

POL 106: The Presidency

University of California, Davis

Winter Quarter, 2021
Tuesdays and Thursdays
4:40-6:00pm (live online via Zoom)

Live lecture URL: <https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/95080854974>
Class YouTube URL: <https://tinyurl.com/yclfbjhp>
Class Discord Invite URL: <https://discord.gg/M5cQ8Vkm2g>

Instructor: Dr. Isaac Hale
Email: idhale@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30-4:30 PM via Zoom (or by appointment)
Office Hours Zoom Link: <https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/99251254311>

Teaching Assistant: Amelia Flack
Email: acflack@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours: Thursday, 10:30-12:30 PM, via Zoom (or by appointment)
Office Hours Zoom Link: <https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/2351438761>

Teaching Assistant: Enrico LaVina
Email: eblavina@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours: Monday, 3:00-5:00 PM via Zoom (or by appointment)
Office Hours Zoom Link: <https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/94220472311>

Course Description

What is the American presidency? Is it a person? A branch of government? An institution with powers and constraints? The answer to all these questions is “yes”! Who the president is matters a lot: they control most of the federal bureaucracy, control most federal appointments, appoint judges, and have massive discretion over foreign policy. However, the presidency is also bigger than one individual: the office has changed significantly over time, both in terms of its powers and its constraints. In this class we will focus on the presidency at both an individual and institutional level. We will examine: 1) presidential nominations, 2) presidential elections, 3) presidential powers, and 4) the institutional presidency. We will look at how each of these facets of the presidency has evolved over time and how they manifest in modern presidential politics. The 2020 election and the Trump presidency will be central to this course.

Since this is an upper division course, it is my expectation that you have a baseline knowledge of the structure of American government. As such, we will not be devoting much time in class to basic civics (e.g., checks and balances, the three branches of government, etc.). If you do not feel comfortable with these subjects, I highly encourage you to brush up at the beginning of the quarter and come to my, Amelia, or Enrico’s office hours if you have questions.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis will make this a challenging quarter for all of us. This class will be my first priority, but I do not expect it to be yours. If you or your family are sick or struggling, let me know – I can help make sure you succeed in this class anyways. There is also no shame in taking this class pass/fail: do not hesitate to let me know if this would be your preference.

I also know that the transition to online courses means that the course structures you are probably used to at UC Davis are not appropriate this quarter. As such, I have taken several steps to make this course as engaging and accessible as possible. There will be no midterm or final exam for this course. Instead, the course will have brief response papers and a short final paper. This will help ensure that students face less pressure and that each graded assignment is worth less of the total grade.

The class will feature both live lectures on Zoom (at the regularly scheduled class time) and lecture recordings will be uploaded to YouTube. I encourage you to attend live lecture – there will be opportunities for Q&A and engagement every class. If you cannot attend some classes, you can watch the lecture recording at a time that works for you. Regardless, you are expected to keep up with the class material and attend class when possible. The links for both the live lecture and the YouTube channel are posted at the top of the syllabus.

One final note – this course is meant to be fun! While the material in this class will often get into the weeds of the presidency, I will endeavor to make sure our discussions are relevant to current political events. If there is something happening in the news that is relevant to our class, I will be sure to allocate time to discuss it. I encourage you to apply current events to course material in class discussion as well. Major legislation, election news, scandals, executive orders, and policy debates are all fair game!

Class Expectations

Live Lecture

Because of the COVID-19 suspension of in-person classes, all lectures will be given digitally on Zoom. These lectures will be given live on Zoom during the normal class time. There will be opportunities for students participating live to ask questions during lecture. To join lectures throughout the quarter, use the following link: <https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/95080854974>

Lecture Recordings

Lectures will be recorded and posted to YouTube for students who are not able to attend lecture at the regular time. The YouTube link for class lectures is <https://tinyurl.com/vclfbjhp>. You are responsible for keeping up with lecture and should take care not to fall behind.

Office Hours

The office hours for the instructor and TAs are listed at the top of this syllabus. You can join our Zoom office hours using the links provided at the beginning of the syllabus.

In addition, we are happy to set up additional office hours at a time more convenient for you. Send us an email if you wish to do so. Once you have scheduled additional office hours you may use that same link to meet with us.

Online Access

All readings and documents for this course (except the textbook) can be accessed through the Canvas website or via hyperlinks in the syllabus schedule. Messages will be sent by me via Canvas, so make sure you have email notifications for Canvas messages activated.

