

POL 433F: Presidential Politics in America

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Lawrence LeDuc, 109 Carr Hall (SMC)
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TEXTS: John A. Maltese, Andrew Rudalevige and Joseph A. Pika,
The Politics of the Presidency (11th edition)

Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse and Michael W. Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate* (15th edition)

A selection of articles will also be posted on Quercus or made available by the instructor

MEDIA / INTERNET:

Students are expected to keep up to date with the events of the election campaign using the many sources that are readily available for this purpose. The *New York Times* [www.nytimes.com] offers an inexpensive on-line subscription to students and is the best overall reference for current information as well as op-ed pieces by regular columnists such as Paul Krugman, Maureen Dowd and Ross Douthat. Other useful sources are *Vox* [www.vox.com/politics], *Politics1* [www.politics1.com], *Real Clear Politics* [<https://www.realclearpolitics.com/>] *Fivethirtyeight* [<https://abcnews.go.com/538>], and *C-Span* [<https://www.c-span.org/campaign/?2024>]. The *Washington Post* [www.washingtonpost.com] covers Congress intensively. Sites maintained by the presidential campaigns or other campaign groups may also be of interest.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

The literature on the U.S. presidency and American presidential elections is vast. The following are recommended as additional reference sources, but are only a small sampling of the Political Science literature in this area. Note that there are multiple editions of a number of these books. The Hetherington/Larson or Poloni-Staudinger/Wolf books may be particularly useful for students with little background in the field. The Routledge Freebook, published just before the 2016 elections, contains much useful background material and is available on-line.

John H. Aldrich et al, *Change and Continuity in the 2020 Elections*

Harold D. Clarke et al, *Making Political Choices: Canada and the United States*

Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*

Marc J. Hetherington & Bruce A. Larson, *Parties, Politics and Public Policy in America*

Michael Lewis-Beck et al, *The American Voter Revisited*

Theodore J. Lowi, *The Personal President*

L. Sandy Maisel & Mark Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America*

Thomas E. Mann & Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*
Michael Nelson (ed), *The Presidency and the Political System*
Michael Nelson (ed), *The Elections of 2020 (2016, 2012. etc.)*
Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*
Lori M. Poloni-Staudinger & Michael R. Wolf, *American Difference*
Gerald M. Pomper & Susan S. Lederman, *Elections in America*
Bert A. Rockman et al, *The Obama Presidency*
Routledge FreeBooks, *United States Election Primer, 2016 (Q)*
Steven A. Shull (ed.), *The Two Presidencies: a Quarter Century Assessment*
Paul D. Shumaker & Burdett Loomis, *Choosing a President*
Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*
Jeffrey Stonecash, *Understanding American Political Parties*
James A. Thurber (ed,) *Rivals for Power*
Martin P. Wattenberg, *The Rise of Candidate Centered Politics*
Stephen J. Wayne, *The Road to the White House*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Two essays. The first essay (25%) will deal with some aspect of any one of the three areas of U.S. public policy scheduled for discussion in the classes of October 8th, 15th or 22nd. The essay should be approximately 5-8 pages in length and should begin with (although not rely exclusively on) the readings listed on the syllabus under the topic chosen. The due date for the first essay is **Tuesday, October 22nd**, but students are expected to make a brief class presentation based on their preliminary work for the essay in one of the three class sessions mentioned above. All students should send an email (a short paragraph indicating the theme of the proposed essay, working title, and initial list of references) to the instructor no later than **September 20th**. The second essay (35%) will deal with any topic of your choice falling under one of the four broad areas scheduled for discussion in the classes of November 12th, 19th 26th and December 3rd.. It should be approximately 10-12 pages in length, and should address some of the themes found in the readings for the appropriate class session. Although the second essay is not due until **Tuesday, December 3rd**, students should similarly expect to make a short class presentation based on their research in one of the four sessions commencing on November 12th. All students should send an email (a short paragraph indicating the theme of the proposed essay, working title, and preliminary references) to the instructor no later than **November 1st**.

Participation/seminar (20%). Students will be expected to contribute to and participate in all class discussions, and to make two short class presentations based on research undertaken for the essays (see above).

Final test (20%). An oral exam based on the required readings, seminar presentations, and written work will be scheduled in December. The exam may be conducted in person or on-line at a mutually agreed time.

COURSE SYLLABUS [* denotes required reading for all students; + denotes required for students writing essay under that theme; “Q” or “LR” indicates available on Quercus.]

