The central goal of this course is to strengthen your understanding of the American presidency, providing fresh analytical lenses through which to view perhaps the most familiar and visible institution in the U.S. political system. One of the core themes we will place special emphasis on this term is the uneasy relationship between liberty, democracy, and executive power. During the ratification debates over the U.S. Constitution, the Anti-Federalists charged that the Framers had created an executive office that would become “the fetus of monarchy,” one that would eventually rob the cherished liberties of individuals. At the same time, champions of democracy like Thomas Paine warned that executive leadership was a “slavish custom” poorly suited for representative systems in which citizens must be “proprietors in government.” From this perspective, presidential power has the potential to make citizens passive, dependent, and deferential – qualities unsuited for self-government. Over time, however, presidents have presented themselves as the only elected representative of the whole people and the true embodiment of the popular will. In this view, other political actors – legislators, bureaucrats, party officials, and lobbyists – are taken to represent only partial or selfish interests. “The President is the political leader of the nation, or has it in his choice to be,” observed Woodrow Wilson. “The nation as a whole has chosen him, and is conscious that it has no other political spokesman. Its instinct is for unified action, and it craves a single leader.” Still others have insisted that only strong presidents can protect the nation from foreign foes and domestic threats. Champions of broad executive power argue that presidential leadership is both crucial for advancing the democratic will of the people and critical for keeping Americans safe in times of national security crisis. Yet contemporary critics argue that our modern chief executives are woefully ineffective in domestic policy and perilously unaccountable in national security policy and foreign affairs. The original debate over liberty, democracy, and executive power rages on.

We hopefully will make the most of the timing of this course to place Obama’s presidency in broader context, to reflect on the 2012 election and future presidential elections, to take stock of domestic policy leadership amidst divided government and partisan polarization, and to assess today’s foreign policy and national security challenges. Our analysis of presidential leadership will illuminate the nature of the presidency as an institution as well as the significance of the person who occupies the office at any given moment. Along the way, we will consider how executive influence is shaped by an American political system that fragments power among numerous political actors and structures. We also will consider how the timing of a presidential term affects the capacity of an incumbent to exercise leadership and the character of what s/he attempts to accomplish. Specific topics include the Constitutional framing of the presidency, presidential elections, rival theories of presidential leadership, media and public
relations, the psychological presidency, interactions with Congress, the judiciary, interest
groups, and social movements, civil rights, public policy, war and crisis management, executive
power and law, and presidential greatness.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

• **Attendance:** It is strongly recommended that you attend all classes. The lectures and
discussions will include material not in your readings, for which you will be responsible
on the exams. If you do not attend class regularly and take careful notes, it is a safe bet
that your grade will suffer in this class.

• **Reading:** You should come to class having completed the reading assignments as
scheduled in the course outline. This will enable you to follow lectures and be actively
engaged in discussions. You will note from the course outline that reading in some
weeks is more demanding than others. I urge you to read ahead when you can. There
will be three “pop” quizzes designed to encourage regular reading.

• **Participation:** Paolo Freire, one of the past century’s most influential education
theorists, observed that too often classroom education is a process in which students are
treated as empty vaults into which their instructors make “deposits” of knowledge. The
problem with this “banking” approach to education, he writes, is that education is most
effective and liberating when there is a strong “dialogue” in the classroom and when
students become teachers and vice versa. I largely agree. Indeed, my classroom style
facilitates participation and I will frequently open our topics for discussion. This course
is meant to encourage lively discussions, but they require you to come to class both
prepared in terms of the readings and willing to jump into the fray.

• **Electronic devices:** You are expected to turn off wireless devices such as laptops, cell
phones, Blackberries, Ipods, and other distractions before class and discussion sections.
If you have a need or strong preference to use a laptop to take notes during class, you
must obtain permission to do so, sit in the first two rows of the classroom, and limit the
use of laptops to taking notes.

• **Quizzes:** As already mentioned, three “pop” quizzes will be administered during the
term and they are designed to encourage you to stay on top of the readings. There will
be no makeup versions of the quizzes.

• **Research Paper** (8-12 pages double spaced). You will have an opportunity this term to
undertake an original research project related to the course. Given how quickly the
term flies by, it is a good idea to develop a paper focus as early as possible. We will
carve out time at the beginning of the second week to help you begin the research
process. Detailed guidelines for the research paper are elucidated at the end of this
syllabus. You will have considerable flexibility in selecting a topic. Topics of past
papers have included topics that focus on a particular presidency (Lincoln and slavery,
Lynden Johnson and Vietnam, Bush and domestic surveillance) and others that are
topical and range across administrations (environmental policy, use of executive orders,
divided government, presidential relations with the media, influence on the judiciary).
• **In-Class Examinations:** There will be two in-class exams during the term. Each will be comprised of short-answer questions, identifications, and essay questions (more specifics later in the term). An important note concerning absences from class exams: Excused absences must involve medical and/or family emergencies. If you have such an emergency, you are expected to notify me as soon as possible and to schedule a makeup in a timely fashion. No exams will be administered prior to a scheduled date.

