

POSC 308/408: The American Presidency

Fall 2021 Syllabus as of August 2, 2021

Professor Joseph White

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9:30 – 10:20

Room TBD

Office Hours 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. Mon/Wed

Mather House 113

and by Zoom meetings Tues/Thurs 8:00-9:30

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Our Topic

This course begins with three puzzles.

The first two have long been features of courses on the American presidency. One is the *puzzle of presidents and the presidency*. At any time there is only one president, and for some the presidency means the individuals who hold the office. So we speak of the Bush 43¹ Presidency, or the Obama Presidency, or Reagan Presidency. Yet the presidency is also a bundle of powers and responsibilities, within a system of “separated institutions sharing powers.” These powers and responsibilities are not simply exercised by an individual called the president, but by a set of organizations, sometimes called the “presidential branch” of government. It includes bureaucracies, such as the Office of Management and Budget and the National Security Council, that work directly for the president to help him or her manage relationships with Congress, the federal agencies, the public, and other forces that influence what government does.

Hence we cannot understand the presidency without thinking about the set of powers, the organizations, and the person – but those are also quite different topics.

The second puzzle involves what the presidency (whatever that means) can do and is expected to do: the *puzzle of presidential power*. Many observers argue there is a mismatch between the role that both the public and presidents appear to expect presidents to play in American government, and the quite limited powers that were established by the constitutional design. The president’s role in government far exceeds what could be expected from reading the constitution or *The Federalist Papers*. The president is also blamed for events over which he² has little control. What, then, are the sources, forms, and limits of presidential power, and how do presidents expand or (if unlucky and unskillful) reduce their influence?

¹ This refers to the Bush who was the 43rd President, so George W. Bush, as opposed to Bush 41, George Herbert Walker Bush.

² So far, all “he”s

The third puzzle is *how the Trump presidency fits into, or should change, understanding of the first two topics*. President Trump, by many standards, behaved in unusual ways. The most obvious consequence was that topics that might not seem necessary to cover most of the time needed to be covered when this course was last taught - most evidently, impeachment.³ Another was doubt about what previous presidency scholarship could tell us about his term. He certainly violated common understandings of both the president's interests - what behavior would serve him best - and what the nation needs from a president. On the other hand, the fact that he did not get re-elected is one indicator that the common understandings might be better guidance for future presidents.

In this course I will argue that many aspects of the Trump experience could have been predicted from previous understandings of the powers of, and constraints on, presidents. But we also will consider what the Trump experience revealed about the extent to which any presidency is personal, dependent upon the personality of the president; how Trump's violations of previous expectations were made possible by changes in the political context - what I'd call the "polity"; and the extent to which Trump showed that a president can reshape that polity - an aspect of presidential power that is not emphasized as much in the political science literature.

We will explore these questions while recognizing that, as is usual in the study of politics and government, we can only gain knowledge and wisdom, not absolute truth. Students also should be aware that this course is only an introduction to the topic and we cannot possibly cover any of the subtopics fully.

The learning objectives of this course therefore are for students to better understand:

- * The different dimensions of the presidency;
- * The challenges and opportunities faced by the president in office at any given time;
- * How the presidency fits into the broader structure of U.S. government and politics;
- * What these factors tell us about the presidency of Donald J. Trump; and
- * What to expect from the Biden presidency.

Class Procedures and Assignments

Reading and Participation in Discussion

We will proceed by reading analyses and a few stories (accounts of events) and discussing them. I will do formal lectures either to introduce a broad topic or if I have a well-

³ I've left that out this time, but will offer supplemental reading to anyone who is interested.

developed view that differs somewhat from the readings. The class discussion and lectures will be part of the material students are expected to be able to use for the written assignments, so attending class should help students earn better grades than if they do not attend. Students are expected (and welcome, and urged!) to participate and share their ideas and reactions to the ideas and evidence that the reading or I present.

Discussion is important because it helps students think. We can all learn from hearing other peoples' questions. Learning is less ephemeral if people work their way to knowledge rather than having it thrown at them by someone at the front of a room. On the other hand, discussion is likely to cover fewer points about a reading than a lecture could highlight. So there will be a tension between me wanting to encourage discussion and wanting to get-on-with-it. Please help by contributing and moving discussion along!

I hope discussion will be courteous and all contributions will be respected by all of us.

