



BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT THE MEADOWLANDS

DIVISION OF BUSINESS, MATH AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE SYLLABUS

Spring 2010

February 22 – May 8, 2010

COURSE NAME/NUMBER: **Themes in U.S. History (Modern American Presidency)**
POL106

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students who have any documented disabilities that would interfere with full participation in the course should notify their instructor at the beginning of the semester so that necessary arrangements can be discussed.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Dr. Ronald Milon
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Dr Ron Milon is the Director of the Meadowlands campus of Bergen Community College in New Jersey. Prior to his assignment at BCC Dr. Milon was the Dean of the Business and Technology at DeVry College of New York. He received his B.S. degree in History and Political Science from SUNY College at Brockport (1987), his first M.A. degree in History from the University of Buffalo (1989), his second M.A. degree in Political Science from the New School University (1995) and his third masters (MAIA) in International Affairs from the New School University (1995). From 1989 – 1992 Mr. Milon was a Ralph Bunche Fellow on the United Nations. Dr. Milon received his Ph.D. in Adult Education and post secondary education from Capella University in 2006.

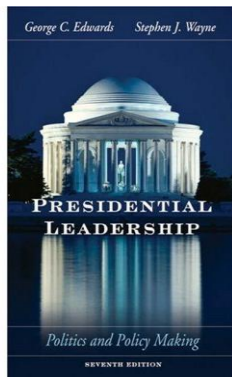


PREREQUISITE : None

COURSE CREDITS/HOURS: 3 lectures, 3 credits

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an introduction to the central actor in the American political drama – the American presidency. This is not to imply that the president as an individual is the most important political actor, or that the presidency as an office is the “highest” office, simply that the chief executive tends to sit at the center of national political action. The presidency is unquestionably the most visible institution in the American republic, but it is also perhaps the most perplexing, and often least understood.

We will provide an analytical and historical examination of the development of the office and powers of the modern American presidency. Emphasis will be place on studying the roles of the president as described in the Constitution, the relationship of the executive with the other branches of government, presidential views of the office, the presidential election system, and presidential character and personality.



TEXT BOOK: Edwards, and Wayne (2006) [Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making](#) (7th edition). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. ISBN# 13-978-0-534-60402-8

In addition to the assigned readings you are required to keep up with current events in national government. **Students should read The New York Times, The Record or another national or regional newspaper.** The Times is on the web for free, all you have to do is sign up for it.



Students should watch the national nightly news, C-Span, or CNN in order to get a handle on current national issues. Students should also, if possible, watch some news programming such as 60 Minutes (Sunday CBS at 7pm), The McLaughlin Group (Sunday NBC 11:00am), This Week (Sunday ABC at 11:30am), Real Time with Bill Maher (HBO) or any other national news program. These programs are not required, but they will help in providing current views on issues of national importance.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

Course objectives are provided within the assigned topics. However, students should be able to:

- Describe the six major functions of the presidency.
- Describe the constitutional provisions related to the presidency.
- Discuss the role of the president in relation to Congress and the judicial branch.
- Describe the four major political resources of the presidency.
- Explain forces behind the expansion of the powers of the presidency.
- Differentiate the formal and informal powers of the president.
- Articulate and illustrate the several major roles that constitute the job of the presidency.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE INSTRUCTOR:

[**General Philosophy**] See me to discuss what action we can take if you are having problems. I am here to help you, so please see me before little problems become **BIG** ones. [**Specific Regulations**]

- 1) You are expected to have the assigned readings completed on the date the topic will be discussed.
- 2) I am **VERY STRICT** about make up exams. You must have a legitimate excuse (such as Medical).
- 3) **Absences**: Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Each student is responsible for all the materials covered and announcements made whether s/he present or not. Class attendance will be taken!!!

Three absences will lead to a reduction of your final grade.

Five or more absences will lead to a (F) for a final course grade.

- 4) **A Note on Plagiarism**: Plagiarism is defined by the American College Dictionary as "...copying or imitating the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author and passing off the same as one's original work." Plagiarism is clear grounds for dismissal from Bergen Community College. If you are in doubt about the definition and seriousness of plagiarism, check with the college hand book or see the



instructor. The responsibility in this matter is solely that of the student. Disclaiming intent to plagiarize is not a valid defense.

5) The Honor System: Any one receiving or giving answers or talking during any examination or test given during class will receive a ZERO for that assignment and will receive a (F) for a final course grade.

6) Respect: The relationship established by the instructor and the student is very special in encouraging educational development. I offer respect to my students and I expect the same in return. Students should refrain from talking while the lecture is taking place. If you have a question, of course you may ask it. However, rude behavior will not be tolerated at any time during lectures or discussions.

