

Professor Rebecca U. Thorpe
Office: 221A Smith Hall, ph. # 543-6493
Email: bthorpe@u.washington.edu
Office hours: Thurs. 11-1 & by appointment

POL S 355: Fall 2016
Tu/Th 2:30-4:20
SIG 224

POL S 355: The American Presidency

This is a course about the institutional development of the American presidency, its place in our constitutional system, and the bounds of executive power in a democracy. Students will analyze the presidency using theories and concepts developed in political science and will be asked to think critically about different theories of presidential authority. The class will consider four general themes. First, we will examine the creation of the presidency and the ways in which the modern executive branch both upholds and thwarts the framers' goals. Second, we will evaluate the presidential selection process and the extent to which our current electoral system selects individuals capable of assuming the responsibilities of the office. We will then examine sources of presidential power, including the ways in which presidents promote their leadership and the political constraints that they encounter, with particular focus on the Obama administration. Finally, we will examine various contours of the policymaking environment, such as the president's relationship with Congress and the courts, as well as different areas of domestic policymaking and national security/ warfare.

Requirements & Evaluation

2016 Election Forecasts (10%): Electoral maps & election forecasts due October 20.

Response Papers & Participation (20%): Participation will be evaluated on the basis of two criteria. First, students are expected to read the assigned material before class and contribute to discussion regularly. Second, 1-2 page response papers will be due each week. The prompts will ask you to address a question or argument raised in the assigned reading for that day and are meant to serve as foundation for class discussion. The responses will be graded as superb (4.0), satisfactory (3.0) or unsatisfactory (no credit).

Essay Exam (35%): Students will construct 2-3 essays based on class readings and discussion. The exam is scheduled to take place on November 3, 2016.

In-Class Debates (35%): Structured in-class debates will take place December 6-8.

Course Material

- **Course reading packet* (a collection of articles and essays available at for purchase at Professional Print & Copy, located at 4200 University Way NE)
- *Andrew Rudalevige. 2006. *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power After Watergate*. University of Michigan Press.
- *Stephen Skowronek. 2011. *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise & Reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas. 2nd Edition.

Recommended: Joseph Pika, John Anthony Maltese & Andrew Rudalevige. 2016. *The Politics of the Presidency*. CQ Press. 9th ed. 978-148337563

All course texts are available at the university book store and through online retailers.

Recommended Daily News Sources (URL's available on course website)

National, International & Local news: The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The BBC, The Guardian, The Seattle Times

Blogs: The Monkey Cage (political science/academic), The Volokh Conspiracy (law), The Mischief of Faction (American politics & political parties)

Election Forecasts: FiveThirtyEight (Nate Silver)

Presidential Debate Schedule: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/presidential-debate-schedule/>

Other Course Policies

Please note that exams are scheduled at the start of the quarter. Make-up exams will only be given in extreme emergencies (such as a death in the family or a serious illness) justified by a written excuse and accompanied with appropriate documentation. Late work will automatically receive a 0.5 deduction each day that the paper is late (e.g., a 4.0 paper would receive a 3.5, etc.). Students should see me IN ADVANCE of any deadlines if something happens that will affect your performance in class or may require an extended deadline. There are no make-ups for class participation. All members of the academic community at the University of Washington must abide by the Student Conduct Code. For questions about the Conduct Code, please consult the following website: <http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>

I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disabilities Support Services Office and who provide me with necessary documentation. Students with documented disabilities should see me by October 13.

Additional Study Material and reading questions for response papers are available on the course website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1068893>

Course Schedule

Sept 29 – Course Introduction

Week 1: Oct 4 – U.S. Presidential System

--Alexander Hamilton, Federalist 69-71, 1788

--Yoni Appelbaum, "America's Fragile Constitution," *The Atlantic*, October 2015

Oct 6 – Presidential Elections & Voting

--Jill Lepore, "How To Steal An Election: The Crazy History of Nominating Conventions," *The New Yorker*, July 4, 2016

--Pika, Maltese & Rudalevige, "Election Politics"

--New York Times Editorial, "Flunking the Electoral College," *NYT*, November 19, 2008

--David Rivkin & Andrew Grossman, "Let the Electoral College Do Its Duty," *Wall Street Journal*, September 7, 2016

--Primary Elections Explained & How the Electoral College Works (YouTube video) - [website](#)

Week 2: Oct 11 – Voter Disenfranchisement & the Politics of Exclusion

--Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *The Atlantic*, October 2015

--David Bateman. 2016. "Race, Party and American Voting Rights," *The Forum* 14: 39-65