Any book or article has something to say. Maybe lots of different things. These can be viewed as *propositions*, such as "presidential power is the power to persuade," or, "the growth of the White House staff since FDR has been both a boon and a bane to presidents." Your understanding of the presidency will also consist of propositions, and the thinking behind those statements. What, for example, does it mean to say "presidential power is the power to persuade?" Aren't there other forms of power? Who do presidents need to persuade, about what, and why would anyone listen? Or, how could having more staff be a "bane" – isn't that sort of like having more troops? What general would not want more troops?

Some readings will make explicit propositions about how some aspect of the presidency works. Others will be stories that can be used to illustrate either propositions made in other readings or in class, or propositions you infer from that reading. In early classes, I will give examples of such propositions. Beginning fourth week of class, on most days I will ask a few students to prepare two propositions (made or illustrated) and submit them to me in advance, by e-mail, by 9:00 a.m.

Graded Assignments

The papers explaining propositions should be at least 250 words long. I will ask the student or students who submitted them to present their propositions near the beginning of class. I expect to ask each student to submit propositions twice. Each of these submissions will count for 4% of your grade.

Other participation in discussion will count for 8% of the grade. I understand that some people are less outgoing than others, so particularly quiet students will not get a lower grade as a result. However, students who have a lot to say, so long as it has some connection to the class material, can benefit from that. Participation would only lower the overall grade if a student misses more than 9 classes without approved explanation, disrupts the class, or is systematically late. Good participation could raise the final grade.

Students will also write three essays about course material and one paper about the Biden administration's policy initiatives. The essays will be designed to challenge students to reflect on the class material and integrate it into understandings of the modern presidency. The first will be due on **September 24**, the second on **October 29** and the third on **December 3**. Each should be no less than 1800 words. I will provide topics no less than a week before each essay is due.

The papers are designed to ask students to take a first look at what the Biden administration is doing in one issue area, and to analyze both the seeming reasons for those choices and the prospects for success. Students should choose among four policy areas: environment, immigration, health, or U.S. relations with China, and inform me of their choice by **September 13**. They then should do preliminary research and submit a short paper, summarizing what they have learned about the Biden administration's initiatives, by **October 8**. This paper should be no less than 500 words. Your final paper should be no less than 2500 words and should be submitted to me, by e-mail, by 8:00 p.m. on **December 13**. We discuss these papers during the scheduled final exam period for the class on **December 14**, so from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. I presume many students will want to be home by then, so *the final paper discussion will be conducted on Zoom*.

To summarize, the assignment schedule and grading will be:

September 24, first essay exam, 18%

October 8, first report on policy topic, 6%

October 29, second essay exam, 18%

December 3, third essay exam, 18%

December 13, final report on policy topic, 24%

Two different dates for each student, proposition papers about readings, 4% each so 8%.

Other discussion participation, 8%.

Classroom Procedures and Academic Integrity

I prefer that students arrive on time. I understand that this is sometimes difficult, particularly if you have a class immediately previous on the other side of campus. If you are in that situation, please let me know (and tell me which class it is). I will note lateness in my attendance records, and systematic lateness, without a good excuse, will be considered as part of the participation grade.

I expect students' work to be their own. Please review the university academic integrity policy at <https://bulletin.case.edu/undergraduatestudies/academicintegrity/>. Plagiarism in any form is punishable by a failing grade on the assignment in question and further penalty on the overall grade; and I may initiate university disciplinary proceedings.

I expect students to submit their assignments on time. This is especially important so that we can discuss essays on the days on which they are due, which means that if you do not submit the essay on time I will expect you to skip the class. I expect to reduce grades by up to half a grade for each day that an assignment is late. I will make exceptions if given a good (and documented) reason.

*Cellphones and other electronic devices **including laptops**, should not be used in class unless I explicitly give permission at the beginning of the session.* I hate making this rule, because it is much cheaper for students to read on their computers as opposed to printing out material to bring to class. Unfortunately, my own observation strongly suggests that a large portion of my students who have open laptops are not looking at course reading material. Moreover, there is a significant body of research which strongly indicates that note-taking by hand is more effective than taking notes on a computer (e.g., see <https://www.brookings.edu/research/for-better-learning-in-college-lectures-lay-down-the-laptop-and-pick-up-a-pen/>)

The readings are a selection of book chapters, academic journal articles, magazine articles and a few news stories that I have decided are relevant. Some are classics in the political science literature, and some are from recent headlines. A number are taken from the same books or journal issues, so I will refer to those sources below by shorthand as **bolded** below. These sources are:

Bob Bauer and Jack Goldsmith, *After Trump: Reconstructing the Presidency*. (Washington, DC: Lawfare Press, 2020). This book is quite good and inexpensive so you should consider buying it.