NO CELL PHONES AND NO TEXT MESSAGING!

CLASS EXPECTATIONS:

The following will be required of you while taking this class:

A) Midterm (4/8)	100 pts
B) Classroom (group) assignments	100 pts
C) Final Examination (5/6)	200 pts
D) Written Assignment (5/4)	100 pts

Total points	500 pts
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A) The Midterm (100 points) will be multiple choice and short essay in format.

B) Classroom Assignments: Learning is an interactive process between you and the professor and fellow students. We will engage in several classroom activities to enhance our understanding of topics and issues covered in class. These assignments will count for a total of 100 points.

C) Final Examination: The final exam will cover all of topics and readings covered in class. Questions will be suggested throughout the course and the instructor will provide a study sheet a week prior to the final exam. The exam worth 200 points will be essay in format.

E) Evaluation or journal assignment: We will provide an evaluation of presidential performance based on criteria determined from our studies. Information on the evaluation assignment is provided in



appendix (C) on page 11 of this syllabus. Students not interested in the evaluation assignment can complete a presidential journal/portfolio. Information on this option is also provided on page 11 of this syllabus. The assignment will be worth 100 points.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

*****Chapters unless other indicated are from the Edwards & Wayne book*****

I. **Constitutional Foundations**

Objective: To enhance our understanding of the creation of the office the president and views on presidential leadership.

1. Studying the presidency and leadership 2/23; 2/25
Readings: Article II of the Constitution, Chapter 1 and Appendix A
2. Origins of the office, formal powers, and the major functions of the presidency 3/2
Readings: Chapter 1
Movie: The Presidents: The lives and legacies
3. Stages of development 3/4
Movie: The Presidents: The lives and legacies

II. **Campaigns, Elections and Public Opinion**

Objective: To add to our knowledge about the politics and importance of presidential elections in the US. The focus will help us to understand more completely the politics and the importance of presidential relations with the public and media as well as factors affecting these relationships.

1. Presidential elections 3/9; 3/11
Readings: Chapters 2, 3, and Appendix B
Discussion: The Obama election
Movie: The Presidents: The lives and legacies

NO CLASS 3/16 and 3/18 SPRING BREAK

2. The Media and public opinion 3/22; 3/30
Readings: Chapters 4 and 5
Group project: Analysis of Political cartoons



3. Presidential mandates and decision making 4/1
Readings: Neustadt, "The power to persuade" and Schlesinger, "The Hundred Days"
(Both provided by the instructor – total of 12 pages)
Individual Assignment: research articles on Obama's first days and compare it to other president since FDR.
Group project: How would you rank the top 10 presidential agenda items and why?

III. Presidential government

Objective: In this unit we will explore the dynamics of the relationship between the executive branch and the other branches of government.

1. President and congress 4/6
Readings: Chapter 10

Midterm 4/8
Covering chapters 1,2,3,4,5, 10, and Appendixes A & B
2. President and the courts 4/13
Readings: Chapter 9
3. The presidency and the bureaucracy 4/15
Readings: Chapters 6, 7, and 11
4. The unilateral presidency 4/20
Readings: Chapter 15 and Harold Krent, "From a unitary to a unilateral presidency,"
<http://www.bu.edu/law/central/jd/organizations/journals/bulr/documents/KRENT.pdf>

IV. Public Policy

1. Domestic Policy 4/22

Objective: To enhance our knowledge of the president's role in domestic policy making and factors that affect presidential leadership and success in achieving domestic policy.

Readings: Chapters 12 and 13



Group project: Class debate “Obama’s stimulus package”

2. Foreign policy 4/27

Objective: To enhance our knowledge of the president’s role in domestic policy making and factors that affect presidential leadership and success in their achieving foreign policy objectives.

Readings: Chapter 14

Movie: The Presidents: The lives and legacies

V. Conclusion

Objective: To enhance our understanding of the importance of presidential leadership, accountability, and its impact on the public’s trust as well as “presidential greatest.”

1. The psychological presidency 4/29

Readings: Chapter 8

Movie: Nixon (parts of the Oliver Stone movie)

2. Evaluating greatest 5/4

Readings: To be assigned

Web link: <http://www.csulb.edu/~astevens/posc100/files/ratings.htm>

Group project: Evaluating the presidents

Exam Review

FINAL EXAMINATION

5/6



Appendix A

The Presidents of the United States

Early Republic 1789 - 1829

- George Washington
- John Adams
- Thomas Jefferson
- James Madison
- James Monroe
- John Quincy Adams

Jacksonian Democracy 1829 - 1853

- Andrew Jackson
- Martin Van Buren
- William Harrison
- John Tyler
- James Polk
- Zachary Taylor
- Millard Fillmore

