

CGCL 6420: THE PRESIDENCY IN AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMER 2025

Section 001: MTWThF 9:00am-3:00pm, July 21-25, Microsoft Teams Online

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the origins and development of the United States presidency. We will begin with the ideas and practices of executive government at the time of the American Revolution and then turn to the creation of the presidency: both the debates at the 1787 constitutional convention and the ensuing debates between Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Next, we will discuss how the rise of parties made the president a popular leader in the nineteenth century and how the Civil War expanded the powers of the commander-in-chief. We will then read about the dramatic expansions of presidential power brought about during the Progressive Era, World War I, the New Deal, and World War II. Finally, we will turn to the rise of a demagogic presidency in the postwar era. This course is designed to help you think, speak, and write clearly about the fundamental questions of American constitutional government, civics, and law.

TEXTS

1. Sidney Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development* (CQ Press)
2. Other readings in *The Founders' Constitution* (TFC), *Democracy in America*, or posted on Canvas

CLASS PARTICIPATION (40%)

Attendance at each class meeting is mandatory. This is a two-credit course, which means we will meet 5 hours each day to discuss the assigned course readings for that day. During the week that we meet, you will not have time to do the readings, so you should do them in May and June. This will allow you, once our week together begins, to quickly review the assigned readings each evening before the next day. 40% of your overall final grade will be based on your attendance at class meetings and how much you improve the meeting with your comments. You need to have your camera on during the entirety of each class meeting. To help you prepare for each class meeting, I will post reading questions on Canvas to guide you through the assigned readings.

READING SUMMARY (10%)

We will not meet on Pioneer Day, 24 July, which is a Utah state holiday. Instead of meeting to discuss that day's material, you should submit a 2-4 page response paper (2,000 words max) addressing one of that day's analytical questions. Your essay should make a coherent argument and demonstrate a mastery of the assigned material.

COURSE EXAM (50%)

There will be a final exam to test your mastery of the course material. The exam will include multiple choice, short-answer, and essay questions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday 21 July: Executive Power in The American Colonies

- 1. 9:00-10:30: Executive Power in a Constitutional Regime**
 - a. Locke, selections from *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, 1689 (8)
 - b. Thomas Paine, selections from *Common Sense*, 1776, TFC 103-107 (5)
 - c. The Declaration of Independence, 1776, TFC 9-11 (3)
- 2. 11:00-12:30: Executive Power at the Constitutional Convention**
 - a. Chapter 1: “The Constitutional Convention” (28)
 - b. Appendix 1: Constitution of the United States, 1787 (19)
 - c. Chapter 2: “Creating the Presidency” (44)
- 3. 1:30-3:00: Ratification Debates Over the Presidency**
 - a. Federal Farmer 14, 1788, TFC
 - b. Mason speech at Ratifying Convention
 - c. Cato 5
 - d. Federalist Papers 65, 68, 70-74, 1788, TFC

Tuesday 22 July: The Presidency in the American Republic

- 1. 9:00-10:30: The Washington Presidency**
 - a. Washington, “First Annual Message,” 1790
 - b. Chapter 3: “Bringing the Constitutional Presidency to Life” (42)
 - c. Washington, “Farewell Address,” 1796 (5)
- 2. 11:00-12:30: The Jeffersonian Presidency**
 - a. Jefferson, “First Inaugural Address,” 1801, TFC 140-142
 - b. Chapter 4: “The Triumph of Jeffersonianism” (26)
 - c. Madison, “Veto Message,” 1817 (2)
- 3. 1:30-3:00: The Jacksonian Presidency**
 - a. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835 (18)
 - b. Chapter 5: “The Age of Jackson” (32)

Wednesday 23 July: The Presidency in the American Nation-State

- 1. 9:00-10:30: The Lincoln Presidency**
 - a. Lincoln, “First Inaugural Message,” 1861
 - b. Chapter 6: “The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln” (24)
 - c. Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” 1865 (2)

2. 11:00-12:30: Parties Over Presidents

- a. Chapter 7: “The Reaction Against Presidential Power” (37)
- b. Grover Cleveland, “Texas Seed Bill Veto Message,” 1887 (1)

3. 1:30-3:00: The Progressive Presidency

- a. Theodore Roosevelt, selections from his *Autobiography*, 1913
- b. Woodrow Wilson, selections from *Constitutional Government in the United States*, 1908
- c. William H. Taft, selections from *Our Chief Magistrate and His Powers*, 1916

Thursday 24 July: The Imperial Presidency

Pioneer Day. No Class Meetings. Submit a Response Paper on:

- a. Chapter 8: “Progressive Politics and Executive Power” (43)
- b. Chapter 10: “The Consolidation of the Modern Presidency” (50)
- c. Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Second Bill of Rights Speech” 1944 (2)
- d. Chapter 11: “Personalizing the Presidency” (47)
- e. Chapter 12: “A Restoration of Presidential Power?” (47)

Friday 25 July: The Twenty-First Century Presidency

1. 9:00-10:30: The Presidency and the War on Terror

- a. Chapter 13: “George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Unilateral Presidential Power” (39)

2. 11:00-12:30: The Demagogic Presidency

- a. James Ceaser, “Demagoguery, Statesmanship, and the American Presidency,” 2007 (43)
- b. Chapter 14: “Trump, Biden, and the Struggle for a Peaceful Transfer of Power” (30)

3. 1:30-3:00: Final Exam

GRADING SCALE

Grades will be determined based on the following scale:

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	64-66
B+	87-89	C	74-76	D-	60-63
B	84-86	C-	70-73	E	0-59

COMMUNICATION

I will use Canvas, Microsoft Teams, and email to regularly communicate with you. Please be sure you add my email address to your “safe senders” list.