This graduate seminar is designed as an overview of major research topics pertaining to the United States Presidency. Because much of the scholarly literature on the presidency has been viewed as atheoretical, unsystematic, and/or largely descriptive, emphasis will be placed on advances in theory-building and methodological approaches. The seminar will cover substantive areas of the presidency at each meeting, including articles from the collection of essays in books edited by Shapiro et al. and Edwards et al. to discuss the application of “power,” behavioral, quantitative, and formal theoretical approaches to the presidency.

In addition to active participation in seminar discussions, students are to prepare a research paper of approximately 20-25 pages (journal length). The paper should represent an endeavor which, fully developed through additional research and analysis, could be worthy of a conference presentation or journal submission. Students are expected to theorize about a particular aspect of the presidency and set forth a substantive question or problem, a hypothesis or hypotheses, and a methodological approach to the question of inquiry. Students are encouraged to collect relevant data and undertake data analysis, as appropriate to the focus of their research.

Students may approach the research question of interest to them from a longitudinal or case study perspective. Potential topics include campaigns, public opinion, executive-legislative relations, press relations, White House organization/management, and decision-making. Students should use the various frameworks in the course readings as a springboard for developing new, creative, and innovative approaches.

The research paper will constitute 50% of the course grade (due date will be announced in class); a preliminary outline of the research paper is due on February 28 (5-7 pp) and constitutes 10% of the course grade. Weekly presentations of seminar readings comprise another 20% of the course grade. Attendance and participation will constitute the final 20% of the course grade.

Books are available at area book stores and are listed in Appendix 1. Journal articles will be available on line through course reserves on the Library West web site.
January 10 – Introduction to the Course

January 17 – The Nature of Presidential Power: Neustadt, Skowronek et les autres…

- Jeffrey Tulis, “The Two Constitutional Presidencies,” in Nelson.
- Lyn Ragsdale, “Personal Power and Presidents,” in Shapiro et al.

Recommended:


January 24 – The Methodology and Future Direction of Presidency Research


January 31 – Presidential Elections

- Stephen J. Wayne, *The Road to the White House 2012.*
February 7 – The Public Presidency I

- Samuel Kernell, *Going Public*.
- Martha Joynt Kumar, “The President as Message and Messenger,” in Shapiro et al.
- Diane Heith, “Presidential Polling and the Potential for Leadership,” in Shapiro et al.

February 14 – The Public Presidency II


February 21 – The Institutional Presidency

- Bert Rockman, “Staffing and Organizing the Presidency,” in Shapiro et al.
- Karen Hult, “Advising the President,” in Edwards et al.
February 28 – Power & Policymaking: Executive Orders


March 7 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

March 14 – Power and Policymaking: Unilateral Actions & Signing Statements Controversies

- William Howell, Power without Persuasion.

March 21 - Archival Research & Approaches to Primary Sources

- Andrew Rudalevige, Managing the President’s Program.
March 28 – Legislative Leadership: Quantitative Approaches & the “Two Presidencies”

- Jon Bond and Richard Fleisher, *The President in the Legislative Arena*.

April 4 - Divided Government, The Veto Power, and the Legislative Presidency

- Charles Cameron, *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*.
- Terry Moe, “Presidents, Institutions, and Theory,” in Edwards et al.


April 11 - The Psychological Presidency

- James David Barber, *Presidential Character*.

April 18 – Presentation of Individual Projects
Book List


Yes, Constitution grants formal powers to the presidents in the Constitution, but is this why we have presidents like Roosevelt, Cleveland, Wilson, and so forth? The answer is that we must assess how these great presidents utilized informal powers differently from the weaker presidents. Argued that power in the U.S. was dispersed among Congressional leaders (2 answers). Worried that committee chairs in Congress had too much power. He was able to unite Congress behind him.

- Neustadt on his Presidential Power thinks about why sometimes we have weak presidents and sometimes we have strong presidents. (2 answers). His answer is 

  - Neustadtâ€™s and Kernellâ€™s. Rather than looking to presidential activity for indicators of presidential power or success, Skowronek looks to the political environment a president faces. Skowronek envisions American history as cycles of political time. Each cycle is marked by the rise and fall of political regimes. A regime, in this sense, is a party or faction that rises to power in what Skowronek calls â€œreconstructive electionsâ€. In these elections, a faction or party soundly defeats the opposing party. When Neustadt was writing there was this linear image of the President making a decision on some matter of policy and then marshaling the resources to carry it out. The basic argument of the book is that this image of the President is flawed as few examples of this type of presidential leadership exist. The President to act as ultimate decider on policy actions is constrained by things like Congress, his own prestige and ability to persuade, and the competing interests within his own administration.

  - A thought provoking thesis on the nature of American presidential leadership that should be read by political science students of all disciplines. Read more. 6 people found this helpful.