Course Description

This is a course about a dominant American political institution, the Presidency. We will review the powers of the presidency and the relationship with other government and extra-government institutions. I hope the course will allow you to achieve a knowledgeable understanding of the institution.

Course Goals

Throughout the course, we will focus on three fundamental questions about the President’s role as the formal head of the executive branch of government and the focal point of public attention: (1) What are the sources of presidential power? (2) How do presidents govern? (3) How are presidents elected?
Grading

- Attend classes, take part in class activities (we play with data and information) and be prepared for discussions. Yes, this means that you need to do the readings in preparation for class, and be active in class. (10% of final grade)

- Final paper (90% of grade): You will receive detailed guidelines on the paper.
  - Submit a research topic: 1 page by August 11 (10% of final grade).
  - Submit a research paper by September 8 (80% of grade).

Learning Outcomes

Part I: Introduction to the American Political System

Part II: Studying the presidency, and the nature of the office.
- Constitutional Origins and Historical Development
- Presidential Power

Part III: Presidential Governing – Managing the Affairs of State, and Getting What You Want
- The President and the Public and the Media; the rise of the “Public Presidency”
- Governing in a “Separated System:” Relations with other government and non-government actors.
- Unilateral Power of the President

Part IV: The Politics of Presidential Elections
- The electoral system
- Understanding elections

Part V: Assessing the Biden Presidency

Lecturer Office Hours

Office: Lauder 127 (Lauder Courtyard)
Office Hours: Thursday, by appointment

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Students must silence and stow all electronic devices (e.g., laptops, iPads, cell phones, etc.) before class begins.

Why don't I allow such devices for taking notes? This post from Buzzfeed says it all: “11 Things You’re Actually Doing on Your Laptop During a Lecture.” A summary of research about this topic is available on the website.

The readings are carefully selected to allow class discussion yet avoid overwhelming you with a heavy reading load. I expect you to read for class and participate in class discussion.

Reading List

A reading list if available on the course website.