

## **The Presidency in American History**

**Department of History, Western University**

**History 2131B, Winter 2016**

**Tuesdays: 1:30-3:30**

**Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30-1:30**

**or by appointment**

**Lawson Hall 2238**

**Professor Shauna Devine**

[sdevine7@uwo.ca](mailto:sdevine7@uwo.ca)

### **Course Description:**

Article II of the United States Constitution says that the president will be vested with “executive power,” will be commander in chief of the nation’s military forces, and have the power to make treaties and appoint judges and executive officers with the advice and consent of the Senate. “He shall from time to time give to the Congress information on the State of the Union” and recommend measures for the legislature’s consideration. The President shall also receive ambassadors and will “take care that the Laws be faithfully executed.” The Framers of the Constitution otherwise had almost nothing to say about what the president would do or what qualities the person should have to fulfill the office.

The presidency is, however, perhaps the most original feature of the Constitution, and the president has long justified presidential programs in constitutional terms by consistently linking policies and agendas with the first principles, even as the office attempted to infuse new meaning into the institution. The Constitution of 1787 provided a broad outline of powers, leaving considerable leeway for individual presidents and future events to shape the executive office. During the last two centuries, some presidents have adopted a strict interpretation of the Constitution while others have made a powerful case for a broad construction, creating congressional as well as presidential partisans. Within this context, this course examines the origins of the American presidency, the development of this office and how it has taken shape during the more than two centuries of its existence. We will examine what has remained constant (due to constitutional design) and the innovations leading to the development of the modern presidency.

But the major change in office did not only arise from the development of bureaucracy in the White House. What the president actually did mattered most. Throughout most of American history the presidency has been much more than a simple instrument of executive power. Many presidents have contributed to the most significant shifts in public policy, political ideology and even social and cultural roles in the life of the country. And yet as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. warned decades ago, with the rise of presidential dominance the executive office could perhaps overstep reasonable limits of power leading to an “imperial” presidency. With the development of heightened partisanship, some presidents have indeed been increasingly accused of non-democratic and unconstitutional governance, ignoring the will of the people and abusing executive power. This course will consider the expanding role of the president in response to

national and world pressures and key historical events including the Constitutional Convention, the expansion of democracy, slavery, political and presidential parties, Civil War, the impact of the Progressive Era, the expansion of the importance and power of the president domestically and internationally, the presidency and war, the constitutional balance of power between the legislative and executive branches, the Great Depression, Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, the Watergate Scandal, the War on Terrorism, NSA surveillance scandal, concluding with an assessment of the Obama administration.

The office of the presidency is distinct from individual presidents, so while each president will be examined, those that have had a larger impact on the office and events will be given greater attention. The approach is chronological but within it certain themes, which have critically shaped the office will be emphasized.

**Eras:**

Early Republic  
Jacksonian Democracy  
Sectional Conflict  
Gilded Age  
Progressive Era  
Depression and World Conflict  
Social Change and Soviet Relations  
Globalization

**General Themes:**

Statements of Administration Policy  
Presidents and Congress  
Presidents and Foreign Policy  
Presidential Cabinets  
Presidents and Wars and the Military  
Campaigns and Elections  
Presidential and Political Parties  
Presidents and Society  
Presidents and National Security  
Office of the Vice President

**Course Learning Outcomes and Objectives:**

1. Students will identify and analyze the main events, trends, persons and development of the Office of the Presidency from the Early Republic to Globalization.
2. Students will demonstrate competence in using historical methods to research, speak and write about the history and institution of the American presidency.
3. Students will demonstrate understanding of the presidency, public policy and political history.
4. Students will develop critical thinking ability through the examination of primary and secondary sources.

5. Students will develop historical and political understanding of the American Presidency through lectures, reading, writing and discussion of the primary themes.
6. Students will develop communication competence through class discussion of the course readings and critical essay writing.

A list of lecture topics and reading assignments for each week follow below.

**Required Text:**

Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2001*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2012)

Michael Nelson (ed.), *The Evolving Presidency: Landmark Documents, 1787-2008*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Washington: CQ Press, 2008).

**Required Readings:**

(See lecture schedule).

**On-line Resources:**

Please see OWL for a complete list of on-line resources along with some general articles of interest.

The American Presidency Project: [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php)

Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress:  
[www.thepresidency.org/publications/presidential-studies-quarterly](http://www.thepresidency.org/publications/presidential-studies-quarterly)

Miller Center: [millercenter.org/](http://millercenter.org/)

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

<http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/>

**Course Requirements:**

Short Research Paper (20%)

Mid-term Exam (30%)

Final Exam (50%)

**General Information:**

The presidency in American history is a very engaging subject, particularly during this critical period in American politics. It is my personal goal that students both enjoy the course and be engaged with the material. I strongly encourage students to meet with me during office hours, after class or contact me via e-mail if you have any questions or

would like clarification on any of the issues that we discuss in class. My aim is to facilitate a positive and productive learning environment and my hope is that students will gain a solid understanding of the American presidency and its history, the Constitution, key political developments and contemporary U.S. politics and government.

