**Political Science 313**

**The American Presidency**

**University of Dayton**

**Spring 2020**

*Professor:* Christopher Devine, Ph.D. *Class:* T/TH 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM, Zehler 104

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**Course Description**

This course examines the American presidency, with particular emphasis on: the presidency’s purpose and functions, under the U.S. Constitution; the exercise of executive powers, in historical and contemporary contexts; presidential versus parliamentary systems of government; and social scientific methods of studying the presidency. Students will develop their understanding of these topics through reading assignments, in-class discussions, experiential learning opportunities, and a series of applied research projects focused on evaluating presidential leadership.

**Learning Outcomes**

Through this course, students will develop the ability to:

* identify and explain the sources and limitations of presidential power, under the U.S. Constitution;
* evaluate U.S. presidents’ effectiveness in achieving relevant political and/or social ends, individually and in comparison to leaders in other (e.g., parliamentary) systems of government;
* conduct original research using social scientific methods;
* be clear and analytically articulate, in writing and oral presentation.

**Course Expectations**

Class Participation & Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly, attentively, and on time. The maximum number of absences – excused or unexcused – allowed without penalty is seven (7). After that, I will deduct ten (10) percentage points from your final grade for each additional absence. For example, if your submitted work earns you a grade of 85% (B) for the course but you have eight absences, your final grade will be recorded as 75% (C); for nine absences, 65% (D); for ten absences, 55% (F). And so on.

Let me stress that this policy applies equally to excused and unexcused absences. There are no exceptions. Also, note that excessive tardiness may be counted toward this total, at the instructor’s discretion. Finally, students who behave in a distracting way – including sleeping or using a phone or computer when the instructor has not explicitly authorized doing so – may be asked to leave, and if so will be counted as absent.

Late Assignments: Once the deadline for a written assignment has passed, 10% of the maximum point total will be subtracted from the student’s grade; an additional 10% will be subtracted for each subsequent 24 hour period in which the assignment is not submitted. For the final paper, the relevant late penalties will be 25% for the first 24 hour period, and 50% for the second 24-hour period. After 48 hours, I will not accept final paper submissions. Exceptions to the late submission policy will be made only for excused absences, as documented by the relevant university administrators and with the instructor’s approval.

**Course Texts (required):**

Buckley, F.H. 2014. *The Once and Future King: The Rise of Crown Government in America*. New York: Encounter.

Bush, George W. 2010. *Decision Points*. New York: Crown.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. 2013. *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

**Honor Pledge, University Resources, and Policies**

University of Dayton Honor Pledge

I understand that as a student at the University of the Dayton, I am a member of our academic and social community. I recognize the importance of my education and the value of experiencing life in such an integrated community. I believe that the value of my education and degree is critically dependent upon the academic integrity of the university community, and so in order to maintain our academic integrity, I pledge to:

* Complete all assignments and examinations by the guidelines given to me by my instructors;
* Avoid plagiarism and any other form of misrepresenting someone else’s work as my own;
* Adhere to the Standards of Conduct as outlined in the Academic Honor Code.

In doing this, I hold myself and my community to a higher standard of excellence, and set an example for my peers to follow.

Students are expected to abide by the University of Dayton Honor Pledge.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student suspected of either cheating or plagiarism will be referred to appropriate administrative proceedings at the University of Dayton. Additionally, the student will receive a zero (0%) for the assignment.

Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s words or ideas without attribution – that is, without proper citation or acknowledgement of their true source. For instance, it would be plagiarism to include in your paper several sentences, one full sentence, or even a substantial part of a sentence that was written or spoken by someone else, without including quotation marks around those words and an in-text citation at the end of the sentence, corresponding to a full bibliographic citation. Failing to provide such attribution is no different than cheating on an exam by looking at someone else’s paper and copying their words or ideas onto yours. In either case, you are presenting these words or ideas to the instructor as if they come from you, when in fact they do not and you deserve no credit for them. This is why plagiarism is such a serious academic offense, and why I will treat it as such. And it is all the more reason to simply *ask me if you have any questions* about whether something in your work would constitute plagiarism. There is no harm in asking, but great risk in not doing so. For helpful information and resources, see [here](http://catalog.udayton.edu/undergraduate/generalinformation/academicinformation/theacademichonorcode/) and [here](https://libguides.udayton.edu/avoidplagiarism).

