

The U.S. Presidency

(Second Term, 2005)

POLI 514A

Wed. 2:00-4:30 PM

Buchanan: Departmental Seminar Room

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Overview

In the 1960s, Richard E. Neustadt revolutionized the study of the U.S. presidency through careful analysis of how presidents assert themselves within the political arena. Neustadt's work shaped an entire generation of presidency scholars. However, their approaches became viewed by some as stressing too much the intellectual acuity of incumbents and their ability to harness latent support within in the formal institutions of the U.S. government. James David Barber stirred the pot in the early 1970s with a treatment of the effects of presidential personality on incumbents' performance. His work soon drew derision as pop-psychology. The study of the presidency continued on the Neustadt trajectory until Ronald Reagan became president. Here was an outsider who knew little about Washington and revealed virtually no intellectual acuity who proved—in electoral terms—a smashing success as president. This event provided the perfect vehicle for a new generation of presidency scholars who would press hard the position that incumbents above all seek to gain and maintain “responsive competence.” The advocates of this view also believed that presidential studies, which had proven relatively resistant to rational choice, should employ formal theory as a key ingredient to scientific rigor. We are now two decades down that road. Skeptics could certainly point to George W. Bush as somebody with little intellectual acuity and an exceedingly selective attention span regarding the institutions of the governmental system who has caused at least two train wrecks of momentous proportions by being Ronald Reagan writ large. But, a more detached view of public choice and its effects would show that apart from being flavor of the generation in the study of the presidency it has led us closer to the waters of rigor. Indeed, a very close look at the youngest practitioners of neo-institutional analysis that employs formal theories will detect a convergence between the young Turks and the old guard. That is what I plan to focus on in this course. If a balance seems to be emerging between the proponents of the two schools, perhaps that can shed light upon our own future research—an important objective given the resistance of Canadian political science to formal theory.

Required Texts

John P. Burke, *The Institutional Presidency: Organizing and Managing the White House from FDR to Clinton* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman, eds., *The George W. Bush Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2004).

Fred I. Greenstein, ed., *The George W. Bush Presidency: An Early Assessment* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

David E. Lewis, *Presidents and the Politics of Agency Design* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

Andrew Rudalevige, *Managing the President's Program* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Grades

Grades for the course will consist of the following components:

Attendance and Participation (10%): Students are expected to attend all classes. *A favorable score for participation in seminar sessions will hinge on the degree to which students' interventions reflect a command of the literature each week.*

Mini-Projects (20%): Students will provide short papers (5 pages each) twice during the semester. The papers will address an issue stemming from the readings for a given week. A ten to fifteen minute presentation of the paper will count as part of the evaluation. *I must receive a copy of each mini paper by 9:00 AM the day it will be presented in class.*

Research Prospectus (20%): Neo-institutional approaches to the study of presidency employing formal theory as well as empirical analysis have become increasingly important in the U.S. Each student will read a specimen of this research offered by David E. Lewis a Stanford Ph.D. now teaching at Princeton. They will then provide a critique of the research approach, including its execution by Lewis, and an assessment of its applicability to questions of interest to them. Some students might want to use the approach as a springboard for research of their own. Others might wish to display cogently how more traditional quantitative and/or qualitative approaches might prove more satisfactory for their research questions. The reports should not exceed 5 pages. *They should be submitted to me by 5:00 PM, Monday, March 7.* The seminar session on March 9 will focus on these reports.

Major Research Project (50%):

50 per cent of the grade will depend upon a research paper (up to 20 pages) analyzing associated with the U.S. presidency of strong interest to the student. The paper topic and research methodology will be developed in consultation with me. *I must receive a copy of your paper by 5:00 PM the Friday before presentation in class.*

(Please note: Any course assignment turned in late will be penalized one five percent (5 %) for each day which has elapsed after the deadline. Extensions will be granted only under the most extreme circumstances.)

Sessions

January 5: Introduction and Organization

January 12: The Institutional Legacy

Burke, Front Matter and Chapters 1-4

January 19: Modern Incarnations

Burke, Chapters 5-9

January 26: Incentives and Constraints

Rudalevige

February 2: Bush II: Support, Opinion and Leverage

Campbell and Rockman: Edwards; and Rockman

Greenstein: Jacobson; Jones; and Brody

February 9: Style and Organization

Campbell and Rockman: Campbell (Chs. 1 and 4); Aberbach

Greenstein: Greenstein; Hecl; Hult; DiJulio

February 16: Reading Week

February 23: Institutional Interfaces

Campbell and Rockman: Sinclair; O'Brien; Peterson; Cannon and Walsh

Greenstein: Fortier and Ornstein

March 2: Policy Implications

Campbell and Rockman: Mucciaroni and Quirk; Herrmann

Greenstein: Schick; Daalder and Lindsay

March 9: The Applicability of the Dominant Paradigm for Presidential Research

Lewis

March 16: Presentations

March 23: Presentations

March 30: Presentations

April 6: Presentations