**Lecture Attendance:**

Students are expected to attend each lecture and complete the assigned readings before each class. The lectures will offer valuable information, which cannot be obtained from the readings. Students who do not attend regularly cannot expect to do well in the course. Although there are no tutorials, we shall endeavor to have a discussion each week in which students are strongly encouraged to participate.

**February Midterm Exam (30%):**

There will be a two-hour exam during the February midterm period. This will consist of short answer as well as essay questions. This will cover the first part of the course only, including lectures, discussions and readings. No aids are permitted (i.e. notes, phones, calculators, computers etc.) There will be a midterm review in class during week six of the course.

**Short Research Paper (20%):**

You will be asked to analyze primary and secondary documents evaluating the foreign and/or domestic policies of the American president of your choice. Your analysis should be 6-8 pages in length, and written in proper scholarly format (including notes and bibliography). Further information to follow in class. **(Due Date: March 15, 2016).**  
**Essays should be submitted no later than 11:59 pm via OWL.**

**April Final Exam (50%):**

You will have a two hour exam during the April exam period. The exam will consist of short answer as well as essay questions covering material from the second part of the course only, although you are encouraged to consider the themes and broad issues from the entire course. No aids are permitted. There will be a final exam review during week fourteen of the course.

**Academic Accommodation on Medical Grounds:**

Academic accommodation on medical grounds can in most cases only be granted if supported by a University of Western Ontario Student Medical Certificate.

This form can be accessed at the following website:

[https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_document.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_document.pdf) or be picked up at the Academic Counseling Office in the students home faculty.

Further details may be found at:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

If, on medical or compassionate grounds, you are unable to meet your academic responsibilities, i.e., unable to write term tests or final examinations or complete course work by the due date, you should follow the instructions listed below. You should understand that academic accommodation will not be granted automatically on request.

You must demonstrate that there are compelling medical or compassionate grounds that can be documented before academic accommodation will be considered. Read the instructions carefully. In all cases, action must be taken at the earliest possible opportunity, preferably prior to the scheduled examination, test or assignment.

1. Inform the instructor prior to the date of the scheduled time of the test or examination or due date of the assignment. If you are unable to contact the instructor, leave a message for him/her at the department office.
2. Bring your request for accommodation to the Academic Counselling Office, Room 2105, Social Science Centre, telephone 519 661-2011 or fax 519 661-3384. Be prepared to submit documentation of your difficulties.
3. Rewriting tests or examinations or having the value of the test or examination reweighted on a retroactive basis is not permitted.

### **Midterm Exams:**

1. If you are unable to write a term test, inform your instructor (preferably prior to the scheduled date of the test). If the instructor is not available, leave a message for him/her at the department office.
2. Be prepared, if requested by the instructor, to provide supporting documentation. Submit your documentation to the Academic Counselling Office.
3. Make arrangements with your professor to reschedule the test.
4. The Academic Counselling Office will contact your instructor to confirm your documentation.

### **Final Examinations:**

1. You require the permission of the Dean, the instructor, and the Chair of the department in question to write a special final examination.
2. If you are unable to write a final examination, contact the Academic Counselling Office in the first instance to request permission to write a special final examination and to obtain the necessary form. You must also contact your instructor at this time. If your instructor is not available, leave a message for him/her at the department office.
3. Be prepared to provide the Academic Counselling Office and your instructor with supporting documentation (see below for information on documentation).
4. You must ensure that the Special Examination form has been signed by the instructor and Department Chair and that the form is returned to the Academic Counselling Office for approval without delay.

### **Short Absences:**

If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outlines for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate.

### **Extended Absences:**

If you are absent more than approximately two weeks or if you get too far behind to catch up, you should consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses. This must be done by the appropriate deadlines. (Refer to the Registrar's website for official

dates.) The Academic Counsellors can help you to consider the alternatives. At your request, they can also keep your instructors informed of your difficulties.

### **Documentation:**

**Personal Illness:** If you consulted Student Health Services regarding your illness or personal problem, you should complete a Records Release Form allowing them to notify Academic Counselling (the form is available in the Academic Counselling Office, 2105). Once your documentation has been assessed, the academic counsellor will inform your instructor that academic accommodation is warranted. If you were seen by an off-campus doctor, obtain a certificate from his/her office at the time of your visit. The off-campus medical certificate form must be used.

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>. The doctor must provide verification of the severity of the illness for the period in question. Notes stating "For Medical Reasons" are not considered sufficient.

