

THE AMERICAN EXECUTIVE

POLS 3203
Spring 2021

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides a broad examination of the American presidency. It examines five major areas: (1) the historical development of the presidency and the presidential election process; (2) the influence of public opinion and the media on the presidency; (3) presidential styles and decision-making; (4) the president's relationship with Congress and the judiciary; and (5) the president's role in policymaking. As we cover each of these subjects, I encourage you to think critically about several important questions concerning the presidency: Why did the framers of the Constitution create an executive branch and why did they limit its power? How do presidential elections affect a president's ability to govern? What leadership skills and personal qualities are necessary for a successful presidency? How do the media, Congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy limit the power of the White House? What situations and circumstances provide opportunities for the president to shape and influence the policy-making process?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The general learning objective in this course is for you to gain a broad understanding of the presidency. To complete this class successfully, you will need to demonstrate factual, applied, and conceptual knowledge of the subjects covered in the course. I will expect you to be able to define terms; interpret the significance of important events; apply principles to hypothetical scenarios; compare and contrast concepts; construct solutions to political problems; and assess the strengths and weaknesses of various perspectives concerning the executive branch. In addition, this course is designated as a *General Education* course for the social sciences (GE:SO).^{*} Therefore, upon completion of this course, you also will be able to: identify core concepts and measures used to study politics; explain at least one approach to the study of politics; and identify the contribution of political science to our larger society. Please note that I will not share my partisan affiliation to anyone in the class. My larger and ultimate learning objective in this course is to teach each of you *not what to think*, but rather *how to think* about the issues we address in class.

REQUIRED READINGS

The required readings in this course are: (1) *Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making*, 11th ed., George C. Edwards III, Kenneth R. Mayer, and Stephen J. Wayne (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020); (2) *The Modern American Presidency* 2nd ed., Lewis L. Gould (University Press of Kansas, 2009); and (3) selected readings on Blackboard.

^{*} For additional information about general education learning objectives, please see <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/committee/as/SocialSciencesCreditSyllabusInstructions.docx>.

COURSE STRUCTURE

POLS 3203 is a 15-week course. It is not on a block schedule. There are approximately 50 students registered for this course. Following ECU's COVID-19 guidelines for a class of this size, course delivery for POLS 3203 will be entirely online. POLS 3203 will be asynchronous. That is, we will not meet as a class at a specific date and time. Instead, I will post my lectures and my lecture notes in a PowerPoint file on Canvas twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday before 2 p.m. Please read through the slides carefully and watch all video material. My intent in including the videos is to heighten your interest in the course material and to help clarify the subject matter. I ask that you review the online class lectures within 48 hours of when I post them. To ensure that you are looking over the lecture slides and viewing the videos, you will have to complete online quizzes that you can complete via Canvas. The *Course Outline* section of this syllabus provides the dates for each quiz, as does the Canvas website for this course.

As an additional part of the course's online instruction, I will require that you set up an account with Packback. I will post a question on Packback every Thursday afternoon. The questions should generate critical thinking about the material I cover in my lectures and in the videos. Your responses should be thoughtful and substantiated with citations (i.e., links to articles or videos from reputable sources). Your post is due no later than the following Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.

QUIZZES AND EXAMS

As noted above, you will have to complete short online quizzes. There will be a quiz or exam every three weeks that you will complete via Canvas. There are three quizzes in total. Each quiz is worth 10% of your overall course grade. In total, your three quiz grades will account for 30% of your overall course grade. The mid-term and final exams also will be taken online via Canvas. The exams will include fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice questions, and an essay question. You may use your readings and notes while taking the exam. However, there is a time restriction of three hours. That is, once you begin the exam, you will be timed out after three hours. The mid-term exam is worth 25% of your overall course grade. Your final exam will follow the same format as the mid-term exam. It is also worth 25% of your overall grade.

PACKBACK REQUIREMENT

One of the advantages of Packback over other platforms is that it provides individual feedback to you to improve the quality of your posts. It also will help ensure that you receive your grade in a timely fashion. Packback provides a "curiosity" score, which offers an unbiased and objective assessment of your post. This curiosity score forms the basis of the grading for your online work. A curiosity score of 90 or higher earns 5 points; a score of 80 to 89 points earns 4 points; a score of 70 to 79 points earns 3 points; a score of 60 to 69 points earns 2 points; and any score below 60 earns 1 point. Failing to complete a response to a question earns 0 points. In total, I will require you to complete 10 responses on Packback over the duration of the semester. Earning 5 points on all 10 responses would earn a maximum score of 50. Your final Packback grade is based on the percentage of points you earned out of 50. That is, 50 out of 50 points equals 100%; 45 of out of 50 points equals 90%; 40 out of 50 points equals 80%; 35 out of 50 points equals 70%; and so forth. Before you start posting, be sure to read the Community Guidelines found in the tutorial on Packback. If your post does not follow the Packback Community Guidelines, it will be removed, and you will not earn credit for that post.

SETTING UP A PACKBACK ACCOUNT

You should have received a welcome email from help@packback.co prompting you to finish your Packback registration. If you did not receive an email (be sure to check your spam), you may register by following the instructions below.

1. Create an account by navigating to <https://questions.packback.co> and clicking “Sign up for an Account.” Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can log in with your credentials.
2. Then enter our class community’s lookup key into the “Looking to join a community you do not see here?” section in Packback at the bottom of the homepage. The Community Lookup Key is: **d9531941-211e-4604-a30d-3fc85e357d75**
3. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Packback, please contact the customer support team at help@packback.co. For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions.

