

**Political Science 4610H**  
**THE U.S. PRESIDENCY**  
Spring 2025 (48451)  
Baldwin 302  
MWF 1:50 - 2:40 p.m.

Dr. Jamie L. Carson  
Office: Baldwin 304B  
Office Hours: W 2:45-3:45 and by appointment

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### **Course Overview**

This honors seminar is intended as a broad survey of the literature on presidential and executive branch politics. The central focus of the course will be on the U.S. Presidency, but much of what we discuss will have direct relevance for the study of executive politics more generally. As such, we will focus on the role of the president in the U.S. political system, presidential selection, executive politics, presidential power, inter-branch relations, and executive policymaking. Throughout the course, we will pay attention to current political and scholarly controversies in terms of identifying important research questions as well as examining and improving upon existing research designs. By the end of the course, you should have a better understanding of how the executive branch operates.

### **Required Texts**

Edwards, George C. III. 2024. *Why the Electoral College is Bad for America*, 4th edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-1009426299

Howell, William G. 2013. *Thinking About the Presidency: The Primacy of Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0691155340

Rudalevige, Andrew. 2021. *By Executive Order: Bureaucratic Management and the Limits of Presidential Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0691194363

Lowande, Kenneth. 2024. *False Front: The Failed Promise of Presidential Power in a Polarized Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 978-0226837253

### **Course Materials**

The readings for the course will be drawn from the list of books above, in addition to scholarly articles each week. Required books are available for purchase from the usual sources or may be checked out from the library. Unless otherwise indicated, assigned articles can be downloaded from [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) or from the UGA library (<http://www.libs.uga.edu/ejournals/>). Please keep in mind that assigned readings or the course schedule may be altered at the discretion of the instructor.

### **General Expectations**

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You are expected to attend class regularly, to show up on time, and be prepared to participate in discussions. You are responsible for all material in the readings and lectures, even if you are unable to attend class. It is your responsibility to remain aware of specific deadlines or dates posted on the syllabus and to be sure that assignments are completed on time.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

1. Participation (20%)
2. Short Writing Assignment (10%)
3. Final Paper (20%)
4. Midterm Exam (25%)
5. Final Exam (25%)

In terms of final grades in light of the +/- grading system, an A will be given to anyone receiving 94 or more points, an A- to those receiving 90-93 points, a B+ to those receiving 87-89 points, a B to those receiving 83-86 points, a B- to those receiving 80-82 points, a C+ to those receiving 77-79 points, a C to those receiving 73-76 points, a C- to those receiving 70-72 points, a D to those receiving 60 to 69 points, and an F to anyone receiving fewer than 60 points in the course.

### ***Participation***

Your grade in this area will be based on the quality of your classroom participation. *Since this is an upper division honors seminar, each student will be expected to present the assigned material and lead the class discussion once during the semester starting in late January.* Students are expected to actively participate through asking questions and answering inquiries raised in class even on days they are not responsible for leading class discussion. Keep in mind that this class is a collaborative enterprise. For the seminar to be a useful learning experience, you *must* come to class and be prepared to participate in discussions.

### ***Short Writing Assignment***

Each student will be required to submit a short writing assignment on the day that you are responsible for leading class discussion. This assignment should briefly summarize and critically analyze the assigned readings. The paper should be approximately 2-3 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. *Be sure to spell check and read over your paper before submitting it for a grade.*

### ***Final Paper***

Everyone will be required to submit a final paper near the end of the semester (more details to follow in the coming weeks). These papers should be approximately 5-7 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. Final papers will be due on **April 18, 2025**. *Your grade on the project will be penalized if there are grammatical or spelling errors in the completed paper.*

### ***Exams***

There will be a midterm and a final exam in this course. Exams are closed book and will include a mix of identification, short answer, and essay questions. The final exam is cumulative and will include material covered in the class lectures and the assigned reading. *A blue book will be required for each exam.*

### ***Active Learning***

Several times during the course, we will engage in active learning exercises. This will typically involve breaking up into smaller groups where each group will discuss a specific issue, question, or topic related to the presidency. Each group will then be asked to make a very brief demonstration at the end of class. Half of your participation grade for the course will be assessed based on your active involvement in these activities. More details will be provided early in the course.

### ***Instructor Availability***

If you would like to speak with me outside of class, feel free to stop by my office during scheduled office hours. Occasionally I have meetings during the day and may be unavailable. To ensure that I am in my office on a given day, email me ([carson@uga.edu](mailto:carson@uga.edu)) ahead of time to set up a specific time to meet.

### ***Incompletes and Make-Up Policy***

A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., a university-sanctioned activity, religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be accepted **prior** to the exam when feasible to allow a make-up to be scheduled. As a rule, late assignments will not be accepted unless approval is obtained in advance from the instructor.