--Dara Lind, "19 Maps & Charts That Explain Voting Rights in America," *Vox*, August 6, 2015 – [on course webpage](#)

Oct 13 – Understanding Voter Insurgency

- John Sides, Michael Tesler & Lynn Vavreck. 2016. "The Electoral Landscape of 2016," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 667: 50-71.
- Roger Cohen, "Views From Trump Country," *The New York Times*, September 9, 2016
- Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol & John Coggin. 2011. "The Tea Party & The Remaking of Republican Conservatism," *Perspectives on Politics*, 9: 25-43

Week 3: Oct 18 – Normal v Abnormal Elections

- Jon Hilsenrath & Bob Davis, "The Great Unraveling," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2016
- Jonathan Rauch, "How American Politics Went Insane," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2016
- Julia Azari & Marc Hetherington. 2016. "Back to the Future? What the Politics of the Late 19th Century Can Tell Us About the 2016 Election," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 667: 92-109

Oct 20 – Forecasting the 2016 Election

- Evan Osnos, "President Trump's First Term," *The New Yorker*, September 26, 2016
- *PBS Documentary: The Choice 2016
- ***Submit Election Forecasts & Electoral College Maps**

Week 4: Oct 25 – Presidential Leadership: Bargaining & Going Public

- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters XVII – XVIII
- Caro, Robert. 2002. "Zip Zip," (in *Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate*, New York: Vintage Books, pp. 604-614 required)
- Samuel Kernell, Chapter 1-2, pp. 1-45 (in *Going Public: New Strategies in Presidential Leadership*, CQ Press 2007, 4th ed)

Oct 29 - Political Time I

- Skowronek ch. 1-2, (p. 1-14, 27-78 required)
- Irwin Morris, "Theories of Presidential Power," (in *The American Presidency*, New York: Cambridge University Press)

Week 5: Nov 1- Political Time II

- Skowronek ch. 3 (pp. 79-116)
- David Crockett. 2011. "Candidate Obama and the Dilemmas of Political Time," *The Forum* 9:2

Nov 3 – **Exam (bring a green book)**

Week 6: Nov 8- Interbranch Relations: Congress & The Courts

- Charles M. Cameron. 2002. "Studying the Polarized Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 32: 647-663.
- Cohen, Bond & Fleisher. 2013. "Placing Presidential-Congressional Relations in Context: A Comparison of Barack Obama and His Predecessors," *Polity*, 45: 105-26.
- Jeffrey Toobin, "The Obama Brief," *The New Yorker*, October 27, 2014

Nov 10 – The Politics of Executive Unilateralism

- William G. Howell. 2005. "Unilateral Powers: A Brief Overview," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35: 417-439.
- Julia Azari. 2013. "Institutional Change and Presidential Mandate." *Social Science History*, 37: 483-514.
- Kenneth S. Lowande & Sidney M. Milkis. 2014. "'We Can't Wait': Barack Obama, Partisan Polarization & the Administrative Presidency," *The Forum* 12:3-27.

Week 7: Nov 15 – Executive Power in Historical Perspective

--Rudalevige, ch. 2-3

--Kenneth E. Sharpe. 1987-88. "The Post-Vietnam Formula Under Siege: The Imperial Presidency and Central America," *Political Science Quarterly*, 102: 549-569

--Koh, Harold. 1988. "Why the President (Almost) Always Wins in Foreign Affairs: Lessons of the Iran-Contra Affair." *Yale Law Journal* 97, pp. 1291-1305 required

Nov 17 – Executive Secrecy, Surveillance & War Powers

--Rudalevige, ch. 7-8

--Richard M. Pious. 2011. "Prerogative Power in the Obama Administration: Continuity and Change in the War on Terrorism," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 41: 263-290.

--Steve Coll, "Remote Control: Our Drone Delusion," *The New Yorker*, May 16, 2013

Week 8: Nov 22 - Evaluating the Presidents

--Fred I. Greenstein. 2000. "The Qualities of Effective Presidents: An Overview From FDR to Bill Clinton," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 30: 178-185.

--Lawrence R. Jacobs & Desmond King. 2010. "Varieties of Obamaism: Structure, Agency & the Obama Presidency," *Perspectives on Politics* 8: 793-802.

--Healy, Gene. "Went to War? Good President. Kept the Peace? Not So Hot," *Cato*, December 10, 2006

Nov 24 – THANKSGIVING – No Class

Week 9: Nov 29 – Wrap-Up

--Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016

*PBS Documentary: Inside Obama's Presidency (2013)

Dec 1- Reserved for Debate Prep

Week 10: Dec 6- Debates I

Dec 8 – Debates II