pos3413 - The American Presidency
David Houghton

Course Home

Instructor Contact

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Introduction

Welcome to POS3413 *American Presidency*, Fall 2012. This course is fully online, and there are no face-to-face meetings. On this website you will find the course schedule, which will tell you what to read - and in some cases what to watch or listen to - in each Module (click on 'Schedule'). Modules generally post at 5pm on a Friday, with the exception of Module 1 (which will post on the first day of class on Monday 20 August). Each week a new Module will be posted which will ask you to complete various readings and do assignments, in most cases within seven days.

Course Description

Although it is by necessity a more abbreviated version than that taught face-to-face, this online version of the course is designed to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to the office of the American president. All aspects of the office will be examined, including recruitment and presidential elections, staffing, policy making and relations with Congress and the public. The role of individual leadership characteristics will also be given particular attention, but the presidency will also be placed in the context of the broader American political landscape, with special emphasis paid to the capacity of the office to cope with the domestic and international environment of the 21st century. No other executive position in the world system has the status of the US presidency. Both in foreign/military and economic affairs the world

looks to the US for leadership. And yet the formal powers of the presidency within the American political system are limited; that system was created to frustrate leadership, not to give in free rein, and therein lies the central dilemma of the office.

There will be two sections to the course this semester: in Part I we begin by examining the various paradoxes which beset the modern American presidency. In Part II we then examine the institutional and political relationships between the president and other influential bodies in American politics.

Required Texts

The following book has been placed on order and should be available for purchase at the UCF Book Store or via an online seller such as Amazon.com. I *strongly* recommend that you buy your own copy, as you'll be tested in detail on the contents of the book at exam time:

Thomas Cronin and Michael Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, third edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). There is an Amazon.com link here.

Publisher's Description: The historic election of Barack Obama has ushered in a new era of hope and optimism across America. However, can Obama--or any President--live up to the incredibly high expectations that we have of our presidents? Elegantly written, timely, and easily accessible to students, the third edition of The Paradoxes of the American Presidency considers this crucial question and many more. Two highly esteemed presidential scholars, Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, explore the complex institution of the American Presidency by presenting a series of paradoxes that shape and define the office. Thoroughly updated and revised to reflect recent political events--from the attacks of 9/11, to the war on terrorism and the controversial eight-year George W. Bush presidency, to the economic meltdown of 2008 and the election of Barack Obama--the third edition incorporates findings from the latest scholarship, the most recent elections and court cases, and relevant survey research.

A Word of Warning About Online Courses

If you haven't taken an online class before, you should know that they can be quite gruelling: since there are no face to face meetings, there is a lot more emphasis on reading than there might be in an ordinary class, and most of all you need to organize yourself so that you complete the readings and postings on time. This will require a great deal of self-discipline on your part. Do not take this course unless you are strongly motivated to do all the readings and other assignments on time.

Rules of Assessment

The final grade will be composed of three elements (note that all times given in this course refer to local time in Orlando, FL, which is US Eastern Time):

- A Midterm Examination on everything covered so far, taken online *at any time* between Friday 5 October 5pm and Friday 12 October 5pm. Consists of 50 multiple choice questions and worth 40%.
- Cumulative Final Examination, taken online *at any time* between Friday 23 November 5pm and Monday 3 December 5pm (extra time given due to vacation). Consists of 100 multiple choice questions and worth 50%.
- Discussion postings will collectively account for 10%. You will usually have a week to do each posting, and discussion topics will close when the week ends (see individual Modules for details). Note: although I will allow every member of the class to do *one* late posting during the semester, after that I will deduct 1% from your 10% Discussions score for every posting which appears late. It is therefore very much in your interest to ensure that you do the readings and discussion postings on time.

  Makeup examinations and extensions to weekly assignments will be offered *only in the very rarest of circumstances*. In order to be eligible to take a makeup exam or get an extension, you must give a *convincing written explanation*, backed up with proper medical or other documentation, as to why you were unable to meet the expectations required of other class members. Only where the instructor is fully satisfied that the student could not be expected to complete the original assignment/examination given his or her personal circumstances will any exceptions whatsoever be granted. Note also that any makeup examination *will not necessarily be of the same format as the original exam*.

  Finally, please note that ***no extra credit*** will be offered in this course; by continuing with the course, you are agreeing to abide by its rules of assessment and agreeing to accept the marks/grades assigned to your work. All grades are final. The grading scheme will be as follows:

  A 90 or above
  A- 88-89
  B+ 86-87
  B 82-85
  B- 80-81
  C+ 78-79
  C 73-77
  C- 70-72
  D+ 67-69
  D 63-66
  D- 60-62
  F Below 60

Schedule of Readings
Fall 2012

The following readings may be subject to change as the course proceeds, so you should check back here frequently. Any readings not included in the required text will be added to the webpage via a link called 'Additional Readings Box'.

Post Date	Module	Activity
Part I: Introduction		
Monday 20 August	1: Introduction To Class	Overview of objectives and methods of assessment, and a bird's eye view of what we'll be covering during the semester. Post discussion to 'Introductions'. Modules will normally be posted on a Friday, beginning on Friday 24 August.
Friday 24 August	2: Paradoxes of the American Presidency	Read Cronin and Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, Chapter 1 and 'Rose'. You can find the latter in a folder on the course homepage called 'Additional Readings Box'. View video on the changing role of the American presidency here. Post discussion to 'Paradoxes'.
Part II: Institutional and Political Relationships		
Friday 31 August	3: How We Judge Presidents	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 2. Post discussion to 'Judging Presidents'.
Friday 7 September	4: How We Elect Presidents	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 3. View a short video on party conventions by clicking here and one on the electoral college here. Post discussion to 'Electing Presidents'.
Friday 14 September	5: Presidential Power and Leadership	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 4, as well as 'Barber' and 'Skowronek'. You can find the last two in the 'Additional Readings Box'. Watch the BBC documentary 'How To Be a Good President', which is available here. It is in six parts, but you can find links to the next sections once you watch this one. Post discussion to 'Power and Leadership'.
Friday 21 September	6: Presidents in a System of Shared Powers	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 5. Post discussion to 'Shared Powers'.
Friday 28 September	7: Presidents and Congress	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 6. Watch video 'Five Presidents' here. Post discussion to 'Congress'.

Friday 5 October	8: Midterm Examination	Examination on everything covered so far, taken online *at any time* between Friday 5 October 5pm and Friday 12 October 5pm. Consists of 50 multiple choice questions.
Friday 12 October	9: Presidents as Chief Executives	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 7. Post discussion to 'Chief Executives'.
Friday 19 October	10: Presidents and Vice-Presidents	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 8. Post discussion to 'Vice Presidents'.
Friday 26 October	11: Presidents and the Courts	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 9. Post discussion to 'Courts'.
Friday 2 November	12: Presidents and Political Parties	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 10. Post discussion to 'Political Parties'.
Friday 9 November	13: Presidents and The Future	Cronin and Genovese, Chapter 11. Post discussion to 'The Future'.
Friday 16 November	14: Thanksgiving	Week off due to holiday.
Friday 23 November	15: Final Examination	Cumulative final examination, taken online *at any time* between Friday 23 November 5pm and Monday 3 December 5pm (extra time given due to vacation). Consists of 100 multiple choice questions.