Participation

Because this class is fully online, “participation” will not be a part of your grade. However, I still encourage you to ask questions, participate in the class chat, and share your opinions. There will be opportunities to do so during the virtual lecture.

Email

I welcome questions and comments, either by email or by Canvas message. When you email me, you should compose your email as you would any piece of professional correspondence. I will respond to your emails as quickly as possible, but please do not expect a quick response to email sent on weekends or after 5pm on any day.

Lecture Slides

Slides will be used in class on most days. Slides will be posted to Canvas before class.

Class Discord

There is a Discord channel for this class. Participation is not required and will not affect your grade. You may use it to ask me questions, chat about the class, talk politics, and socialize. While you are encouraged to discuss class material with each other, please keep in mind that you are expected to complete your assignments individually. You may join using the following link:

<https://discord.gg/M5cQ8Vkm2g>

Required Texts

There is a required textbook for this course.

- Textbook: William G. Howell, *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. 2003.
 - ISBN-13: 9780691102702

You may access all other readings through the Canvas portal for this class or via hyperlinks in the syllabus.

Grading

Grading for this course will be calculated as follows:

Response Papers (best 7 out of 8)	70%
<u>Analytic Essay</u>	<u>30%</u>
Total:	100%

All grading items listed above are detailed in the sections that follow.

Analytic Essay

In lieu of a final exam, you are required to submit an analytic essay for this class. Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, double-spacing, and proper citation format (see section below). Additionally, please number each page. The essay should be roughly 5-6 pages long (not including the bibliography). Essay prompts and grading guidelines are posted to Canvas.

Response Papers

There are no exams in this class. However, 70% of your grade will be determined by **eight (8)** short weekly response papers. The response papers are a means for you to engage on a deeper level with the (often complex!) articles and chapters we are reading for class.

There will be a response paper every week EXCEPT for weeks 1, and 10

Each response paper will be short (generally less than a page), though the exact length will vary from paper to paper. Each one should take you no more than an hour to complete. Your lowest scoring response paper will be dropped from your final grade.

Prompts will be posted to Canvas at 5:00 PM every Thursday. You will have 72 hours to complete each assignment, meaning submissions will close at 5:00 PM each Sunday.

Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, and double-spacing. All response papers will receive in-text comments on Canvas via the SpeedGrader tool.

Grade Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the grade you receive on an assignment or exam, please take the following steps:

- 1) Review any comments/feedback I or the TAs have provided.
- 2) If you still have questions, go the office hours of the TA who graded you, or contact them by email.
- 3) If you still believe the grade you received is in error, submit a one-paragraph written request for a regrade by email. If the request is approved, your work will receive a completely new evaluation by me. Your score may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

Late Submissions

Do not wait until the night before it is due to begin to work on an assignment. Life is complicated and full of unexpected surprises. Plan for uncertainty by managing your time efficiently. Even if your work is not complete because something unexpected interfered, submit what you have accomplished prior to the emergency. After-the-fact extensions will be granted only under extreme circumstances, and at my sole discretion.

If you know in advance that you will miss an assignment deadline, you may submit a partially completed assignment early — and then appeal for an extension.

Response papers submitted late will have 10% deducted from their final score for every day they are late. This penalty begins immediately following the day and time the assignment is due and will not be prorated. Late analytic essays will not be accepted after the end of the quarter.

Writing Resources

There are lots of writing resources still available, even with social distancing. The writing center (<https://tutoring.ucdavis.edu/writing>) provides video resources and handouts with writing guides. They also offer one-on-one appointments with both professional specialists and undergraduate peer tutors. If you do not feel confident in your writing, I highly encourage you to take advantage of these resources.

Disabilities

UC Davis encourages qualified students with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. I am strongly committed to the same policy. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Student Disability Center at (530) 752-3184 as soon as possible to identify and document your specific needs. Additionally, it is your responsibility to contact me privately immediately at the beginning of the quarter (i.e., within the first week) so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. Do not wait until just before an assignment deadline or an exam to inform me of a learning disability.

Academic Dishonesty

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless otherwise specified by me. Any reference materials used to prepare an assignment must be cited. The following document contains specific guidelines for avoiding plagiarism: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf>. In general, you must cite the person at the end of the sentence in which you use another person's idea. When you use a specific phrase, you must put that phrase in quotation marks and cite the original author at the end of the sentence in which you use the phrase. If you wish to submit a piece of writing that you have used in another class, you must receive my permission before doing so.

You may also find information on the UC Davis code of academic conduct here: <https://ossja.ucdavis.edu/code-academic-conduct>.