• **Academic Integrity:** If there is clear and convincing evidence that a student engaged in dishonest academic behavior, the instructor will have the authority to take appropriate actions. You should be aware that dishonest behavior includes both “giving” and “taking” of improper assistance on exams, papers, or any other form of attempting to take credit for work that is not your own. Thanks to recent software, it is not difficult to detect cheating and plagiarism. If you are uncertain what plagiarism entails, please see http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/.

• **Calculating the Grade:** Your final grade will be calculated based on the following components:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>First Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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• **Opportunities for Extra Credit:** I coordinate a speaker series and other programs for the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics. You may earn extra credit when you attend one of the talks listed below (for up to a total of 4% of your final grade). There will be a member of our staff to help with a sheet to sign in and out at the Morse Center table at the entry to each event.

- Harold Meyerson, “The Revolt of the Cities,” Tuesday, January 20, 2015, 7pm, 110 Knight Law Center


- Kerry Tymchuk, “Lessons in Leadership,” Tuesday, February 10, 2015, 3:30pm, Gerlinger Lounge, Knight Law Center, 4th Floor.

- Vesla Weaver, “We’re Free But Not Free: Race and Incarceration in America,” Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 7pm, 175 Knight Law Center.
REQUIRED READINGS

I have ordered the following required books through the university bookstore. A variety of other readings will be available on Blackboard.


COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

January 6 – Introduction: On Liberty, Democracy, and Executive Power

January 8th – Constitutional Designs: Inventing the Presidency and Enduring Ambiguities

(Food for thought: What are the most important flaws in the constitutional blueprints for the presidential office? Would the framers recognize the modern presidency? How limited or expansive did they expect presidential power to be?)

*Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chapter 2.*


January 13 – Breathing Life Into the Office: Executive Precedents and Democratization in the Early American Republic

(Food for thought: Do presidents have certain “inherent” powers? In what ways did Washington, Jefferson and Jackson make the presidency safe or dangerous for democracy? What are the merits and problems of the Jackson/Van Buren model of partisan democracy?)

*Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chapters 4 and 5.*

January 15 – Lincoln and the Politics of Transformation

(Food for thought: How did Lincoln’s words and actions impact American politics in general and the presidential office in particular? Was Lincoln a “constitutional dictator”? What checks, if any, should be placed on the power of presidents during national security crises of the first order?)

*Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chapters 6 and 7.*

January 20 – Theodore Roosevelt and the Presidency in a New Century

(Food for thought: Why was Theodore Roosevelt so pivotal in recasting popular expectations of the White House? How did his leadership anticipate new roles for the presidency?)
Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chapter 8.

(Food for thought: What are the possibilities and perils of the president’s “bully pulpit” and of popular leadership more generally?)


January 27 – In the Shadow of FDR: Crisis Leadership and Consolidating the Modern Presidency
(Food for thought: Franklin Roosevelt confronted the two greatest crises of the 20th century, and in the process recast the character of American government. What sets the “modern presidency” apart from earlier presidencies? FDR struggled to define and defend his reform agenda against critics on the Left and Right – how should we understand his public philosophy and policy legacies?)

Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chapter 10.

January 29 – From Camelot to the Reagan Revolution
(Food for thought: During the 1960s and 1970s, journalists and scholars first wrote of an “imperial presidency” and then an “imperiled presidency.” Is the presidency too strong or too weak? Ronald Reagan was arguably the most influential occupant of the Oval Office since FDR. What made his presidency effective? What were his chief limitations?)

Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chapters 11 and 12.

February 3 – Theoretical Models of Presidential Leadership: Skill, Context, and Leadership Over Time (The Insights of Neustadt and Skowronek)
(Food for thought: What are the strengths and limitations of each of these analytical models of the American presidency? Test them out by applying their insights to the recent administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. How well did they work for recent presidencies?)


February 5 – Midterm Exam

February 10 – Presidential Personality and Character

February 12 – Presidential Nominations and Elections: From King Caucus to the Permanent Campaign

February 17 – Governing the Nation: Congress, Parties, and Interest Groups

February 19 – Researching the Presidency
No readings today. This is your chance to make significant headway on your research papers. Details on research guidance and library resources will be provided.

February 24 – “The Dark Side:” Terrorism and Unilateral Presidential Power
Readings: Milkis and Nelson, chapter 14.

February 26 – A Tale of Two Wars: Executive Discretion and National Security
Readings: Fisher, Presidential War Power, excerpt on Blackboard.

Readings: Dan Tichenor, "The Development of Presidential Emergency Power" Perspectives on Politics 11, no. 3 (September 2013): 769-788, on Blackboard.

March 5th – Venerable or Vulnerable Courts?: Presidents and the Judiciary

March 9th – Taking Stock of the Bush and Obama Presidencies (and Beyond)

March 12th – Presidential Greatness: Lessons of the Past, Prospects for the Future
**Notice of Duty to Report**

I support Title IX and have a duty to report relevant information.

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking.

Any UO employee who becomes aware that such behavior is occurring has a duty to report that information to their supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity.

The University Health Center and University Counseling and Testing Center can provide assistance and have a greater ability to work confidentially with students.