POLI 100A: The American Presidency

Summer Session I 2018

Lecture:
Monday/Wednesday 11:00am-1:50pm [Solis Hall 110]

Instructor:
Skyler Roth [seroth@ucsd.edu]
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 2:00pm-3:00pm [Social Sciences Building (SSB) 446]
(office hours start on July 9th)

Teaching Assistants:
Dang Do [n4do@ucsd.edu]
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Overview

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of the role of the president within modern American politics, drawing from political science research as well as historical and current events. It is meant to make students consider the benefits and drawbacks of our current system for governmental efficiency and stability, democratic accountability, and the quality of policy outcomes. Topics include: presidential elections and campaigns; sources of presidential power and presidential limitations; governmental structures and procedures that influence executive policymaking; the influence of inter- and intra-party conflict on presidential success; and current debates on executive politics reform.

Course Evaluation

Policy Memo [30%] – Students are expected to submit a 2- to 3-page (single-spaced) policy memo via TritonEd. It is due on Friday, July 27th at 11am. Students may work in pairs on this assignment if they so choose; both students will receive the same grade. An additional reading may be required depending on your choice of topic. Refer to the "Policy Memo Assignment" guide on TritonEd for instructions.
Midterm [30%] – The midterm exam will be held in class on Wednesday, July 18th, from 11:00am-12:30pm. Class will resume as normal after the midterm. All content covered prior to the day of the midterm exam may be included in the exam (but readings assigned for that day will not be tested). The midterm is closed book. Please bring a bluebook for the midterm exam.
Final [40%] – The final exam will be held on Friday, August 3rd 11:30am-2:29pm [Location TBA]. The final exam will be cumulative, with an emphasis on material from after the midterm. The final is closed book. Please bring a bluebook for the final exam.

Required Readings

1. *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive* (4th edition) – Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson
[Note: The 3rd edition will also be usable for the class material, but the chapter numbers are different – please check with me if you are using the 3rd edition.]

2. Additional academic book chapters, journal articles, and news articles [These materials are posted on TritonEd under the "Course Readings" folder, or a link is provided in the syllabus.]
Note: There may be changes to future readings. Please regularly check the announcements on TritonEd, and I will also announce in class any changes.

How to Access and Use TritonEd?

Log in with the same username and password used for UCSD email, click on "POLI 100A – Roth [S118]" link on home page, and click on the "Content" section for course documents.

Questions about the Course

For questions about course material, assignments, or exams, please email the instructor, including "POLI 100A" in the subject line, or visit office hours.

How to Use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to Access Articles Off-Campus?

I believe all linked articles are available to anyone; however, you may find that certain articles require a subscription. These should be accessible when on campus, or you can follow the directions on the website linked above. Remember to turn the VPN client off when you are done.

Late Assignment and Rescheduling Policy

If the policy memo is turned in late, it will receive a penalty of 5% for each 24 hours (or fraction thereof) beyond the due time (11am on July 27th). It will not be accepted after the final exam. It is your responsibility to confirm that the memo has been properly uploaded on TritonEd; if the system gives you trouble, email the memo to the instructor.

Exams can be rescheduled with a university-documented excuse. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible if you need to reschedule.

Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to complete the policy memo on your own (unless working with a partner), although you may receive help from the UCSD Writing + Critical Expression Hub. The midterm and final exams are closed note and closed book. For more information on academic dishonesty, please refer to the UCSD policy on integrity of scholarship.

Remember that we have software available to detect plagiarism on the policy memo assignments. Violations of the UCSD policy on plagiarism can result in serious penalties.

Learning Disabilities

If you have a UCSD-documented learning disability, please email the instructor and teaching assistants to inform us of your academic needs.

Course Schedule

Lecture 1: July 2nd, 2018

Part 1 – Course Overview; Presidential Democracy in Context
Part 2 – The Constitutional Powers of the President; The Rise of the Modern Presidency

July 4th Holiday: No Class

Lecture 2: July 9th, 2018

Part 1 – Presidents within a Polarized Society
Part 2 – Elections I: Overview and the Invisible Primary

Readings

U.S. Constitution and Amendments *(especially Article 2; 12th, 20th, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th amendments – see TritonEd for a version with relevant sections highlighted/annotated, or look at this site for brief explanations of each section)*
Debating the Presidency – Ellis and Nelson (2017) [Chapter 1]
"The Ways that the 2016 Election Was Perfectly Normal" – Vavreck (2017)
"'Negative Partisanship' Explains Everything" – Abramowitz and Webster (2017)
"No Matter Who Wins the Election, America Could be Barreling towards a Constitutional Crisis" – Kierz (2016)
"Why Republicans Can't Govern" – Azari (2017)