Presidential Studies Quarterly (PSQ), Vol. 51, No. 1 (March, 2021). This is a journal issue so pricey, so I don't recommend purchase.

Larry J. **Sabato**, Kyle Kondik, and J. Miles Coleman eds, *A Return to Normalcy? The 2020 Election That (Almost) Broke America*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). This book has some good chapters that aren't as relevant to this particular class, so you might consider purchasing it if you're interested in elections in general.

James A. **Thurber**, *Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations* 5th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013). You could buy if find used.

I will post readings on the course Canvas site unless I provide an alternative link below.

Schedule of Discussions, Readings, and Assignments

The files on the course Canvas site should be in the order of this syllabus, with names that are not identical to the names below but should be close enough to be recognized.

August 23 Introduction to class and each other.
Review of the syllabus and Article II of the Constitution.
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>

Part I: Development(s) of the Presidency in the Polity

August 25 James Pfiffner, "The Presidency: Origins and Powers." Chapter 1 in *The Modern Presidency* 6th ed. (Wadsworth/Cengage, 2011), pp. 1-17.
Gene Healy, "The Cult of the Presidency." *Reason*, June 2008.
The president has both formal and informal powers. Very few of the formal powers are stated in Article II, though some may seem logical inferences from the limited language there. Many have developed over time, whether granted by Congress and the courts or appropriated by ambitious presidents. Why do presidential powers expand?

August 27 Scott C. James, "The Evolution of the Presidency: Between the Promise and the Fear," Chapter 3 in Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Peterson eds., *The Executive Branch* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 3-40.
What do we want from presidents? What should we want? Do you think political scientists or legal scholars would give the same answers that average voters would? Would most peoples' answer depend on whether they like the incumbent? What is James saying about how and why expectations have changed?

August 30 Richard E. Neustadt, excerpts from *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. (The Free Press, 1990). Chapters 1, 3, and "Preface to the 1990 edition."

This is the old line, so the most obvious question is to what extent it remains true. Something to think about for the rest of the course: to what extent does a president's power depend on what he does for himself, rather than the system around him? What does it mean to say that presidential power is the power to persuade?

Sept 1 Byron E. Shafer and Regina L. Wagner, "The Trump Presidency and the Structure of Modern American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 17, No. 2 (June, 2019), pp. 340-357.

If how the presidency works depends on (but also shapes) the underlying political conditions of the time, one obvious issue is how the divisions within the country, and especially the party system, constrain or enable presidential behavior. So ask yourself if the argument here seems plausible – and what your doubts might be.

Sept 3 Stephen Skowronek, excerpts from *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 2008. Preface and Chapter 1.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life,

is bound in shallows and miseries..."⁴

Skowronek's book is not just about time or timing in politics and for presidents, but about time as not linear but cyclical – and so much like the tides. He claims American politics gets re-made, largely through presidential leadership, in fairly standard cycles. A dominant coalition of groups and set of attitudes about government and society forms; gains power in the form of a "transformative" president; enacts some of its agenda; and then goes through a process of temporary defeat and decay, return to power, further rejection, perhaps one more round of power in greatly weakened form, and finally is replaced by a new coalition and ideology. This is a grand theory of presidents' places in American politics, which makes claims about how both presidents shape macro-politics and vice versa. The most obvious question as Skowronek wrote was where Obama would fit. The obvious question now is how Trump and Biden could fit in to his theory... or how the factors in his analysis can help us understand President Biden's prospects.