Sectional Conflict 1853 - 1881

- Franklin Pierce
- James Buchanan
- Abraham Lincoln
- Andrew Johnson
- Ulysses Grant
- Rutherford Hayes

Gilded Age 1881 - 1897

- James Garfield
- Chester Arthur
- Grover Cleveland
- Benjamin Harrison
- Grover Cleveland

Progressive Era 1897 - 1921

- William McKinley
- Theodore Roosevelt
- William Taft
- Woodrow Wilson

Depression & World Conflict 1921 - 1961

- Warren Harding
- Calvin Coolidge
- Herbert Hoover
- Franklin Roosevelt
- Harry Truman
- Dwight Eisenhower

Social Change & Soviet Relations 1961 - 1989

- John Kennedy
- Lyndon Johnson
- Richard Nixon
- Gerald Ford
- Jimmy Carter
- Ronald Reagan

Globalization 1989 -

- George H. W. Bush
- Bill Clinton
- George W. Bush
- Barack Obama



Appendix B

Sources

I. Books

Broyles, David. "Fundamentals of Intelligence: Prudential Reason and the Founders' Executive." *TEACHING POLITICAL SCIENCE* 16 (Spring 1989): 99-105. EJ 401 567.

Haas, Mary, et al. "Teaching About the President and the Presidential Election." *SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE YOUNG LEARNER* 5 (September/October 1992): 1-4. EJ 460 398.

Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay. *THE FEDERALIST PAPERS*. Introduction by Clinton Rossiter. New York: Penguin Books, 1961.

Hargrove, Erwin C., and Roy Hoopes. *THE PRESIDENCY: A QUESTION OF POWER*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975. ED 111 744.

Ketcham, Ralph, ed. *THE ANTI-FEDERALIST PAPERS AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION DEBATES*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

McDonald, Forrest. *THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994.

Pious, Richard M. *THE YOUNG OXFORD COMPANION TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. ED 384 545.

II. Internet Resources

American Presidents.

http://www.americanpresidents.com/handcrafted2.asp?run_init=1

American President An Online Reference Resource.

<http://millercenter.org/index.php/academic/americanpresident>



The Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia sponsors this site. It covers all 43 presidents by historical period with biographical background, Cabinet information, and essays on major aspects of that Administration and historical period.

The American Experience: The Presidents.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/indexjs.html

This interactive PBS site features eight presidents and emphasizes their early careers, presidential politics, domestic policy, foreign affairs, legacies, and "days of decision." The site provides content information and enables students to "vote" on critical issues that dominated the respective presidential administrations. A teacher's guide and links to further resources are included as well.

Character in Time: The U.S. Presidents.

www.uspresidents.com/plays.htm

The History Project, Inc. is in the process of developing a series of one-act plays that seek to capture each of the American presidents as a person in his time and place. This site contains information on the plays currently available for use and those in production. A description of the playwrights and subscription information are also included.

The American Presidency -- Selected Resources: an Informal Reference Guide.

www.interlink-caf.com/uspresidents/

This site serves as a host to provide connections to numerous sites relating to the presidency. It offers links for both "fun facts," primary sources, and current debates regarding the presidency. It also features links to specific information on each of the presidents.

The White House

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

Presidents USA

<http://www.presidentsusa.net/>

The most comprehensive website about the Presidents of the United States and the US Presidency. The alphabetized subject headings below contain a wide array of information and resources about the Presidents of the United States.

The Living Room Candidate



<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>

Presidential campaign commercials 1952-2008



Appendix C

Evaluation or journal assignment (Due the last class before the final examination 5/4/2009)

Evaluation assignment

Using course materials as a guide develop a set of criteria that can be used to evaluate presidential effectiveness, or what makes a “good president.” Then choose a 20th century president (other than Obama) and assess how that president’s performance in office stands up to the criteria that you have identified. Your case will be strongest if you can anticipate and respond to opposing views, both in the development of evaluative criteria and in their application to the president you selected. Your assignment **MUS** be typewritten and double-spaced and between 7-10 pages in length. The assignment MUST handed in person in class. Email assignments will not be accepted.

OR:

Presidential journal/portfolio

Compile an American presidency journal/portfolio. Portfolios should consist of copies of articles from the New York Times (available online) or the Record relevant to concepts in the readings, lectures and other course activities; and typewritten responses of approximately one or two double-spaced pages for each article. Each portfolio must include at least seven entries. Up to two entries may relate to conversations or experiences students have had relevant to the course materials. Portfolios should be neat and well organized; unprofessional work will receive a lower grade. The assignment MUST handed in person in class. Email assignments will not be accepted.