nov 4

An Imperial Presidency or Commander in Chief?
Thurber Ch 12, 13, & 14
“Relations between the President & Congress in
Wartime”
“Rivals Only Sometimes: Presidentialism,
Unilateralism, and Congressional Acquiescence in
the U.S. ‘War on Terror’”
“The President, Congress, Military Tribunals, and
Guantanamo”

Class lead discussion/debate

*Class members begin to lobby POL 311 students
(outside of class)*

*Thursday evening public forum on Health Care Policy
with POL 311 and CIS 470*

F Nov 6

Power Play Ch 1: “A Government of Laws or Men?”
Ch 2: “The nature of Executive Power”
Ch 3: “Creating Individual Rights . . .”
Ch 4: “The American Constitution”

M Nov 9

Power Play Ch 5: “The Power to Imprison: Habeas
Corpus”
Ch 6: “The Power to Torture”

W Nov 11

Power Play continued
Ch 7: “The Power to Surveil”
Ch 8: “The Power to Ignore Laws:
Signing Statements”