**In Case of Serious Illness of a Family Member:** Obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician. **In Case of a Death:** Obtain a copy of the newspaper notice, death certificate or documentation provided by the funeral director. . **For Other**

**Extenuating Circumstances:** If you are not sure what documentation to provide, ask an Academic Counsellor.

### **Academic Concerns:**

You need to know if your instructor has a policy on late penalties, missed tests, etc. This information may be included on the course outline. If not, ask your instructor. You should also be aware of attendance requirements in courses such as Business and English. You can be debarred from writing the final examination if your attendance is not satisfactory. If you are in academic difficulty, check the minimum requirements for progression in your program. If in doubt, see your Academic Counsellor.

If you are registered in Social Science courses but registered in another faculty (e.g., Arts or Science), you should immediately consult the Academic Counselling Office in your home faculty for instructions

### **Course Lectures:**

#### **January 5: Course Introduction**

The American Revolution; Forging a National Republic; Constitutional Convention; Opposition and Ratification

#### **Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson, Chapter One

Nelson, pp. 1-14.

#### **January 12: The Development of the American Presidency**

The Early Republic: The Presidencies of George Washington and John Adams; The Early Vice Presidency

#### **Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapters two-three; 487-489.

Nelson, pp. 15-68.

**January 19: The Triumph of Jeffersonianism:**

The Jeffersonian Era

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Four

Nelson, pp. 69-80.

**January 26: The Politics of Jacksonian America:**

Manifest Destiny and Expansionism, The Peculiar South? The Slavery Controversy and the Twilight of the Jacksonian Presidency

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Five

Nelson, pp. 86-94.

**February 2: The Crisis of the Union**

Abraham Lincoln and Disunion; Two Societies at War, 1861-1865; Prerogative Power during the Civil War; Presidential Reconstruction; The Congressional Reconstruction Plan.

Class discussion of the mid-term.

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Six

Nelson, pp. 95-110.

**Week of February 8-12**

Mid-term (30% of final grade)

**February 15-19, 2016**

Reading Week, No Class.

**February 23: The Presidents of the Late Nineteenth Century**

**Reconstruction Reversed:** Andrew Johnson and Ulysses S. Grant

**Theories of Presidential Power:** James Garfield, Chester Arthur, Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison; The Vice Presidency in the Nineteenth Century

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Seven; pp. 490-492.

Nelson, pp. 111-125.

**March 1: Expansion and Intervention: Progressive Politics, Executive Power and the Emergence of the Modern Presidency**

William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, Woodrow Wilson

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Eight

Nelson, pp. 126-137.

**March 8: The Modern Presidency Recedes**

Warren Harding to Herbert Hoover

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Nine

**The Vice Presidency: Political Status of the Office Evaluated**

Milkis and Nelson: pp. 493-496.

Nelson, pp. 138-148.

**March 15: The Modern Presidency Revives and Grows**

Franklin D. Roosevelt to Dwight Eisenhower; The Twenty-second Amendment

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Ten

Nelson, pp. 149-176; 187-189.

**\*\*\*\*Short Essay Due\*\*\*\* (worth 20% of the final grade)**

**March 22: Personalizing the Presidency**

The emergence of presidential celebrity and its effect on the institution:

John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson

**The Modern Presidency Under Siege:**

Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Eleven

Nelson, pp. 190-248.

**March 29:**

**The Modern Presidency in a Republican Era:**

Ronald Regan, George H. W. Bush

**Perils of the Modern Presidency:**

Bill Clinton

**The Modern Vice Presidency**

**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapter Twelve-Thirteen; 497-510.

Nelson, pp. 249-254; 265-282.

**April 5:**

**George W. Bush:**

The 2000 Election, War on Terror, The Bush Doctrine (2002), “Unitary Executive Theory”

**Barack Obama and the Dilemma of Modern Presidential Leadership:**

“Change comes to America”; Red vs. Blue?; The President and National Security  
Barack Obama Evaluated: difficulties of globalization, terrorism, environmental change and health care reform



**Readings:**

Milkis and Nelson: Chapters 14-15

Nelson, pp. 283-312.

Discussion of the Final exam.

**Final Exam Period: April 11-30, 2016.**

## ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

### **Prerequisites and Antirequisites:**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course, as described in the Academic Calendar description of the course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The Academic Calendar description of each course also indicates which classes are considered antirequisites, i.e., to cover such similar material that students are not permitted to receive academic credit for both courses.

### **Academic Offences:**

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and

indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

## **Medical Issues:**

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to [https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_accommodations\\_link\\_for\\_OOR.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf) to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links to the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES:**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

*Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.*

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Morgan Sheriff, Undergraduate Program Advisor, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84999 or [msherif5@uwo.ca](mailto:msherif5@uwo.ca)