

SYLLABUS

THE PRESIDENCY (HIS 501)

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Norfolk Campus

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SPRING 2011

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Taking a historical perspective on the development of the whole office of the presidency, this course focuses on both the man and the office. We will look at the evolution and growth of the presidency and the 43 men who have held that office to date. The American Presidency is a rather unique office, one of the few unique creations of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and the men who have held that office exercised powers wielded by few executives in democratic societies.

REQUIRED TEXT: Milkis, Sidney M. and Michael Nelson. 2008, 5th ed. The American Presidency. CQ Press
Nelson, Michael, ed. 2008, 3rd ed. The Evolving Presidency. CQ Press.

OBJECTIVES: Among the topics we will focus on are: the pre-Constitutional and Constitutional basis of the office of the presidency; highlights of administrations; controversial election returns; strengths and weaknesses of the men who held the office; relationships with Congress and the Courts; key domestic and foreign issues as well as current trends; scandals which have surrounded some of our executives and what presidents do after they retire.

More specifically, upon completion of this course, you the student should be able to:

- Understand, properly differentiate, and critically analyze primary and secondary historical sources.
- Make use of critical thinking techniques including problem solving, integration, analysis and synthesis, and to develop these skills both orally and in writing.
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the major historical issues and events of the period under study.
- Develop an insight and awareness of the paradoxical relationships of the executive to the other branches of government and to the citizen in America.
- Develop an understanding and appreciation of the origins and ever-changing nature of the American presidency.
- Gain an insight into the dynamics of elite decision-making placing those decisions into the broader framework of an increasingly globalized world.
- Gain an understanding regarding the connection between issues of today to the origins of those issues in early American history. For example: political conflicts; banking crises, evangelicalism; social groups effecting political change; the costs of expansionism; and the dilemmas of nation building and extending democratic principles.

METHOD OF EVALUATION:

- Student participation/individual contribution (this is vital for a course of this caliber). Response papers may be assigned as needed.
- Research paper (8-10 pages) Further information on the paper to be provided.
- Two take-home examinations (mixed question type)
- Three short response papers (3-5 pages)
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GRADING CRITERIA: Your final grade will be computed as follows:

- Participation 10%
- Attendance 10%
- Response papers 30%
- Research Paper 20%
- Examinations 30% (15% each)

A	93-100	C	73-77
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	88-89	D+	68-70
B	83-87	D	63-67
B-	80-83	D-	60-62
C+	78-79	F	Unsatisfactory

READINGS: I assign the reading for each class session in the syllabus. Participation and articulation of a position cannot occur without reading the assigned material. To make this class a success, keep up with the readings.

ATTENDANCE: The student handbook clearly outlines the attendance policy. If you do not have a copy of the handbook, I strongly recommend you get one. I expect you, the student, to make every effort to attend all classes scheduled. The fourth unexcused absence will result in a drop of one grade level (i.e. from B to B-).

DISABILITIES STATEMENT: If you have a hidden or visible disability which may require classroom or test-taking modifications, please see me as soon as possible.

MAKE-UP EXAMS: Are **not** given. This policy also applies to papers and oral presentations. Advance notification and working with me concerning scheduling problems signifies a mark of maturity and responsibility. Remember, you scheduled when the papers are due.

PERFORMANCE: How well you perform in class and on examinations is a combination of three factors:

- How well I present the material.
- Your personal motivation to learn. (Notice that I did not mention your capability. You are capable by the mere fact that you are sitting here.)
- Your personal discipline to prepare.

OVERALL: I handle the course similar to the job environment. Call me before class and you get a “sick day,” call after and I “dock your grade.” Talk to me to resolve issues, to solve problems, and to get your questions answered. I am here to help you, let us work together for your academic achievement.

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS CLASS IS TO ENJOY IT.