Sept 6: Labor Day, No Class

⁴ Brutus to Cassius in Act 4, Scene 3 of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

- Sept 8** Joseph White, "Understanding Elections, Especially Presidential Elections." Unpublished manuscript, August 2021.
Since this reading basically says what I think is important to know, I expect discussion to be driven by student questions. Two obvious themes are: (1) how future elections should be expected to work out and, (2) to what extent the process described seems "fair."
- Sept 10** Alan Abramowitz, "The Politics of Good Versus Evil: Voting in a Polarized America." Chapter 4 in **Sabato, *Normalcy?***, pp. 63-80.
Many observers have highlighted the extent and effects of "polarization." How might that affect not just elections but government between elections?
- Sept 13** James P. Pfiffner, "Donald Trump and the Norms of the Presidency," *PSQ* **2021**, pp. 96-124.
Pfiffner, "Trump's lies corrode democracy." April 13, 2018. At <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2018/04/13/trumps-lies-corrode-democracy/>
The most logical question from this reading is to what extent following any "norms" affects presidents' political support, so ability to accomplish their goals. If that has changed, why has that changed – and what might be the consequences?
- Sept 15** **Bauer and Goldsmith** Chapter 1, pp. 1-20
How does this analysis add to or contradict Pfiffner's?
- Sept 17** Lou Cannon, Prefaces and Chapters 2-4, pp. ix-xvii and 16-44 of *Ronald Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000).
Adam Gopnik, "How Charles De Gaulle Rescued France." *The New Yorker*, August 20, 2018.
Both the Reagan and the De Gaulle cases are examples of a kind of leadership by performance: of self-presentation in order to win support and identify the leader with a notion of what the country should be. We might suspect that the prominence and visibility of presidents means that they send such messages whether or not they mean to do it, or understand what they are sending. It is something presidents can do in a way that no other political official in the United States can approach. But how easy is it for presidents to make performance serve their ends? For example, what was Obama "performing?" Was Trump a more effective performer?

Sept 20 Ryan Lizza, "The Obama Memos: The making of a post-post-partisan Presidency." *The New Yorker*, January 30, 2012.
Kenneth R. Mayer, "The Random Walk Presidency," *PSQ* 2021, pp. 71-95.
Political scientists tend to think of political actors as rational and strategic, choosing actions (means) in order to achieve ends. But what if a president misjudges the situation? Or hardly pays attention at all?

Sept 22 Mary E. Stuckey, "The Rhetoric of the Trump Administration," *PSQ* 2021, pp. 125-150.

If President Trump personalized everything, what does that say about this course's claim that there are three dimensions to the presidency, with the person being only one? Alternatively, how did this personalization matter?

Sept 24: **Discussion of First Essay;**
Essays should be submitted to Professor White by e-mail by 9:00 a.m.

Part II: Presidents and the Executive Branch, or, the Executive Power

Sept 27 Andrew Rudalevige, "The President and Unilateral Power: A Taxonomy." Chapter 17 in Michael Nelson ed., *The Presidency and the Political System* 10th ed. (CQ Press 2014), pp. 473-499.

Jeffrey Crouch, Mark J. Rozell, and Mitchel A. Sollenberger, "The Unitary Executive Theory and President Donald J. Trump." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 47, No. 3 (September, 2017), pp. 561-573.

What the heck is the "executive power" anyway? This might be the most important puzzle about the presidency. One might begin, for example, by distinguishing among different types of executive powers – as this course does. But there is a coterie of law professors and other theorists who insist that the executive power is "unitary," as in the Constitution's reference to "the" executive power, and that it (all of it) is vested in the president. It seems fairly clear that the people who wrote the Constitution thought nothing of the sort, but (except for Hamilton) they also seem not to have given the nature of "executive power" much thought. We will try to do better.

Sept 29 David E. Lewis, excerpts from *The Politics of Presidential Appointments* (Princeton, 2008). Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-50, 221-236.

The power of appointment is arguably a president's most effective way to shape the executive branch. Lewis gives an outline of the extent of that power, and also some sense of the risks. Having a loyal but rather incompetent FEMA Director when Hurricane Katrina drowned New Orleans did not work out well for President Bush.

- October 1** Lou Cannon, Chapter 5, "Offstage Influences," pp. 45-65 in *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*. New York: Public Affairs, 1991 & 2000.
David E. Lewis and Mark D. Richardson, "The Very Best People: President Trump and the Management of Executive Personnel." *PSQ* 2021, pp 51-70.
Bauer and Goldsmith, "Vacancies Reform" chapter through p 325

Another aspect of the appointment process is how presidents select the major figures in their administrations. Ronald Reagan is an example of this process working fairly well, from the president's perspective – at least for his first term. Donald Trump, maybe not so much – though he also took a rather strange approach to appointments.

