



Course Syllabus: The Presidency
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
POLS 3843-201
Spring 2026: TTR 11:00am-12:20pm, PY 209

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Duff

Office: 112 Hardin

Office hours: MWF: 9:00am-10:00am, TTR 8:00am-9:00am

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Course Description

With a focus on the skills of political leadership, this class introduces undergraduates to the institution of the U.S. presidency. It describes the origins and development of the presidency, analyzes the president's relations with other government elites, and explains how presidents formulate and implement domestic, economic, and national security policies. By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Analyze the historical evolution and expansion of presidential power.
2. Evaluate the dynamics of presidential interactions with other branches of government.
3. Critically examine the role of presidential leadership in public politics and electoral processes.
4. Assess presidential influence on public policy across domestic, economic, and national security arenas.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

The Politics of the Presidency. 11th Edition. Joseph A. Pika, John Anthony Maltese and Andrew Rudalevige.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of

work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

There will be three exams. Each exam will make up 15% of your final grade. The West Wing Experience will make up 30% of your final grade. Your Presidency Case File will make up 25% of your final grade.

Table 1: Percentages allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Presidency Case File	25%
West Wing Experience	30%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Final Exam	15%
Total	100%

Table 2: Totals for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	90%+
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Less than 60%

Grade Discussions

I will only discuss a grade with you in my office or via email. I will not discuss a grade with you before or after class in the classroom, in the hallway, outside by my car, or over the phone. I want you to take time to look over your exam thoroughly, outside of the classroom before you make an argument for a different grade. Any discussion of exam grades should take place within my office hours or via email if you are not able to attend the scheduled office hours.

If you feel that you and another student provided similar or equal answers to an exam question and you received a lower grade on that question, then both students must come to the assigned office hours with their exams in order for me to evaluate the answers equally and fairly. Keep in mind that in some cases I may lower the grade of the other student and not raise yours after reviewing both answers, if I feel that the situation deems it necessary.

Presidency Case File

This assignment is a semester-long analytical project that requires students to apply core theories, concepts, and institutional frameworks from *The Politics of the Presidency* to real-world presidential behavior. Students will build a structured “case file” examining how presidential power operates, evolves, and is constrained in practice. The goal is not to summarize news coverage, but to analyze presidential action through the lenses provided by political science scholarship.

Each student will create a Presidency Case File focused on one presidency OR one major policy domain during a single administration.

Students choose ONE of the following tracks: 1. Presidency Track: A single president (e.g., Biden, Trump, Obama) 2. Policy Track: A major policy area across one presidency (e.g., immigration, war powers, executive branch management, economic policy)

The case file consists of four analytical case briefs and a final synthesis essay.

A West Wing Experience

This is a semester long project where students will participate in a United States Executive Branch Simulation. A separate handout is attached outlining the requirements and expectations for the simulation.

Exams

There will be three required examinations. The scheduled examinations dates are as follows (these will not change):

Exam 1: February 19, 2026

Exam 2: March 24, 2026

Final Exam: May 12, 2026, 1:00pm-3:00pm

Taking Exams Early

You will not be allowed to take an exam early.

Extra Credit

Situations may arise throughout the semester where I offer extra credit opportunities. These are entirely up to my discretion and will only be provided to the entire class. I NEVER give individualized extra credit to students who request it for missed assignments or to improve their grade. I will only give extra credit opportunities to everyone in the course, and only I will decide when and if those opportunities are provided.

Late Work

I do not accept late assignments, papers, exams, quizzes, or anything else. If it is late, it will receive a grade of zero. If you miss an assignment because you arrive to class late, you will receive a grade of zero, as well.

Make-up Work/Tests

If a student has a University-approved excuse and if the instructor is notified in writing, prior to the examination or assignment, and the student can provide official documentation to validate the excuse, arrangements for a make-up may be made. If a student fails to do any of these things, the student will receive a zero for the exam or assignment. Official documentation does not include a letter from the Dean of Students Office. You must provide me with actual documentation that validates the excuse and clearly demonstrates that you were unable to complete the assignment (or exam) by the due date.

Artificial Intelligence

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, writing assignments should be the original work of the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, for this type of assignment, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism and a violation of the MSU Texas Academic Dishonesty Policy. Your work will be checked with AI checking tools and if it is determined that your assignment was completed using AI, you will be given a grade of zero for that assignment.