Research, Writing & Technical Support Syllabus Statement

Roesch Library's reference services and the Write Place offer free research and writing assistance on any assignment, at any stage of the writing process. Additionally, UDit’s TechExpress offers free technical support for printing, password troubleshooting and laptops. These services are offered at Roesch Library’s first-floor Information Point. Hours are listed online at [libcal.udayton.edu/hours](https://libcal.udayton.edu/hours). No appointment is necessary, although they are available; to make an appointment with the Write Place, email [writeplace@udayton.edu](mailto:writeplace@udayton.edu); to make an appointment with Heidi Gauder, the political science librarian, see <http://libcal.udayton.edu/appointments/gauder>.

Students with Disabilities

If you feel you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Formal disability-related accommodations are determined through the Learning Teaching Center’s Office of Learning Resources (OLR). It is very important that you be registered with OLR and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations with a signed SLS Self-Identification Form. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations. For more information, please contact OLR at 937-229-2066, by email at [disability.services@udayton.edu](mailto:disability.services@udayton.edu), or stop by the OLR office in LTC 023.

**Grade Calculation**

Reading Responses 20%

Presidential vs. Parliamentary System? 20%

Presidential Rating System 15%

Was Taft a Great President? 20%

Final Paper 25%

TOTAL 100%

*Grading Scale:*

A: 93%-100% A-: 90%-93% B+: 87%-90% B: 83%-87% B-: 80%-83%

C+: 77%-80% C: 73%-77% C-: 70%-73% D: 60%-70% Fail: <60%

Note: If your final course grade falls within 0.25% of the next highest letter grade, I will round it up (e.g. 86.75% = B+, etc.).

**Graded Assignments**

Presidential vs. Parliamentary System?

Suppose the U.S. Senate were voting on a resolution to abolish the U.S. presidency and adopt a parliamentary system of government (similar to that of Canada or the United Kingdom). How would you vote? And how would you explain your vote to Senate colleagues and your constituents, so as to persuade them to agree with you? For this assignment, you will write a five-page paper explaining your vote on this resolution – specifically, by answering a series of questions geared toward identifying the relative strengths and weaknesses of presidential versus parliamentary systems of government. See Isidore for complete instructions.

Presidential Rating System

In this paper, you will develop an original presidential rating system that you will apply and revise in subsequent course projects. You will begin by specifying 5-10 rating criteria, or categories, and their relative weight, as a percentage of the overall rating. Then, you will define each criterion in at least two sentences, with such clarity that you can easily apply it to the rating of any given president and others could use the same definition to arrive at a similar rating. This paper should be approximately 3 pages in length. See Isidore for complete instructions.

Was Taft a Great President?

Using the presidential rating system developed in your previous paper, you will rate William Howard Taft’s presidency. This evaluation will be informed by our reading of *The Bully Pulpit* and our visit to his National Historic Site in Cincinnati. The primary purpose of this assignment is to pilot, or test out, your presidential rating system. Therefore, you will begin by rating Taft’s presidency in accordance with the criteria described in the previous paper. Then, you will reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of this rating system, and identify at least one way in which you would revise that system before applying it again in the final paper. See Isidore for complete instructions.

Final Paper

The final paper consists of two parts. In Part I, you will present a revised version of the Presidential Rating System paper, incorporating my feedback and your evaluation from the Taft Presidency paper. In Part II, you will apply the revised rating system to a president of *your* choosing. Your evaluation of that president will be based upon a biography that you have chosen to read, in consultation with the professor. This is an opportunity not only to learn about a president that you find particularly interesting, but also to rate his presidency using an original, scientific measure that *you* have developed over the course of the semester. See Isidore for complete project instructions.