### ***Miscellaneous***

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. No “extra credit” will be given under any circumstances. Final grades may only be changed in the event of a clerical error (e.g., points summed incorrectly). The syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

### **Accommodations and Academic Honesty**

Students that require accommodation should notify me and the Office for Disability Services as soon as possible so appropriate arrangements can be made. All information and documentation is considered confidential. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” More detailed information can be found at: <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>. If you choose to use ChatGPT or other AI software in this class, keep in mind that it can give you incorrect information.

### **Policy on Recording Lectures**

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

### **Mental Health and Wellness Resources**

- If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
- UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services or crisis support: (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

**Course Schedule** (Assigned readings are to be completed by the dates listed below.)

1/6 Introduction

**Studying the Presidency**

1/8 Assessing the Constitutional Presidency

1/10 Howell, *Thinking About the Presidency* (pgs. 1-54)

1/13 Howell, *Thinking About the Presidency* (pgs. 55-105)

1/15 Howell, *Thinking About the Presidency* (pgs. 106-143)

1/17 Active Learning Exercise: Should We Revise Article II of the Constitution?

1/20 *No Class, MLK Day*

**Presidential Primaries**

1/22 Aldrich, John. 2009. "The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42(1): 33-38.

1/24 Norrander, Barbara. 2006. "The Attrition Game: Initial Resources, Initial Contests, and the Exit of Candidates During the U.S. Presidential Primary Season." *British Journal of Political Science* 36: 487-507.

1/27 Sides, John, Chris Tausanovitch, Lynn Vavreck, and Christopher Warshaw. 2020. "On the Representativeness of Primary Electorates." *British Journal of Political Science* 50: 677-685.

**Presidential Elections**

1/29 Gomez, Brad, Thomas Hansford, and George Krause. 2007. "The Republicans Should Pray for Rain: Weather, Turnout, and Voting in U.S. Presidential Elections." *Journal of Politics* 69(3): 649-663.

1/31 Sides, John, Lynn Vavreck, and Christopher Warshaw. 2022. "The Effect of Television Advertising in United States Elections." *American Political Science Review* 116(2): 702-718.

**The Electoral College**

2/3 Edwards, *Why The Electoral College is Bad for America*, pgs. 1-98

2/5 Edwards, *Why The Electoral College is Bad for America*, pgs. 99-207

2/7 Active Learning Exercise: Is it Time to Eliminate the Electoral College?

**The Presidency as an Institution**

2/10 Ragsdale, Lyn and John Theis. 1997. "The Institutionalization of the American Presidency, 1924-92." *American Journal of Political Science* 41(4): 1280-1318.

2/12 Dickinson, Matthew and Kathryn Dunn Tenpas. 2002. "Explaining Increasing Turnover Rates Among Presidential Advisors, 1929-1997." *Journal of Politics* 64(2): 434-448.

### **Presidential Approval**

- 2/14 Kriner, Douglas L. and Eric Schickler. 2014. "Investigating the President: Committee Probes and Presidential Approval, 1953-2006." *Journal of Politics* 76(2): 521-534.
- 2/17 Christenson, Dino P. and Douglas L. Kriner. 2017. "Mobilizing the Public Against the President: Congress and the Political Costs of Unilateral Action." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(4): 769-785.
- 2/19 Active Learning Exercise: Evaluating Presidential "Greatness"

### **The President and Congress**

- 2/21 Canes-Wrone, Brandice and Scott de Marchi. 2002. "Presidential Approval and Legislative Success." *Journal of Politics* 64(2): 491-509.
- 2/24 Rogowski, Jon C. 2016. "Presidential Influence in an Era of Congressional Dominance." *American Political Science Review* 110(2): 325-341.

### **Midterm Exam**

- 2/28 Active Learning Exercise: Should We Give the President "Fast-Track" Authority?
- 3/3-3/7 *No Class, Spring Break*

### **Executive Branch Politics**

- 3/10 Kriner, Douglas L. and Andrew Reeves. 2012. "The Influence of Federal Spending on Presidential Elections." *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 348-366.
- 3/12 Ostrander, Ian. 2016. "The Logic of Collective Inaction: Senatorial Delay in Executive Nominations." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 1063-1076.
- 3/14 Active Learning Exercise: Reevaluating Presidential Appointments

### **Presidential Bargaining**

- 3/17 Trager, Robert F. and Lynn Vavreck. 2011. "The Political Costs of Crisis Bargaining: Presidential Rhetoric and the Role of Party." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 526-545.
- 3/19 Hassell, Hans J. G. and Samuel Kernell. 2016. "Veto Rhetoric and Legislative Riders." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 845-859
- 3/21 Active Learning Exercise: Do Presidents Have Sufficient Authority to Bargain with Political Actors?