- October 4** Kenneth R. Mayer, "Executive Orders," Chapter 7 in Joseph M. Bessette and Jeffrey K. Tulis eds., *The Constitutional Presidency* 5th ed. (2009), pp. 149-172 (notes 324-333).

John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, "Do Presidential Memo Orders Substitute for Executive Orders? New Data." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 47(2) June, 2017: 378-393

Presidents can influence what government agencies do through the appointment power, and through the White House staff liaising with the (possibly loyal) political appointees to give them a sense of what the president (allegedly) wants. But a lot of attention is devoted, in the literature and even in public discussion, to more visible written decisions about what agencies should do, issued directly by the President. These are visible and can be significant but their importance can also be overstated. The basic question is what executive orders, or other versions such as Presidential Decision Memoranda, add to the appointment power.

- October 6** Simon F. Haeder and Susan Webb Yackee, "Presidentially Directed Policy Change: The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs as Partisan or Moderator?" *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* Vol. 25, No. 4 (2018), pp. 475-488.

In addition to direct general orders and appointments, presidents also may shape agency action through using some portion of the White House bureaucracy to review and possibly veto or change specific agency decisions. While there are many ways in which "the White House" might interfere, the most systematic is review of planned regulations by the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, or OIRA. Debate about OIRA ranges from whether its authority is legitimate to what it has actually tended to do.

October 8 Selected articles recommending use of the president's executive authorities by the next Democratic president, from the Fall, 2019 issue of *The American Prospect*.

Excerpt from Elena Kagan, "Presidential Administration," *Harvard Law Review* 114 (2000-2001). Introduction, pp. 2246-2253; beginning of Part III, pp. 2281-2290.

Attitudes about presidential command of agencies to shape policy outputs tend to depend on attitudes about that president's values. In the first of these readings, authors in the liberal/left *American Prospect* magazine give examples of how authority might be used by a Democratic president. Many of these measures are now being urged on President Biden. In the second reading, future Justice (and at the time Dean of Harvard Law) Kagan describes some of the ways the Clinton administration used executive powers. The excerpt also provides some but not all of her rationale for those initiatives.

Short Paper on Policy Topic Due

October 11 Robert V. Percival, "Who's In Charge? Does the President Have Directive Authority Over Agency Regulatory Decisions?" *Fordham Law Review* Vol. 79 (2011), pp. 2487-2540.

As it happens, many observers do not find Justice Kagan's arguments compelling. This article explains some of the reasons, while providing an extensive history of the presidency's efforts to direct regulatory policies. Percival focuses especially on what such efforts add to the influence presidents have from the appointment power.

October 13 Louis Fisher, excerpts from *Presidential War Power 3rd ed.* (University Press of Kansas, 2013). Chapter 1, "The Constitutional Framework" 1-16. Chapter 11, "Covert Operations," 266-290.

We turn now to the aspect of executive power that may seem most easily justified by the Constitution: direction of national security bureaucracies, based on the Commander in Chief authority. But there is good reason for concern that presidents have become too powerful in these matters. In this and following readings we will look at arguments about both the reasons for and merits of the current presidential role.

October 15: Bauer and Goldsmith, "War Powers and Nuclear Weapons," pp. 281-314.

Ever since Alexander Hamilton, there have been arguments that greater presidential power in foreign than domestic affairs is simply necessary, because foreign and military matters require speed and secrecy that Congress cannot match. But that does not mean it's safe...

October 18 No Class, Fall Break

October 20 Excerpts from Peter Baker, *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House*. (New York: Doubleday, 2013) pp. 494-532.

Peter A. Baker and Mark Mazetti, "Brennan Draws on Bond With Obama in Backing CIA." *New York Times*, 12/14/14.

Connie Bruck, "Why Obama Has Failed to Close Guantanamo," *The New Yorker*, August 1, 2016.

The Baker reading about Bush and Cheney involves two topics: President Bush finally firing Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and his efforts to convince his own administration to agree to increase American troop levels in Iraq after the 2006 election, known as the "surge." The Baker and Mazetti article looks at internal decision-making in the Obama administration. The Bruck article reminds us that there are lots of ways, nonetheless, to push back against presidential initiatives. So these readings give us a look at all sorts of dynamics, from the fact that in the end presidents make decisions for their administrations (if they're sure enough), to possible influence from experts, to making decisions in the shadows of Congress and public opinion, to the human dimension of presidential responsibility, to how personal relationships – in these cases with the Vice President and CIA Director – can shape decisions.