EVALUATION

Your final overall grade in the course will be based on the following:

- (1) Packback online assignments = 20% of your final grade.
- (2) Canvas quizzes = 30% of your final grade (10% for each of three quizzes).
- (3) Mid-term exam = 25% of your final grade.
- (4) Final exam = 25% of your final grade.

GRADING SCALE

Course averages will be converted to letter grades using the scale below:

Course Average	Grade	Course Average	Grade
93 and above =	A	73 to 76 =	C
90 to 92 =	A-	70 to 72 =	C-
87 to 89 =	B+	67 to 69 =	D+
83 to 86 =	B	63 to 66 =	D
80 to 82 =	B-	60 to 62 =	D-
77 to 79 =	C+	Below 60 =	F

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education shared by all at East Carolina University. Consistent with this principle, I expect all students to complete their academic work honestly. I will not tolerate any student’s involvement in *cheating, plagiarism, falsifying work, submitting the same assignment for more than one course, or other acts that would be in*

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (continued)

violation of the university's academic integrity standards. If I become aware of or suspect a potential academic integrity violation, I will contact the student under suspicion following the procedures outlined in the university's academic integrity policy. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has occurred, I reserve the right to assign a grade penalty up to and including an "F" for the assignment or the course. If it also comes to my attention that the student involved in such an incident has had a prior academic integrity violation, or if there are other aggravating circumstances, I will refer the case directly to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Should the Academic Integrity Board determine that the accused student committed an academic integrity violation, the penalties, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, may include a grade penalty and up to suspension from the university. For more, see: <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section2.pdf>.

APPOINTMENTS

My office hours will be conducted online. Please schedule a time with me through e-mail to make an appointment. I prefer to use Webex or Zoom for appointments, but if you prefer an alternative such as Skype or Facetime, please let me know.

E-MAIL

E-mail is a valuable tool for me to communicate announcements and information to the entire class. Please check your ECU e-mail at least once a day (weekends excluded). E-mail is also a good way for you to contact me. Please feel free to use e-mail to set up one-on-one Webex or Zoom meetings with me if you feel it is necessary. If you have specific questions about the course material, I am happy to answer them through e-mail. I am also happy to answer any specific questions concerning academic or career advising through e-mail. My one request to you is to please not use e-mail to request information already listed in the syllabus, such as an exam date or the weight assigned to a specific exam.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1. Overview of the Presidency

January 19. Importance of the presidency and foundations of the executive branch

January 21. Presidential requirements: Formal and informal

- Required reading for Week 1: *Presidential Leadership*, chapters 1-2

Week 2. Running for President: The Nomination Process

January 26. Rules of the presidential nomination process: Past to present

January 28. Campaign finance rules during the nomination process

- Required reading for Week 2: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 3, and Canvas reading, "Campaign Finance"

Week 3. Running for President: The General Election Campaign

February 2. The importance of the Electoral College on campaign strategy

February 4. Campaigning for votes in the general election

- Required reading for the Week 3: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 4
- **Quiz #1 on February 5**

Week 4. After the Election: Public Opinion and Approval of the President

February 9. Trying to meet the high and often contradictory expectations of the public

February 11. Figuring out what the public is thinking and what the public wants

- Required reading for Week 4: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 5

Week 5. Leading the Public

February 16. Direct opinion leadership

February 18. Framing the issues

- Required reading for Week 5: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 6

Week 6. The President, the Media, and Information Control

February 23. Relations between the president and the press

February 25. Media effects

- Required reading for Week 6: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 7
- **Exam #1 on February 26 (covers all material from weeks 1-6)**

Week 7. The Structure of the Executive Branch

March 2. The cabinet, executive departments, and executive offices

March 4. The Vice President and First Lady

- Required reading for Week 7: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 8

Week 8. Presidential Decision Making

March 9. Relationships with advisors and presidential personality characteristics

March 11. Psychological presidency

- Required reading for Week 8: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 9, and Canvas reading, "Psychology of Presidential Leadership"

Week 9. Presidential Leadership Styles: FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower

March 16. The modern presidency / Assessing the leadership style of F. Roosevelt

March 18. Assessing the leadership styles of Truman and Eisenhower

- Required reading for Week 9: *The Modern American Presidency*, chapters 4-5
- **Quiz #2 on March 19**

Week 10. Presidential Leadership Styles: Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon

March 23. Assessing the leadership styles of Kennedy and Johnson

March 25. Assessing the leadership styles of Nixon and the Watergate scandal

- Required reading for Week 10: *The Modern American Presidency*, chapters 6-7

Week 11. Presidential Leadership Styles: From Ford to Clinton

March 30. Assessing the leadership styles of Ford, Carter, and Reagan

April 1. Assessing the leadership styles of Bush and Clinton

- Required reading for Week 11: *Presidential Leadership*, chapters 8-10

Week 12. The President in the Legislative Arena

April 6. The president's legislative powers and skills

April 8. The President and Congress

- Required reading for Week 12: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 11
- **Quiz #3 on April 9**

Week 13. The President and the Judiciary

April 13. The president's judicial powers

April 15. The President and the Supreme Court

- Required reading for Week 13: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 12

Week 14. Domestic and Economic Policy

April 20. The basics of the federal budget and the budgetary process

April 22. Issues and controversies in budgeting, and the making of economic policy

- Required reading for Week 14: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 13

Week 15. Foreign and Defense Policy

April 27. War and diplomacy

- Required reading for Week 15: *Presidential Leadership*, chapter 14
- **Exam #2 (final exam) on April 29 (includes all material from weeks 7-14)**