

PSCI 3011-001, American Presidency and the Executive Branch

Tuesday, Thursday 3:30 PM - 4:45 PM
HLMS 199

Contact Information

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Communication Policies

I am best contacted by email. If I have not answered in 24 hours, please call the Political Science office (303-492-7871) and have them contact me.

Instructor Biography

I have been teaching political science and international affairs since 2001. My bachelor's degree was in science from the US Military Academy with a concentration in engineering. I also have a master's in managerial science from Troy State University, international relations from Salve Regina University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado, Boulder, focusing on political psychology and its effect on foreign policy decision making.

Before joining academia, I served in the US Army, including assignments as operations officer and analyst from brigade to theater army level in the United States, Latin American and Europe. I also spent a short time as a contract employee for SAIC, a think tank working for the Defense Department. My activity as an analyst included studies on expert decision making, low-intensity conflict, and preventive diplomacy.

Teaching Assistant Biography

I am a Ph.D. candidate in political science at CU Boulder and have served as the instructor and TA for courses in political theory and American politics. I received my bachelor's degree from Wellesley College in political science and English and a master's from the London School of Economics in gender, media, and culture. In my research, I study how gender and race affect political actors' ability to make claims and get heard by systems of power.

Prior to beginning my Ph.D., I was an editor for an online media marketing company in Boston as well as a Legislative Aide in the Massachusetts State House. I also worked on various political campaigns at the local and national level.

Course Description (from the catalog)

Examines the constitutional, institutional, and historical development of the presidency and the federal bureaucracy. Explores the changing role of the executive branch in the US political system over time and competing views of executive power.

Approved for arts and sciences core curriculum: United States context.

Course Objectives

1. Identify the formal and informal powers of the president.
2. Explain the selection and election process.
3. Describe the relationship between the president, the bureaucracy, Congress, and the courts.
4. Explain the ways in which presidents make policy.
5. Examine the current presidency considering the prevailing theories.

Questions. There are two questions that frame our discussions.

1. How did we go from the president as the servant of Congress to it becoming the dominant institution?
2. Has the presidency gotten too big?

Overview of Class

There is a reading assigned for each day except when there is an exam. These should be read in advance of the class. The reading comes from textbooks.

Classes will start with any administrative announcements and any relevant news. After that, I will give a short talk on the day's readings. These talks are not summaries. Instead, they will highlight sections of the readings and add historical and theoretical aspects to the readings. During these talks and after, you are expected to contribute with questions and comments. I will sometimes interrupt my talk to ask opinions or to prompt a discussion.

Student Responsibilities.

Your first responsibility is to show up.

Readings and course notes are only part of the course. Additional material will be presented in the lectures. However, the most benefit will come from participating in the class discussions.

Be prepared to participate.

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are part of an intellectual journey. You will be asked to offer and defend positions about the topics we are discussing. I believe that the only way to sharpen an argument is to grind away at it; you can expect me to criticize your position.

Because this is not typical in many classes, I am offering these warnings.

- Your defense should be based on theory or history. Arguments built on beliefs or a moral argument are subjective and assume the universality of views.
- If you are not prepared to question your fundamental beliefs about the world and people, this is not the class for you.
- Do NOT take it personally. I have been known to criticize positions with which I agreed.
- *Ad Hominem* attacks will not be tolerated. Criticisms should be based on counterarguments or counterfactuals and not the status of the individual making the argument. Violators will be warned. Persistent violators will be asked not to attend class.

Be on time.

Late arrivals disrupt the class. I also consider lateness a sign of disrespect to other students because it says that your convenience is more important than their desire to learn.

Keep up with the news.

To paraphrase Shakespeare, 'There are more things in heaven and earth than show up in your newsfeed.'

I recommend you have a mix of domestic and international news. Here are some of my suggestions.