Reading Responses

You must submit **15 reading responses** over the course of the semester, on days that a *new reading assignment* is due (there are 22 such days; you will submit responses on 15 of those days, and skip responding on 7 days). When multiple readings are assigned, you may respond to one or both of the readings. However, you cannot earn credit for multiple reading responses based upon the same day’s readings.

Reading responses must be typed or neatly hand-written, and at least one paragraph in length. You will submit them to the professor at the beginning of class, in hard copy format.

To receive full credit (on a 0-1 point scale), your response must:

1. **raise an insightful and well-informed question or thought** demonstrating comprehensive, substantive engagement with the day’s reading assignment, and one that is conducive to generating constructive in-class discussion (0.5 points);\*

2. **include a relevant in-text citation** (e.g. quote, fact, or argument – with page number) from the day’s reading, to support or amplify the substance of your response (0.25 points);\*\*

3. **be well-written and properly edited** (0.25 points).

\* If, in my judgment, your response addresses a tangential point from the reading, or does not convey a clear and thorough understanding of its substantive content, as a whole, then I will give partial credit on that basis.

\*\*If you directly cite a reading assignment but do not specify a page number (when one is available), I will subtract 0.10 from your grade.

**Perspective on Grading**

I welcome students to discuss grades with me at any point in the semester, if concerns arise. Often, this helps a student to understand the basis for his/her grade, or to clarify something that I misunderstood when first evaluating the work.

However, let me be clear about my expectations for such conversations: It is not appropriate to come to me with a general objection, such as “I thought I did better on this paper” or “I need an A.” I grade your performance on assignments. I do not grade your *expected* performance, or you as a *person*.  Your grade on each assignment will be broken into parts. After grading each part, I simply calculate the sum total to derive your overall grade on the assignment. The same applies to your course grade: I grade each assignment, and then sum them (in accordance with the weighting formula detailed in our syllabus) to determine your final grade. Overall grades, then, derive from a *mathematical* process – not a subjective, summary judgment of you or your work, as a whole.

Therefore, if you want to talk with me about the possibility of changing a grade, you need to be able to tell me which specific part of that grade might be in error, and why.  If you cannot tell me which part you think I got wrong/misunderstood and why, you are not ready to discuss your grade.

Finally, I do not “fix” grades.  I do not offer extra assignments at the end of the semester to help you reach the grade that you wanted; if I did so, I would have to extend the same opportunity to the entire class. As a social scientist, I view grades as instruments of *measurement* – that is, they measure how much, and how well, you have learned what the course is designed to teach. If I add in other elements to your grade that do not measure actual *learning*, such as your desired GPA or your graduate school ambitions, I have corrupted the measurement (and acted unethically).  Please know that I will not do so, and you shouldn’t ask for that.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Assigned readings must be completed prior to class on the first date under which they are listed below. Readings are from the required texts (“F.H. Buckley”, “G.W. Bush”, or “D.K. Goodwin”), or accessible via hyperlink (“web”) and/or on Isidore.

This schedule is subject to change, at the professor’s discretion. I will notify you of any changes in class and/or via announcements on our Isidore course page.

**Introduction**

Jan. 14 (Tue.) Syllabus

Jan. 16 (Thu.) M. Yglesias & A. Prokop, “Impeachment, Explained” ([web](https://www.vox.com/2019/11/5/20914280/impeachment-trump-explained))

The New York Times, “Read the Articles of Impeachment Against President Trump” ([web](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/12/10/us/politics/articles-impeachment-document-pdf.html))

M.J. Gerhardt, excerpt from *The Federal Impeachment Process*” (Isidore)

**Constitutional Design**

Jan. 21 (Tue.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 2 (pp. 17-61) & Appendix A (pp. 294-307)

Jan. 23 (Thu.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 4 (pp. 87-120)

Z. Beauchamp, “Justin Trudeau’s Liberals Won Canada’s Election” ([web](https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/10/21/20926201/canada-election-results-2019-justin-trudeau-wins))