October 22 Lou Cannon, chapter 21, "The New Era," from *Ronald Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, pp. 663-710

The Cannon reading gives an account of President Reagan's response to, and negotiations with, Mikhail Gorbachev once the latter became leader of the Soviet Union. At one level, it involves the crucial role of presidents in foreign policy. At another, it gives some further indication of presidents not simply leading but also dealing with their national security establishments. At a third, it shows the importance of presidential personality.

October 25 James P. Pfiffner, "Organizing the Trump Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 48(1), March 2018, 153-167.

Karen M. Hult, "Assessing the Trump White House," *PSQ* 2021, pp. 35-50.

David B. Cohen, Karen M. Hult and Charles E. Walcott, "The Chicago Clan: The Chiefs of Staff in the Obama White House," *Social Science Quarterly* 93(5), Dec 2012, 1101-1126.

There is some conventional wisdom about organizing the structure of advice closest to the president, or, "the White House." Observers see some alternatives, but it's fair to say that how the Trump presidency was constructed did not fit any model, and that became more true over time. We could do a whole course on this topic, but will

only brush over it lightly. The piece on Obama provides another example, and we will refer back to the Lou Cannon account of putting together the Reagan presidency – which is sort of a best-case scenario. One thing to remember is that White Houses have to serve the working style of their presidents. Another is that this might mean buffering them against their own weaknesses. A third is that presidents might not want to be buffered...

October 27 George Packer, “The President Is Winning His War on American Institutions,” *The Atlantic*, posted March 2, 2020; printed in April issue. Matthew Yglesias, “What Trump has actually done in his first 3 years,” *Vox*, December 2, 2019, at <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/12/2/20970521/trump-administration-achievements>
So what did President Trump do with his executive power? Yglesias summarizes the administration’s accomplishments to that point, most of which were through executive action of one sort or another. Packer focuses especially on Trump’s effects on the executive branch – including the removal, over time, of most of the ways in which the “institutional presidency” might have served as a check on the president.

October 29 **Discussion of Second Essay**
Essays should be submitted to Professor White by e-mail by 9:00 a.m.

Part III: The President and Congress

November 1 Andrew Rudalevige, "The Executive Branch and the Legislative Process," Chapter 13 in Aberbach and Peterson eds., *The Executive Branch*, pp. 419-451.

Joseph White, "Applying What We Know About Presidents: The Case of George W. Bush, as of March, 2001." Unpublished manuscript.

Presidents have a constitutional role in legislation, through the veto. They have an informal role as leaders of their party, which both gives them support from their co-partisans and may lead to reflexive opposition from the other side. They have further potential influence from attempting to lead public opinion, both to rally public opinion to influence legislators and by influencing the agenda of topics getting attention. They can also use their other powers to influence legislators, such as when Lyndon Johnson arranged for the Republican leader in the House to receive some research funding for his local university in return for cooperating to allow consideration of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. We now begin our discussion of sources of power within the legislative process.

But before focusing on the dynamics of presidential influence on legislation in particular, we pause for a quick look at the four topics for policy papers...

November 3 Meg Jacobs, "Obama's Fight Against Global Warming," and Sarah R. Coleman, "A Promise Unfulfilled, an Imperfect Legacy: Obama and Immigration Policy." Chapters 5 and 12 in Julian E. Zelizer ed., *The Presidency of Barack Obama: A First Historical Assessment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); pp. 62-77, 179-194, and notes at 288-89, 307-310.

President Biden's efforts both will be shaped by and respond to the policies and experiences of his predecessors. In today's reading we look at the Obama administration and two of those policies (with the Trump policies having been somewhat addressed in the Yglesias piece)

November 5 Barack Obama, "A President Looks Back on His Toughest Fight," *The New Yorker* (October 26, 2020, from November 2, 2020 issue).
Jonathan Cohn, "The ACA, Repeal, And The Politics of Backlash." *Health Affairs* blog, March 6, 2020
Jeffrey A. Bader, "Obama's China and Asia Policy: A Solid Double" (August 29, 2016) and Cheng Li, "Assessing U.S. – China Relations Under the Obama Administration" (August 30, 2016), both blogs from The Brookings Institution.