- The Hill - <https://thehill.com/> - The Hill focuses on what is going on in Washington, DC. It is free to subscribe to, and you can select specific newsletters (<http://www.email.thehill.com/thehillreg/thehillreg/pref.action>).
- The Economist Magazine. In my opinion, this is the best international news magazine. In addition, they have a discounted student subscription ([Special student rate - Subscribe to The Economist](#)).
- The Wall Street Journal. As University students, you also have free access to The Wall Street Journal. You can go to <https://libguides.colorado.edu/databaseguide/wallstreetjournal/home> for information on how to access it.
- The New York Times. You also have access to the New York Times through the library. Information on how to activate this account is at <https://libguides.colorado.edu/databaseguide/newyorktimes/home>.

Required Texts

There are two required textbooks for this course. Do NOT use earlier editions.

Ellis, Richard J. and Michael Nelson. 2021. *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive, 5th Edition*. Thousand Oaks: CA: CQ Press/Sage Publishers.

Nelson, Michael. Ed. 2021. *The Presidency and the Political System, 12th Edition*. Thousand Oaks: CA: CQ Press/Sage Publishers.

Both are available through the CU Bookstore in hard copy and the Bookstore's "Day 1 Digital Access" program which you can access through the **Course Materials** tool on the Canvas website. If you buy it somewhere else (*e.g.*, Amazon), ensure you have the correct edition.

Day 1 Digital Access

To keep the cost of your course materials as low as possible and access to those materials as convenient as possible, we have collaborated with the CU Book Store and the publisher to deliver those materials through a program called "Day 1 Digital Access", which will appear on your tuition and fee bill as "Day 1 Digital Access".

What does this mean for you?

1. You will receive access to all your course materials, digitally, on the first day of classes, through the course Canvas page.
2. You will see a "Day 1 Digital Access" charge on your tuition and fee bill for: \$74.12
3. This is a guaranteed lowest price, discounted by the publisher, and not available outside this course
4. You have the option to opt out. This means you won't pay for anything, but you lose all access to the course materials, including homework managers like Connect or Mindtap.
5. You can opt out by: using a link in a reminder email you will receive with the subject heading "Day 1 Digital Access".
6. You must opt out no later than January 26th, otherwise you will be charged for the materials.

Please keep in mind that "opting out" means that your access to these materials will be turned OFF, and you will have no way to complete assignments.

Troubleshooting tips from VitalSource:

VitalSource Support: <https://support.vitalsource.com/hc/en-us>

Email: support@vitalsource.com

Call: 1-855-200-4146

VitalSource Support is available 24/7 and can troubleshoot most issues

If you have questions about **BILLING**, email: digital@cubookstore.com

Grading Criteria

Grades are based on a scale of 80 points. Your final grade will be a function of the number of points that you achieve.

A	94-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	0-59
A-	90-93	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66		
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62		

Points are allocated based on the following distribution.

Midterm – 25 points each	50 points
Final	35 points
Participation/attendance	15 points
Total	100 points

Midterm.

There are two midterms. Each will consist of seven possible questions, of which you need to answer five. A review will be published about ten days in advance of the exam.

Final Exam.

This will consist of nine possible questions, of which you need to answer seven. A review will be published about ten days in advance of the exam.

Participation/attendance.

Absences will only be excused based on illness, incarceration, religious observation, work/sports/ROTC commitments, or family emergencies. Documentation for the absence may be requested. Attendance will not be taken until we start in-person classes.

Course Schedule

Based on University guidance, classes until January 24 will be held remotely.

These classes will be conducted using Canvas' BigBlue Button (Conferences) tool. A short slideshow is available as a link in the announcement section. Additional guidance is available at

- Canvas Guide - <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-use-Conferences-in-a-course-as-a-student/ta-p/470>.
- YouTube video - <https://youtu.be/uYYnryIM0Uw>.

Module 1. Approaches and Elements of Presidential Power

Objective – distinguish the sources of presidential power.