**Presidential Power**

Jan. 28 (Tue.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 5 (pp. 121-139 & 148-151)

Jan. 30 (Thu.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 5 (pp. 139-142)

G.W. Bush, Ch. 14 (pp. 439-472)

Feb. 4 (Tue.) G.W. Bush, Ch. 5 (pp. 126-151) & Ch. 6 (pp. 152-182)

Feb. 6 (Thu.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 5 (pp. 142-148)

G.W. Bush, Ch. 8 (pp. 223-271)

**The Presidential System**

Feb. 11 (Tue.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 6 (pp. 167-180) & Appendix B (pp. 309-314)

Feb. 13 (Thu.) Devine & Kopko, *Do Running Mates Matter?* Introduction & Conclusion Chapters (Isidore)

Feb. 18 (Tue.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 7 (pp. 181-204)

Feb. 20 (Thu.) F.H. Buckley, Ch. 8 (pp. 205-234) & Ch. 9 (pp. 235-256)

**Presidential vs. Parliamentary System?**

Paper due Sunday, February 23 @ 11:55 PM (Isidore)

**Becoming the President**

Feb. 25 (Tue.) D.K. Goodwin, pp. 11-20; 21-34; 50-63; 87-108

Feb. 27 (Thu.) D.K. Goodwin, pp. 143-154; 214-221; 264-278; 287-290; 300-305

Mar. 3 (Tue.) D.K. Goodwin, pp. 385-400; 410-414; 424-436; 516-556

Mar. 5 (Thu.) G.W. Bush, Ch. 2 (pp. 35-64), Ch. 3 (pp. 75-81), & Ch. 9 (pp. 287-296)

**Rating the Presidents**

Mar. 10 (Tue.) Siena College, “Siena’s 6th Presidential Expert Poll 1982-2018” ([web](https://scri.siena.edu/2019/02/13/sienas-6th-presidential-expert-poll-1982-2018/))

A. Rudalevige, “Rating the Presidential Rankings” ([web](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/16/rating-the-presidential-rankings/?utm_term=.34bf39389cab))

J.E. Cohen, “The Historical Memory of American Presidents in the Mass Public” ([web](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/7/3/36/pdf))

Mar. 12 (Thu.) J. Azari, “Presidential Ratings are Flawed. Which Makes It Hard to Assess Trump” ([web](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/presidential-ratings-are-flawed-which-makes-it-hard-to-assess-trump/))

J.E. Uscinski & A. Simon, “Partisanship as a Source of Presidential Rankings” (Isidore)

J.L. Curry & I.L. Morris, “Explaining Presidential Greatness” (Isidore)

*Mar. 17 (Tue.) & Mar. 19 (Thu.) No class – Spring Break*

Mar. 24 (Tue.) TBA

Mar. 26 (Thu.) F. Kaplan, excerpt from *John Quincy Adams: American Visionary* (Isidore)

**Presidential Rating System**

Due Sunday, March 29 @ 11:55 PM (Isidore)

**The Taft Presidency**

Mar. 31 (Tue.) D.K. Goodwin, pp. 557-604

Apr. 2 (Thu.) D.K. Goodwin, pp. 605-671

Apr. 7 (Tue.) Field Trip: William Howard Taft National Historic Site (Cincinnati)

*Apr. 9 (Thu.) No class - Easter Break*

Apr. 14 (Tue.) D.K. Goodwin, pp. 671-750

*Apr. 16 (Thu.) No class – Professor away at conference*

**Was Taft a Great President?**

Due Sunday, April 19 @ 11:55 PM

Apr. 21 (Tue.) B. Hufbauer, “Turning Presidents Into Pharaohs” ([web](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/05/obama-presidential-library-116695?paginate=false))

**Conclusion**

Apr. 23 (Thu.), Apr. 28 (Tue.), Apr. 30 (Thu.) – TBA

**Final Paper**

Due Wednesday, May 6 @ 9:00 AM (Isidore)