Lecture 3: July 11th, 2018

Part 1 – Elections II: Presidential Primaries, General Elections, and Campaigns
Part 2 – Elections III: Midterm Elections

Readings
Debating the Presidency – Ellis and Nelson (2017) [Chapters 3, 4]
Campaigns and Elections (2nd edition) – Sides et al. (2015) [Chapter 13]
"Why the 2016 Election Won't Go Away" – Azari (2017)
"November is Going to be a Referendum on Trump" – Louis (2018)

Lecture 4: July 16th, 2018

Part 1 – Sources of Presidential Power I: Bargaining
Part 2 – Sources of Presidential Power II: Going Public

Readings
Debating the Presidency – Ellis and Nelson (2017) [Chapter 8]
"How LBJ Saved the Civil Rights Act" – O'Donnell (2014) *(You may stop reading at this sentence, above the picture of Johnson signing: "Johnson's very comprehensiveness is what jarred the sluggish and paralyzed Capitol into action and ultimately moved the bill.")*
Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership (4th edition) – Kernell (2006) [Chapters 1, 2]

Lecture 5: July 18th, 2018

First half of class – MIDTERM EXAM
Second half of Class – Sources of Presidential Power III: Unilateral Action

Readings
Debating the Presidency – Ellis and Nelson (2017) [Chapter 11]
"Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory" – Moe and Howell (1999)
(Skim) President George W. Bush's "Statement on Signing the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002"
(Skim) President Trump's "Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States" (2017)

Lecture 6: July 23rd, 2018

Part 1 – The Executive Branch
Part 2 – The President and Congress I: Bureaucratic Delegation

Readings

"Caught in the Middle: The President, Congress, and the Political-Bureaucratic System" from *The Executive Branch* – Weingast (2005)
"Staffing Alone: Unilateral Action and the Politicization of the Executive Office of the President, 1988-2004" – Lewis (2005)
"Trump Wants to Reorganize the Executive Branch. Good Luck with That." – Rudalevige (2017)
"The Deep State is Real – But it Might Not Be What You Think" – Crowley (2017)
"Why Donald Trump Needs the 'Administrative State' that Steve Bannon Wants to Destroy" – Lewis (2017)

Lecture 7: July 25th, 2018

Part 1 – The President and Congress II: Lawmaking
Part 2 – The President and Congress III: Federal Budget

Readings

Debating the Presidency – Ellis and Nelson (2015) [Chapter 9]
"The President's Playbook: White House Strategies for Lobbying Congress" – Beckmann (2008)
"In Wielding Rarely Used Veto, President Obama Puts Budget Heat on Republicans" – Davis (2015)
"Here's How the Newly Passed GOP Tax Bill Will Impact the Economy, Businesses, the Deficit, and Your Wallet" – Bryan (2017)

Policy Memo due July 27th, 11am

Lecture 8: July 30th, 2018

Part 1 – The President and Congress IV: Foreign Policy
Part 2 – The President and the Federal Courts

Readings

Debating the Presidency – Ellis and Nelson (2015) [Chapters 10, 13]
"Congress Is About to Decide Whether to Give Trump More or Less Power to Expand Wars" – Goitein (2018)
"If Obama Appoints Scalia's Successor, the Supreme Court Will Really Jump Leftward" – Cottrell and Shipan (2016)

Lecture 9: August 1st, 2018

Part 1 – Case Study: The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)
Part 2 – Possibilities for Political Reform

Readings
Choose either:
(a) Read "How They Did It" – Cohn (2010)
(b) Watch Frontline's "Obama's Deal" (2010)
"President Trump Couldn't Pass Obamacare Repeal. This is Why." – Rudalevige (2017)
"Trump Administration Won't Defend Key Parts of Affordable Care Act" – Levey (2018)
"Governors and the Executive Branch" from *Politics in The American States: A Comparative Analysis* – Ferguson (2012)

Recommended but optional – the *Washington Post*'s series on the modern presidency:
"Is the Modern President Too Powerful? A Primer" – Gebelhoff (2016)
"Imagine There's No Congress" – Vermeule (2016)
"Obama is Maintaining the Balance of Powers, Not Overturning It" – Gorod (2016)
"Obama Can't Rewrite the Law" – Slattery (2016)
"Strong Presidencies May Threaten Democracy. Luckily, We Don't Have One." – Carey (2016)
"Obama is Upending the Role of the Presidency" – Yoo (2016)

Final Exam: August 3rd, 2018, 11:30am