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PSC 366.01: American Presidency

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
Department of Political Science

PSc 366(W) The American Presidency
Autumn 2001

Dr. Laslovich
Office: LA 354
Hrs: T 10-11:00, 1:30-2:30,
W 10-11:00, R 1:30-2:30,
and by app't (4418).

Course Description

A critical analysis of the American presidency. Since the office lacks a clear constitutional statement of precise power, it is subject to various approaches taken by succeeding presidents, as they attempt to meet heightened expectations of presidential performance. Topics include the presidential resources and leadership, presidential-congressional relations, case studies in domestic and foreign policy-making, and an evaluation of presidential performance.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students should gain an understanding of the extent, and limitations, of presidential power as the office has evolved since WWII. Students will consider the contingent nature of presidential influence vis-à-vis Congress, the judiciary, interest groups, public opinion and the media. As a writing course, participants will develop their analytical skills, including their ability to define a research project, conduct library research, marshal contending arguments, and present their assessments articulately.

Texts

Students are required to read the following texts that are available at the University Bookstore:

- Hargrove, Erwin C. The President as Leader, Appealing to the Better Angels of Our Nature. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1998,
Kessel, John H. Presidents, the Presidency, and the Political Environment. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2001, and
Kernell, Samuel. Going Public, New Strategies of Presidential Leadership. 3rd edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997.

Course Requirements

Students will be evaluated upon the following basis:

Exam 1 (Sept.28) Topics I-II	20%
Research Paper Proposal (due Oct. 8)	15%
Research Paper (due Nov. 19)	25%
Exam 2 (Oct. 31) Topics III-IV	20%
Final Exam (Thurs., Dec. 20, 8:00-10:00) Topics V-VIII	20%

- NOTE - ALL writing assignments must be submitted to complete the course.
- Late Papers will not be graded but nonetheless must be submitted.
 - A "C" letter grade is required to receive a "passing" mark for students selecting the P/NP grading option.

Drop/Add Deadlines

Sept. 24 - Last day to drop/add classes by Dial Bear and to receive a full refund.

Oct. 15 - Last day to drop/add (no refunds).

Dec. 14 - Last day for drop/grade option petitions.

Makeup Exam Policy

Students who are excused from a scheduled exam may write a makeup exam. In fairness to all students, the instructor must approve exam absences.

Research Essays

Students are invited to formulate their own research topic. However the instructor, to ensure proper scope and focus, must approve topics.

Students must submit a paper proposal by Oct. 8, approximately 3 typed pages in length. The proposal should, in effect, comprise the introduction of the research paper. It should include a clear research statement (i.e., the purpose of the paper), a discussion of the various academic points of view regarding the topic, and a preliminary bibliography listing scholarly sources to be used. The proposal will be returned with comments and suggestions to facilitate completion of the next writing assignment.

Please note that this is to be a research paper. Consequently the amount of research undertaken, and the ability to marshal information effectively, will be crucial in the evaluation of the paper. The submission will also be graded for composition as well as content. The paper should range between 12 to 15 double-spaced typed pages. Research papers are due Nov. 19 in class.

The Classroom Learning Environment (authored by Dr. Ronald Perrin, Professor of Political Theory)

Wherever the learning process takes place (for example, in the library or the seclusion of one's study) it does so best when there are a minimum of distractions. This requirement poses special challenges for the learning that takes place in the lecture hall or the classroom, where the possibility of distractions is the greatest.

In order to establish and maintain a supportive learning environment for my students I will not tolerate the few individuals who might be prone to a) come to class late or leave early, b) carry on private conversations during class, c) use the lecture hall/classroom as an opportunity to read material, such as the Kaimin, that is not relevant to the subject matter under consideration.

The only exception to these conditions concern students whose work schedules or unanticipated appointments require them to arrive for class late or leave early. In these circumstances I would appreciate knowing of the circumstances before it occurs and, in all such instances, request that students do so as unobtrusively as possible. Thank you.

Lecture Topics and Readings

- I Introduction – The Contemporary White House
Kessel, chapter 1.
- II Presidential Power and Leadership
Hargrove, passim.
- III Working with Congress
Kessel, chapter 2.
- IV Working with the Media and Public Opinion
Kessel, chapter 3.
Kernell, passim.
- V Foreign Policy
Kessel, chapter 4.
- VI Economic Policy
Kessel, chapter 5.
- VII Domestic Policy
Kessel, chapter 6.
- VIII Presidential Evaluation
Kessel, chapters 7 and 8.

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