Weekly Assignments and Topics

The list below indicates reading assignments and class topics. All journal articles and other readings will be available on Canvas or linked below. You should do each day's readings before that day's class. I will generally keep us on schedule but note that discussions may bleed over from one class to the next.

Date	Topic	Readings Due
Week 1		
Tues, Jan 5	Course Introduction & Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus
Thurs, Jan 7	The Invisible Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silver, Nate. "The Republican Party May Be Failing: What "The Party Decides" could get wrong about Donald Trump and the GOP." January 26, 2016. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-republican-party-may-be-failing/ <li>• Azari, Julia. "The 2016 Primaries were weird. Will things get even weirder in 2020." https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-2016-primaries-were-weird-will-things-get-even-weirder-in-2020/ <li>• Silver, Nate. "We're Tracking 2020 Presidential Endorsements. Here's Why They Probably Still Matter." February 28, 2019. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/were-tracking-2020-presidential-endorsements-heres-why-they-probably-still-matter/ <li>• EXPLORE: 538 historical endorsement tracker: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-endorsement-primary/ <li>• EXPLORE: 538 2020 endorsement tracker: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2020-endorsements/democratic-primary/

Week 2		
Tues, Jan 12	Caucuses & Primaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government 101: United States Presidential Primary, https://votesmart.org/education/presidential-primary • Yglesias, Matthew, “The US presidential primary process, explained.” https://www.vox.com/a/presidential-primaries-2016-republican-democrat/presidential-primaries-explained • John Oliver, Last Week Tonight, “Primaries and Caucuses.” https://youtu.be/S2G8jhhUHg • Skelley, Geoffrey, “We Re-Ordered The Entire Democratic Primary Calendar To Better Represent The Party’s Voters.” March 7, 2019. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-if-early-democratic-primary-states-looked-more-like-the-party/
Thurs, Jan 14	The 2020 Democratic Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory of the case – Biden, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-joe-biden-could-win-the-2020-democratic-nomination/ • Theory of the case – Sanders, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/bernie-sanders-2020-democratic-nomination-kickoff/ • Theory of the case – Warren, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-elizabeth-warren-could-win-the-2020-democratic-primary/ • Theory of the case – Bloomberg, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-michael-bloombergs-late-bid-for-the-democratic-nomination-could-go/ • Theory of the case – Buttigieg, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/pete-buttigieg-2020-democratic-nomination/ • Theory of the case – Harris, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/kamala-harris-2020-democratic-primary/

Week 3		
Tues, Jan 19	The Electoral College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DeSilver, Drew. 2016. “Trump’s victory another example of how Electoral College wins are bigger than popular vote ones.” <i>Pew Research Center</i>. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/12/20/why-electoral-college-landslides-are-easier-to-win-than-popular-vote-ones/ • Inversions in US presidential elections, 1836-2016, https://voxeu.org/article/inversions-us-presidential-elections-1836-2016 • Podcast, <i>Why Is This Happening?</i> Episode: “Abolish the Electoral College with Jesse Wegman” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google podcast link: https://tinyurl.com/y84l3waz • Apple podcast link: https://tinyurl.com/ya4dqcwv • YouTube link: https://youtu.be/Tl372t7B4yo
Thurs, Jan 21	Rethinking Electoral Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weigel, David. 2016. “How do other countries elect presidents without an electoral college? Pretty easily.” <i>The Washington Post</i>. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/12/20/how-do-other-countries-elect-presidents-without-an-electoral-college-pretty-easily/ (also on Canvas if paywalled) • Podcast, <i>Politics In Question</i>. Episode: “Should the Electoral College be abolished?” https://www.politicsinquestion.com/episodes/the-electoral-college
Week 4		
Tues, Jan 26	Presidential Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas: Erikson, Robert S. 2009. “The American Voter and the Economy, 2008.” <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 42(3): 467-471. • Canvas: selection from Vavreck, Lynn. 2009. <i>The Message Matters</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Thurs, Jan 28	Presidential Election Forecasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abramowitz, Alan I., “It’s the Pandemic, Stupid! A Simplified Model for Forecasting the 2020 Presidential Election” August 4, 2020. https://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/its-the-pandemic-stupid-a-simplified-model-for-forecasting-the-2020-presidential-election/ • Silver, Nate. “When We Say 70 percent, It Really Means 70 Percent.” https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/when-we-say-70-percent-it-really-means-70-percent/ • Silver, Nate. "How FiveThirtyEight’s 2020 Presidential Forecast Works — And What’s Different Because Of COVID-19." https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-fivethirtyeights-2020-presidential-forecast-works-and-whats-different-because-of-covid-19/
Week 5		
Tues, Feb 2	The 2016 & 2020 Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas: Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. "The 2016 U.S. Election: How Trump Lost and Won." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 28, no. 2 (2017): 34-44. • Silver, Nate. "The Real Story of 2016." https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-real-story-of-2016/ • Eric Levitz. New York Magazine. "David Shor’s Postmortem of the 2020 Election" https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/11/david-shor-analysis-2020-election-autopsy-democrats-polls.html
Thurs, Feb 4	Presidential Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article II of the U.S. Constitution: https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/article/article-ii • Canvas: Rohde, David W. & Meredith Barthelemy. 2009. “The President and Congressional Parties in an Era of Polarization.” In George C. Edwards III & William G. Howell eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2016.

