

Political Science 420  
American Presidency  
Fall 2001  
Professor Alexander Bielakowski

General Description: It has been described as "dignified slavery" by one of its occupants yet sought with creativity and cunning by many. It has been referred to as the most powerful position in the world yet shunned and avoided by some truly great Americans. A modern day analyst called it "imperial" yet its original creators were most fearful lest it become monarchical. It is a branch of government with few articulated powers yet some would say that it is possessed of all power - and, to be sure, some of its occupants have acted thusly. Some have come to it by accident; some have left it by violent means. Some have served for one term by choice; others by popular will. Some have left it at the height of their power and popularity and others at the low point of their public lives.

In this course we will attempt an analysis of the significant developments in the evolution of the Presidency using a study of the administrations of a select group of American Presidents. Emphasis will be on an examination of the leadership roles each exercised in shaping the character of the office as well as a focus on the primary political, military, and cultural forces of the respective historical periods.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance and participation will count as 10% of the student's grade. Students are expected to attend every class and to participate in the classroom discussion of those classes.

Written Work: Each student will be assigned an American President on the first day of class. That President will be the focus of most of their research and writing for the rest of the semester, including an in-class presentation.

Each student will be required to submit a five to seven (5 - 7) page bibliographic essay of the books written about the American President that they have been assigned. It must follow the outline presented in class. The review will be due on Thursday, September 27.

In addition, each student will be required to submit a ten to twelve (10 - 12) page biographical sketch of an American President. It must follow the outline presented in class. The biographical sketch will be due on Thursday, November 1.

Lastly, each student will present a five to seven (5 - 7) page historical appraisal of the American Presidency. It must follow the outline presented in class. The biographical sketch will be due on Thursday, December 6.

Late written work will be subject to a penalty of one (1) point per day of lateness, *without exception*. No written work will be accepted after the final examination.

Grading: Your grade will be based on a maximum of 100 points, which are broken down in the following manner:

10 pts. – Attendance and Participation  
20 pts. – Bibliographical Review  
20 pts. – Class Presentation  
20 pts. – Historical Appraisal  
30 pts. – Biographical Sketch  
100 pts.

Academic Dishonesty: Remember the Academic 11th Commandment, “Thou Shall Not Plagiarize.” Plagiarism and cheating are serious offences and may be punished by failure on an exam or paper; failure in a course; or expulsion from the university.

Note-Taking: All forms of copyright and property ownership are reserved by the course instructor. Professional note-takers or their agents are expressly excluded from this course.

Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability it is your responsibility to register with the Office of Disability Services and inform your instructor at least two weeks prior to a needed service so reasonable accommodations can be made.