September 3rd — Introduction: Before and After November 5th

Theiss-Morse/Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 1
Stephen Medvic, “Campaigns and Elections in American Democracy” chapter 1 in Routledge, *United States Election Primer* [Q]

September 10th — Studying the Presidency and the American Political System

* Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch. 1, 11 and appendices
* Charlie Savage, “Immunity Ruling Escalates Long Rise of Presidential Power.”
New York Times, July 1, 2024 [Q]

Sidney M. Milkis & Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development*
Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*
Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*
Theodore J. Lowi, *The Personal President*

September 17th — Political Parties and Elections in America

* Theiss-Morse et al, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 5
* Matt Grossman & David A. Hopkins, “Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats: The Asymmetry of American Party Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (March 2015) [Q]

Marc J. Hetherington & Bruce A. Larson, *Parties, Politics and Public Policy in America*, ch. 1, 2
Jason Zengerle, “The Vanishing Moderate Democrat.” *New York Times*, June 29, 2022 [Q]
Charles Homans, “How ‘Stop the Steal’ Captured the American Right.” *New York Times*, July 19, 2022 [Q]

September 24th — The Long, Long Campaign

* Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch. 2, 3
* Theiss-Morse/Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 2, 7

Real Clear Politics, *Election Central 2024* [<https://www.realclearpolitics.com/elections/2024/>]
Jeffrey M. Stonecash, “Voters and the Media,” in Routledge, *United States Election Primer* [Q]
Marjorie Randon Hershey, “The Media and the 2020 Presidential Campaign” in Nelson, *The Elections of 2020* [LR]

October 8th — The Economy and the 2024 Election

* Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch. 9

+ M. Stephen Weatherford, “Comparing Presidents’ Economic Policy Leadership.”
Perspectives on Politics 7 (September 2009) [Q]

+ Michael Lewis-Beck & Mary Steigmeier, “Economic Determinants of Electoral Outcomes.”
Annual Review of Political Science 3 (2000) [Q]

Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*

Herbert Stein, *Presidential Economics: the Making of Economic Policy From Roosevelt to Reagan and Beyond*

October 15th — Foreign Policy and National Security

* Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch. 10

* Mark Landler, “Trump, the Insurgent, Breaks With 70 Years of American Foreign Policy.”
New York Times, December 28, 2017 [Q]

+ John Gerard Ruggie, “The Past as Prologue: Interests, Identity and American Foreign Policy.”
International Security 21 (1997) [Q]

+ Sebastian Rosato & John Schussler, “A Realist Foreign Policy for the United States.”
Perspectives on Politics 9 (December 2011) [Q]

Alexander George, *Presidential Decision Making in Foreign Policy*

Thomas J. McCormick, *America’s Half-Century: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After*

October 22nd — Social Policy Issues in 2024 America

* Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch. 8

* Theiss-Morse/Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 4, 6

+ Leslie McCall & Lane Kenworthy, “America’s Social Policy Preferences in the Era
of Rising Inequality.” *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (September 2009) [Q]

+ Roger B. Porter, “Presidential Power and Public Policy” in Nelson, *The Presidency and the
Political System* [LR]

Andrew Rudalevige, *Managing the President’s Program: Presidential Leadership and Domestic
Policy Formulation*

Michael Nelson & Russell Riley (eds.), *Governing at Home: The White House and Domestic
Policymaking*

October 29th — Fall reading week: no class

November 5th — Election Day

- * Lawrence LeDuc and Richard G. Niemi, “Voting Behavior: Choice and Context” in LeDuc, Niemi and Norris, *Comparing Democracies 4* [Q]
- * Gerald M. Pomper, “Sixty Years of Elections: From John Kennedy to Joe Biden,” in Nelson, *The Elections of 2020* [LR]

Harold D. Clarke et al, *Making Political Choices: Canada and the United States*
Herbert B. Asher, *Presidential Elections and American Politics*

November 12th — Election Retrospective: What Happened and Why?

- * Theiss-Morse/Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 3, 8
- + Costas Panagopoulos, “Campaign Context and Preference Dynamics in U.S. Presidential Elections.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 22 (2012) [Q]
- + Herbert F. Weisberg & Christopher J. Devine, “Partisan Defection and Change in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 20 (2010) [Q]

Stanley Kelley, *Interpreting Elections*
Andrew Rudalevige, “The Meaning of the 2020 Election: Fundamentally Divided” in Nelson, *The Elections of 2020* [LR]
Robert A. Jackson, “Voter Mobilization” chapter 6 in Routledge, *United States Election Primer* [Q]

November 19th — American Politics and the 119th Congress

- * Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch. 5
- + Gary C. Jacobson, “Congress: Ever More Partisan, Polarized and National” in Nelson, *The Elections of 2020* [LR]
- + Kathryn Pearson, “Demographic Change and the Future of Congress.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* (April 2010) [Q]

James A. Thurber (ed.), *Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations*
Matthew J. Dickinson, “The President and Congress” in Nelson, *The Presidency and the Political System* [LR]

November 26th — Organizing the Trump [Harris] Administration

* Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch. 6

+ John P. Burke, “The Institutional Presidency” in Nelson, *The Presidency and the Political System* [LR]

+ Andrew Rudalevige, “Rivals or a Team? Staffing and Issue Management in the Obama Administration” in Rockman et al, *The Obama Presidency* [Q]

Hugh Heclo, *A Government of Strangers*

James Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency*

Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency*

Charles O. Jones, *Transitions*

December 3rd — The Harris [Trump] Presidency: Expectations

* Maltese et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*, ch.4, 7

+ Michael Nelson, “The Psychological Presidency” in Nelson, *The Presidency and the Political System* [LR]

+ Joel D. Aberbach, “Change We Can Believe In Meets Reality” in Rockman et al, *The Obama Presidency* [Q]

James David Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*

Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton*

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*

James Pfiffner, *Character and the Modern Presidency*

December 5th - 20th — Final oral exams TBA

January 20th — Inauguration Day