Boston Univ.
The Presidency
TH

FALL 2010
HI 501
12:00 – 3:30

DEPT OF HISTORY
GARY DONATO
Norfolk Campus

WEEK	TOPIC	READING
1 (1/27)	Introduction and Constitutional Basis Pre-Constitutional Presiding Officers	Article II
<p>Historians often make the assertion that Washington had “no model on which to draw” his experiences. I would argue, however, that our first president had fourteen models from which to draw. We will take an overview of those fourteen men.</p>		
2 (2/3)	Background: Origins/Power Federalist/ Antifederalist Debate	Milkis 1,2 Nelson 1-3
<p>Tonight we take a closer look at the origins of the office of the president as well as the concerns of such anti-Federalists as Cato and Brutus. Read Cato and Brutus carefully to see what the concerns were. Were they correct in their concerns?</p>		
3 (2/10)	The precedent and the first crisis Controversy of 1800 Twelfth amendment	Milkis 3 Nelson 4-7
<p>Our first president, seeing himself as establishing precedent, quickly created a crisis of government. What did the other founders articulate about the crisis? How was the crisis resolved? The controversy of 1800 (some argue Revolution of 1800) established for the first time what we today take for granted. What was the controversy? How resolved? What lessons were learned and precedent established?</p>		
Response Paper #1 Due in class 2/17 - Topic TBD		
4 (2/17)	Transition and Good Feelings	Milkis 4 Nelson 7-10
<p>The Jeffersonian to the election of 1824 was a unique historical time period. Why is the period marked as an “Era of Good Feelings?” How did Monroe capitalize on the sense of nationalism? Why would this era lead to another controversial election (1824)?</p>		
5 (2/24)	Another transition, another controversy The eagle screams.	Milkis 5 Nelson 7-10
<p>After the controversial election of 1824, American presidential politics changes forever. What changes did Martin Van Buren institute on behalf of Andrew Jackson in the election of 1828 – forever altering the electoral process? The 1830s/1840s is often identified as the Age of Expansion or the Age of Controversy – explain how the presidents of the age perpetuated the monikers. How did Jackson and his protégé Polk alter the perspective of the presidency?</p>		

6 Lincoln, War, and Crisis of Power Milkis 6
(3/3) Nelson 14-18
Lincoln establishes for the more modern presidents a unique precedent as a “war president.” Describe the Lincoln view of the presidency correlating that view to our more modern perspective of the president. How can an individual sitting in the Oval Office make more effective use of both the Hamiltonian (Pacificus-Helvidius debate) coupled with the Lincolnian view of the office?

Examination #1 Due in Class 3/10

7 Reconstruction Presidents Milkis 7
(3/10) Nelson 19
The era after the Civil War became a turning point in American history as well as an establishment of a new trajectory for America and the president. Describe the basis of that trajectory. What controversies emerge during Reconstruction (1865-1876)?

NO CLASS 3/17

8 President and the people Milkis 8 - 10
(3/23) Progressivism Nelson 21 - 23
The Progressive Era witnesses a resurgent Pacificus Helvidius debate between two political friends (Roosevelt and Taft). What is the updated debate? Who has the more correct (i.e. Constitutional) argument? Who, based on what you know of the modern president actually wins the argument? Combine the concept of Progressivism with increasing global responsibility to determine a “new concept” of the presidency as embodied in Wilson and the interwar (1920s) presidents.

Response Paper # 2 Due in Class 3/31 - Topic TBD

9 Begin the modern president Milkis 11
(4/7) Nelson 24 - 28
The crisis of the Stock Market Crash of 1929 creates the basis for a reconsideration of the president and the office of the presidency. How did FDR both expand and limit the office and his powers at the same time?

10 A changed office necessitates “new” people Milkis 12
(4/14) Nelson 30-35
Milkis identifies these presidents as popular leaders. What does he mean by the term popular? How does that perception of the president alter the role, expectation, and relationship with Congress?

Papers and Examination Information

I will constantly evaluate your writing skills as the course develops.

EXAMS: Examinations will be of the "mixed type" combining true/false, multiple choice, short answer (less than a paragraph), longer answer (paragraph), and essay (page to page and a half). Responses other than multiple choice require supporting evidence in the form of citation/quotation using either MLA/APA/Chicago Manual of Style format.

NOTE: Grading on take home examinations consist of 50% for the correct answer and 50% for germane supporting evidence.

PAPERS All written material must be typed double-spaced and with 1 ½" left margin, 1" margins top/bottom/right. The writing must comply with MLA standards. I most strongly recommend you acquire a writing guide/handbook. I evaluate the papers for content, grammar, and historical accuracy and most importantly, integration of reading material (text, reader, contemporaneous readings). The best way to ensure you have a presentable paper is to conduct both spell and grammar check and have at least one peer read your paper, preferably aloud so you can hear your errors. The quality of your papers falls into and between three categories: Superior, Excellent, and Good.

Superior:(A/A-) Paper is historically accurate with main ideas supported by facts. The paper has a clear thesis, original/thoughtful interpretation and demonstrates significant knowledge of the topic. This paper also exhibits creative use of wide ranging sources that advance the thesis and analysis. Finally, this paper exhibits a balance between interpretations.

Excellent:(B+/B/B-) The main ideas have factual support but can be improved with more evidence. The thesis is present, but not clearly stated. This paper presents more description than analysis. The author uses a variety of sources to support the thesis but provides little analysis of the supporting material. Finally, this paper inordinately selects one position over another with little convincing evidence or analysis.

Good:(C+/C/C-) Little evidentiary material to support thesis. The paper has a focus but no clear thesis. The work is essentially non-specific in that there is little analysis and factual material to support a position. Source material is not diverse, too much emphasis on one type of resource. The paper only presents one point of view when it is obvious that others exist.

POOR: (D/F) There are no cogent or pertinent ideas present. No evidence or analysis, source material not present. The paper was obviously written in haste. (you generally have to "work" to achieve a grade this low!)