Week 6		
Tues, Feb 9	The President & the Legislative Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas: Herrnson, Paul S., Irwin L. Morris, and John McTague. 2011. "The Impact of Presidential Campaigning for Congress on Presidential Support in the U.S. House of Representatives." <i>Legislative Studies Quarterly</i> 36(1): 99-122. • Howell, chapter 1, pages 1-14
Thurs, Feb 11	The Unilateral Presidency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howell, chapter 1 & chapter 2 (you can skip pages 31-52) • Azari, Julia. "Trump Came in as a Weak President, He's Made Himself Weaker." August 1, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-weak-president/
Week 7		
Tues, Feb 16	The Unilateral Presidency & Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howell, chapter 5 • Podcast, <i>Deconstructed</i> (The Intercept). "What Can Biden Do Without the Senate?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPLE: https://tinyurl.com/ybe6l3vw • GOOGLE: https://tinyurl.com/y4kakuco • SPOTIFY: https://tinyurl.com/y9x9wppk
Thurs, Feb 18	Presidential Revocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas: Thrower, Sharece. 2017. "To Revoke or Not Revoke: The Political Determinants of Executive Order Longevity." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. • Conroy, Meredith. "Trump Hasn't Rolled Back Obama's Executive Orders (So Far)." February 8, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-hasnt-rolled-back-obamas-executive-orders-so-far/
Week 8		
Tues, Feb 23	The President & the Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howell, chapter 6
Thurs, Feb 25	The President, the Public, & the Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas: Canes-Wrone, Brandice and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2004. "The Conditional Nature of Presidential Responsiveness to Public Opinion." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. 48(4): 690-706. • Canvas: Cohen, Jeffrey. 2004. "If the News is So Bad, Why Are the Presidential Polls So High?" <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i>. 34(3): 493-515.

Week 9		
Tues, Mar 2	The Presidency & the Politics of Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malone, Clare. "The Republican Choice." June 24, 2020. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-republican-choice/ Hale, Isaac & Algara, Carlos. 2020. APSA <i>RAISE the Vote</i> blog. "Will Trump & Congressional Republicans Benefit from White Racial Attitudes in 2020?" https://connect.apsanet.org/raisethevote/2020/07/22/will-trump-congressional-republicans-benefit-from-white-racial-attitudes-in-2020/
Thurs, Mar 4	The White House Under Bush & Obama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Pfiffner, James P. 2009. "The Contemporary Presidency: Decision Making in the Bush White House." <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 39(2): 363-384. Canvas: Pfiffner, James P. 2011. "Decision Making in the Obama White House." <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 41(2): 244-262. Goitein, Elizabeth. "The Dangerous Powers Obama Left in Trump's Hands." January 18, 2017. https://tinyurl.com/ybrp8hu2
Week 10		
Tues, Mar 9	The Trump White House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas: Pfiffner, James P. 2018. "The Contemporary Presidency: Organizing the Trump Presidency." <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 48(1): 153-167. Haberman, Maggie. "Book by Former Staff Member Describes a White House 'Out of Control.'" January 20, 2019. www.nytimes.com/2019/01/20/us/politics/book-trump-white-house.html (also on Canvas if paywalled) Rudalevige, Andrew. "As a candidate, Trump criticized Obama's use of executive power. So guess what powers President Trump has been leaning on?" January 20, 2018. www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/01/20/as-a-candidate-trump-criticized-obamas-use-of-executive-power-so-guess-what-powers-president-trump-has-been-leaning-on/ (also on Canvas if paywalled)
Thurs, Mar 11	The Biden White House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readings TBA
NO FINAL – Analytic Essay due at noon, March 18		