1. January 11
 - a. Objective
 - i. Identify the course requirements and expectations
 - ii. Discuss the two understandings of presidential power.
 - b. Reading Assignment
 - i. Syllabus
 - ii. *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 1
2. January 13
 - a. Objective – summarize the approaches to studying the presidency.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 2
3. January 18
 - a. Objective – discuss the development of the unitary president
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 3
4. January 20
 - a. Objective – review the history of the expansion of presidential powers
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 4

In-person classes start

5. January 25
 - a. Objective – debate whether the modern presidency is as envisioned in the Constitution.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 1
6. January 27
 - a. Objective – examine the management skill necessary for the presidency.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 5
7. February 1
 - a. Objective – analyze the basis for presidential success
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 7
8. February 3
 - a. Objective – identify the connections between presidential character and ability to govern.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 6

February 8 – Midterm 1 Exam (review sheet to be published)

Module 2. Presidential Selection and Politics

Objective – outline how presidents are selected and how they connect with groups.

9. February 10

- a. Objective – review the presidential nomination process.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 7
10. February 15
- a. Objective – evaluate the practicality of a national nomination process.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 3
11. February 17
- a. Objective – outline the major factors in presidential elections.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 8
12. February 22
- a. Objective – evaluate the impact of the Electoral College.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 4
13. February 24
- a. Objective – question the rhetorical aspects of the presidency.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 9
14. March 1
- a. Objective – evaluate the persuasive power of the presidency.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 8
15. March 3
- a. Objective – identify how interest groups influence presidential decisions.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 11
16. March 8
- a. Objective – examine the connections between the president and political parties.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 12

March 10 – Midterm 2 Exam (review sheet to be published)

Module 3. Government and Public Policy

Objective – describe how the president implements and develops policy.

17. March 15
- a. Objective – question the growth of the presidency as a bureaucracy.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 13
18. March 17
- a. Objective – discuss the relationship between the president and the permanent bureaucracy.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 14

Spring Break – March 21 to 25

19. March 29
- a. Objective – outline the sharing of powers between the president and Congress.

- b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 15
- 20. March 31
 - a. Objective – review the relationship of the president to the court system.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 16
- 21. April 5
 - a. Objective – question the power of the president to organize the court system.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 13
- 22. April 7
 - a. Objective – summarize the administrative powers of the president.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 17
- 23. April 12
 - a. Objective – judge the necessity of executive orders and agreements.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 12
- 24. April 14
 - a. Objective – debate whether the unitary presidency is justified.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 2
- 25. April 19
 - a. Objective – examine how presidents affect public policy.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 18
- 26. April 21
 - a. Objective – analyze presidential war-making powers.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 19
- 27. April 26
 - a. Objective – question presidential war-making powers.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *Debating the Presidency* – Chapter 10
- 28. April 28
 - a. Objective – identify how a president can be removed from office.
 - b. Reading Assignment – *The Presidency and the Political System* – Chapter 20

May 2, 1:30 to 4 PM, Final Exam (review sheet to be published)

Policies (as established by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education)

Classroom Behavior.

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or

political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution policies](#).

Requirements for COVID-19.

As a matter of public health and safety, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policy on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

CU Boulder currently requires masks in classrooms and laboratories regardless of vaccination status. This requirement is a precaution to supplement CU Boulder’s COVID-19 vaccine requirement. Exemptions include individuals who cannot medically tolerate a face covering, as well as those who are hearing-impaired or otherwise disabled or who are communicating with someone who is hearing-impaired or otherwise disabled and where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication. If you qualify for a mask-related accommodation, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus. In addition, vaccinated instructional faculty who are engaged in an indoor instructional activity and are separated by at least 6 feet from the nearest person are exempt from wearing masks if they so choose.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home and follow the further guidance of the [Public Health Office](#) (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you are fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay home; rather, you should self-monitor for symptoms and follow the further guidance of the [Public Health Office](#) (contacttracing@colorado.edu).

E-mail me if you are going to miss class. These will count as excused absences.

Accommodation for Disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at

303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns.

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name,

Honor Code.

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code academic integrity policy. Violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu; 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation.

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. The university will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by or against members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and the support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and reporting options. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

Religious Holidays.

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, e-mail me if you are going to miss class. This will count as an excused absence.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.