Ryan Hass, "Lessons from the Trump Administration's Policy Experiment on China," Working Paper for the Penn Project on U.S. – China Relations, Brookings Institution, September 25, 2020 at

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/lessons-from-the-trump-administrations-policy-experiment-on-china/>

I apologize for assigning more reading about these two topics.

November 8 George Edwards, Chapters 1 and 3 of *The Strategic President*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) pp. 1-18, 61-109.

Does a president's influence on Congress depend more on his skills and actions or on underlying political and institutional context and constraints. For example, if Barack Obama was not as successful as LBJ, was that because he was not as skilled or because he faced more negative conditions? Edwards provides the best statement of the importance of conditions. Think about how his argument relates to Neustadt's.

Nov 10 George C. Edwards III, "Was Donald Trump an Effective Leader of Congress?" *PSQ* 2021, pp. 4-34.

The short answer is "not much." But you might note that for someone who argues presidential skill is not all that important, Edwards puts a surprising amount of emphasis on President Trump's errors.

- Nov 12** Jeffrey E. Cohen, “A Theory of Presidential Influence on Congress,” Chapter 2 in Cohen, *The President on Capitol Hill: A Theory of Institutional Influence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 13-33.
Joseph White, “Loyalty and Betrayal: Two Ways Presidents Influence Legislation.” Powerpoint presentation from 2013 (still seems right to me)
Perhaps presidents have a bit more influence than Edwards argues. Cohen explains some ways that might work; I explain others.
- Nov 15** Barbara Sinclair, “The President and the Congressional Party Leadership in a Hyperpartisan Era,” Chapter 6 in **Thurber, *Rivals***, pp. 113-136.
Mark J. Oleszek and Walter J. Oleszek, “Congress and President Obama: A Perspective, Chapter 13 in **Thurber, *Rivals***, pp. 259-292.
These two readings give excellent overviews from major Congress scholars of President Obama’s dealings with Congress during his first term. We should think about how President Biden’s situation may be similar or different.
- Nov 17** Joseph White, “Presidents, Congress, and Budget Decisions.” Chapter 9 in **Thurber, *Rivals***, pp. 179-200
Budgeting is the central process of governance and the most fundamental topic on which cooperation between the president and Congress is vital. Budgeting raises every possible issue about power and purpose. It is also the major way through which Congress can exercise power over the federal agencies, in opposition to the president.
- Nov 19:** Joseph White, draft chapter on budgeting during the Trump administration and whatever has happened by now with the Biden administration.
Chapter not written at the time this syllabus was designed.
John B. Gilmour, “Political Theater or Bargaining Failure: Why Presidents Veto.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41(3), Sept. 2011, pp. 471-487.
The veto is the only significant tool for presidential influence on Congress that is in the Constitution. Gilmour addresses logical questions about why it is used, how it is used, and with what effects. My yet-unwritten piece is supposed to update the 2013 *Rivals* article; I’m not sure how...
- Nov 22:** Ron Elving, “The President, Congress, and the Media.” Chapter 8 in **Thurber, *Rivals***, pp. 155-178.
Bauer and Goldsmith, “The Press,” pp. 87-110.
As Chapter 3 of the Edwards book argued, one of the main ways presidents might influence Congress is through public opinion – the “bully pulpit.” But that influence has normally been limited for many reasons Edwards describes, including that

presidential efforts to persuade have normally been carried by, and competed with other messages in, various forms of mass media. Elving provides an overview of how that worked in the first Obama term. Trump, however, had a rather different approach to the problem...

Nov 24 No class, day before Thanksgiving. I will arrange a zoom meeting for any who wish

Nov 26 No class, Thanksgiving break.

Part IV: From Trump to Biden...

Nov 29: Sean Trende, "Was Trump Worth It for Republicans?" Chapter 13 in **Sabato Normalcy?** pp. 225-243.

December 1 Martha Joynt Kumar, "Joseph Biden's Effective Presidential Transition: 'Started Early, Went Big'". Draft for *Presidential Studies Quarterly*
Note: on both November 29 and December 1 I may present public opinion data to compare opinions of Trump and Biden

December 3 **Final Essay**

December 13: Final Papers Due to Professor White by 6 p.m.

Please send a copy by e-mail and also bring a printed copy to the class discussion.

December 14: Class Discussion of Final Papers

**By Zoom because I suspect a lot of students will want to have gone home by then
9:00 – 11:00 a.m.**

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