### **Unilateral Presidential Power**

- 3/24 Rudalevige, *By Executive Order*, pgs. 1-109
- 3/26 Rudalevige, *By Executive Order*, pgs. 110-220
- 3/28 Thrower, Sharece. 2017. "To Revoke or Not Revoke? The Political Determinants of Executive Order Longevity." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(3): 642-656.

- 3/31 Kaufman, Aaron R. and Jon C. Rogowski. 2024. "Divided Government, Strategic Substitution, and Presidential Unilateralism." *American Journal of Political Science* 68(2): 816-831.
- 4/2 Active Learning Exercise: Do We Need Greater Checks on Unilateral Executive Power?
- 4/4 *No Class, Midwest Political Science Association Meeting (Chicago)*
- The President and the Courts**
- 4/7 Johnson, Timothy and Jason Roberts. 2004. "Presidential Capital and the Supreme Court Nomination Process." *Journal of Politics* 66(3): 663-683.
- 4/9 Bailey, Michael, Brian Kamoie, and Forrest Maltzman. 2005. "Signals From the Tenth Justice: The Political Role of the Solicitor General in Supreme Court Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(1): 72-85.
- 4/11 Bartels, Brandon L. and Eric Kramon. 2021. "All the President's Justices? The Impact of Presidential Copartisanship on Supreme Court Job Approval." *American Journal of Political Science* 66(1): 171-186.
- Presidents and the Media**
- 4/14 Baum, Matthew A. and Samuel Kernell. 1999. "Has Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television?" *American Political Science Review* 93(1): 99-114.
- 4/16 Druckman, James. 2003. "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate Revisited." *Journal of Politics* 65(2): 559-571.
- 4/18 Eshbaugh-Soha, Matthew. 2013. "Presidential Influence of the News Media: The Case of the Press Conference." *Political Communication* 30(4): 548-564.  
\**Final Papers Due*
- 4/21 **Presidential Leadership**  
Lowande, *False Front*, pgs. 1-52
- 4/23 Lowande, *False Front*, pgs. 53-118
- 4/25 Lowande, *False Front*, pgs. 119-184
- 4/28 Active Learning Exercise: Can Modern Presidents Govern Effectively?
- 5/2 **Final Examination**, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.

## Reflections on 20+ Years of College Teaching

Here are some simple lessons that will take you far in class (and in life more generally) and it is best to start practicing them now as they will definitely pay off later:

1. It is critical to learn how to write an effective email. First, begin with a proper greeting such as “Dear Dr. [Last Name] or Professor.” Don’t begin with “Hey!” It’s not professional.
2. On a related point, keep your emails short and to the point. We don’t need to know every detail of your life. But, most importantly, be direct and provide some context. If I have no idea who you are or what you are asking for, I may not respond as quickly.
3. If you have a legitimate excuse for missing an exam or the due date for an assignment, I am willing to work with you up to a point. If you must miss an exam or turn in a paper late because your high school buddy is getting married and you want to leave town early to attend the rehearsal dinner, that unfortunately doesn’t qualify.
4. The date of the final exam is set by the university, and I can’t do anything about it so plan accordingly. Also, taking an exam early is never an option so please don’t ask to do so. On a similar note, please tell your parents not to buy you a plane ticket home before the actual end of the semester so we can avoid any awkward discussions in April.
5. Proofread everything you email or submit for a grade. It really does make a difference.
6. Always consult the syllabus before quickly firing off an email with a question that is likely already addressed in the syllabus (such as when an assignment is due or when the next exam is scheduled). It will ultimately save everyone time in the end.
7. Expect a reasonable turnaround time when you do email me. I’m always amazed when someone emails me at 12:30 a.m. on a Friday or Saturday night and seems surprised when I don’t email them back until Monday. Professors have lives too and we don’t spend all of them waiting for emails to come in.
8. Don’t be afraid to ask questions in class. Most of us love to talk and we get paid to teach and answer your questions. We really don’t mind at all.
9. But don’t ask for extra credit, especially after not completing some of the work during the course of the semester. That is also unprofessional.
10. At some point, you may need one or more professors to write you a recommendation letter for a job application, an internship you are interested in, or for a scholarship that you’d like to apply for. Keep the above suggestions in mind before you ask for one because our letters can be quite honest in terms of focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals we are writing about. Employers and those screening applicants for various positions expect that from us.
11. Finally, if you continue to come to my class after the first day, that means you have accepted the terms of the contract (i.e., the syllabus), regardless of whether you have read it fully. Keep in mind that the terms of the syllabus are not negotiable.