However, there will be some assignments, particularly during the West Wing Experience, where you may be permitted to use AI. In these instances, you will be required to properly cite the use of AI and also provide your professor with the exact prompts that you used to generate the AI response. Specific assignments where AI will be permitted will be announced in class.

Wikipedia

At no time will a student be allowed to use Wikipedia as a source for any project or paper in my class. If it is determined that Wikipedia was used as a source for a project or paper, the student will be given a grade of zero.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Class attendance is strongly encouraged. It has been my experience that those who do not attend class tend to have a difficult time with the course and generally receive lower grades. During class periods that are devoted to the West Wing Experience, I will take attendance, and attendance will be considered when evaluating your participation. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from the course. In the case of excessive absences, I will contact the student with an initial warning. After the warning, if the student does not start attending class regularly, I will drop them from the course with a grade of WF.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in any form is unacceptable. Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor.

In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. "Proper attribution" means that you have fully identified the original source and extent of your use of the words or ideas of others that you reproduce in your work for this course, usually in the form of a footnote or parenthesis.

As a general rule, if you are citing from a published source or from a web site and the quotation is short (up to a sentence or two) place it in quotation marks; if you employ a longer passage from a publication or web site, please indent it and use single spacing. In both cases, be sure to cite the original source in a footnote or in parentheses.

This is not limited to direct quotations. Any time you use material from a published source, whether quoting directly, borrowing from it, or paraphrasing, you can only do so with proper attribution.

If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or examination, be sure to seek clarification from me.

Finally, you should keep in mind that as a member of the campus community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. So be proud of your academic accomplishments and help to protect and promote academic integrity at MSU. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty – including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school – are simply not worth it.

Any paper or assignment that is found to be plagiarized will be given a grade of zero and will be reported through the proper channels according to the guidelines provided in the MSU Student Handbook.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester. Spring 2026 last day for a W is April 29.

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License-to-carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by the MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled *“Run. Hide. Fight.”* which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#).

Note, students can only appeal the final grade of a course, not individual assignments or exams.

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Dates	Activities/Assignments/Exams
January 20	Introduction and Overview of the Course
January 22-27	The Changing Presidency: Chapter 1
January 29- February 3	Election Politics: Chapter 2
February 5-10	Public Politics: Chapter 3
February 12-17	Presidential Character and Performance: Chapter 4
February 19	Exam 1
February 24-26	Legislative Politics: Chapter 5
March 3-5	Executive Politics: Chapter 6
March 10-13	Spring Break: No Class
March 17-19	Judicial Politics: Chapter 7
March 24	Exam 2
March 26-31	Domestic Policy: Chapter 8
April 2	Holiday Break: No Class
April 7-9	Economic Policy: Chapter 9
April 14-16	Foreign Policy: Chapter 10

Dates	Activities/Assignments/Exams
April 21-23	<p>Vaughn, Justin S. 2016. "The Post-Rhetorical Presidency of Barack Obama: 'Speak all the time and carry a little stick.'" <i>The Blue Review</i>. https://thebluereview.org/obama-post-rhetorical-presidency/</p> <p>Baum, Matthew A. and Samuel Kernell. 1999. "Has Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television?" <i>The American Political Science Review</i>. 93 (1): 99-114.</p> <p>Young, Garry and William B. Perkins. 2005. "Presidential Rhetoric, the Public Agenda, and the End of Presidential Television's 'Golden Age.' <i>The Journal of Politics</i>. 67, (4): 1190-1205.</p>
April 28-30	<p>Sides, John and Michael Tesler. "How political science helps explain the rise of Trump: Most voters aren't ideologues." <i>Washington Post</i> https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/02/how-political-science-helps-explain-the-rise-of-trump-most-voters-arent-ideologues/</p> <p>Sides, John and Michael Tesler. "How political science helps explain the rise of Trump (part 3): It's the 'economy, stupid.'" <i>Washington Post</i> https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/04/how-political-science-helps-explain-the-rise-of-trump-part-3-its-the-economy-stupid/</p>
May 5-7	TBA
May 12 1:00pm- 3:00pm	Final Exam