

PSCI 5324 (95351)
THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Fall 2005
Professor Karen Hult

Hours: Major Williams 537 T 2-3:30, W 10:30-noon, and by appt.

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"Governance is a scarce commodity."¹ An accurate assessment of democratic governments around the world, B. Guy Peters's observation evidently applies as well to the U.S. presidency and national executive branch. Pundits and politicians, scholars and citizens have all at various times labeled the U.S. presidency imperial, imperiled, and impossible. Many argue that contemporary presidents are overloaded -- confronted with burgeoning responsibilities, intractable problems, unresponsive civil servants, an increasingly fragmented and fractious political system, and unreasonable public expectations. Others maintain that presidents have become too closely linked to the mass public, perhaps increasing responsiveness but reducing institutional capacity for addressing complex, long-term problems. In contrast, still other critics complain that presidents have grown out of touch with most U.S. citizens, and the other branches of government have failed to check growing executive dominance. Especially in a federal, separation-of-powers system of government like that of the United States, such alleged problems have few uncontested solutions. And, the challenges may be multiplying as policy problems grow in seeming complexity, policy goals are difficult to identify or agree upon, and possible solutions are unknown, ill-understood, or disputed. Meanwhile, the U.S. struggles to cope with an increasingly uncertain and threatening post-Cold War and post-9/11 world and a volatile, ever more tightly linked global economy.

This semester, we will explore many of these concerns. We will do so by analyzing executive branch actors (e.g., chief executives, political appointees, career officials) as they participate in governing. The seminar's focus will be on the national and, to a lesser extent, the state levels of U.S. government, although other advanced industrialized national settings also will be considered. A primary emphasis will be chief executives' strategies for pursuing their political and policy goals, within the executive branch and in the larger governmental and political systems in which they are embedded. Attention will focus as well on the interplay among executive, legislative, and judicial branches and on the permeability of the executive branch to interest groups, the media, and public opinion. Much of the emphasis will be on untangling and making sense of *empirical* relationships and effects, but their implications for key values like governing capacity, responsiveness, and accountability also will be highlighted.

¹ B. Guy Peters, *The Future of Governing*, 2nd edition revised (University Press of Kansas, 2001), p. 1.

READING

The following books are required and are available at the University and Tech bookstores:

Erwin C. Hargrove, *The President as Leader: Appealing to the Better Angels of Our Nature* (University Press of Kansas, 1998)

Ludger Helms, *Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Chancellors: Executive Leadership in Western Democracies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency in a Separated System*, 2nd edition (Brookings Institution, 2005)

Paul A. Kowert, *Groupthink or Deadlock: When Do Leaders Learn from Their Advisors?* (SUNY Press, 2002)

David E. Lewis, *Presidents and the Politics of Agency Design: Political Insulation in the United States Government Bureaucracy, 1946-97* (Stanford University Press, 2003)

Michael Nelson, editor, *The Presidency and the Political System*, 8th edition (CQ Press, 2006)

Materials marked below with an asterisk (*) will be on reserve in political science and at CPAP. Most of the journal articles also may be accessed electronically through Newman Library.

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

1. “Question Period”: Before each seminar (preferably by 7 p.m. the evening before), each student will e-mail me *at least* one question or brief comment about the day’s topic and assigned readings. Questions may focus on material that was not fully clear or whose relevance (to, e.g., political science scholarship, governing, political or policy practice) was not apparent. Questions also may be about possible applications or extensions that the readings did not discuss or about seeming contradictions or inconsistencies in authors’ findings or arguments. Comments may include assertions about the utility or value of particular works or certain subjects that may provoke class discussion. Anything is fair game as long as the question/comment is relevant to the day’s topic, and it is framed in civil terms.
2. Critical Book Review and Presentation: Over the course of the semester, each student will review one book, making a brief (approximately 10 minute) presentation in class and providing copies of a written review to other seminar members. Reviews will be keyed to seminar discussion topics, with presentations typically being made during the week of the relevant topic. A list of possible books for review will be distributed in seminar; other books may be chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Written reviews should be 5-7 double-spaced typed pages. The review should summarize the book’s major arguments and findings, evaluate the work’s strengths and weaknesses,

and, where possible, place it in the context of seminar readings and discussion. Examples of reviews can be found in the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Congress & the Presidency*, *Journal of Politics*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, and *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*. Reviews should be turned in either at the time of the oral presentation or at the next week's seminar.

3. Annotated Bibliography of Articles in Scholarly Journals: Each student will select an area of scholarship on the U.S. presidency, presidential systems, U.S. state executives, executive branch agencies (at the U.S. national or state level, in other nation states), or other subjects relevant to the seminar. Possibilities include (but are *not* limited to) the creation of the presidency, influences of public opinion on the presidency, presidential approval, citizens' expectations of elected chief executives (e.g., presidents, prime ministers, governors), presidential press relations, media coverage of executives and executive branches, presidential-legislative relations, presidency and the federal judiciary, presidential decision-making, domestic policy-making, economic policy-making, national security policy-making, or comparisons among presidential systems. After consulting with Prof. Hult about the subject area and relevant sources, each student will produce an annotated bibliography of *at least* 8-12 journal articles to share with the rest of the seminar.

4. Overview and Assessment of Research Area: At the end of the semester, each student will critically discuss the articles in the bibliography produced for the previous assignment, emphasizing their contributions to studying and to understanding the subject area and highlighting limitations and areas for future research.

5. Seminar Participation: As in any seminar, class participation is critical. Students should come to seminar having already done the week's readings, and be ready both to ask questions about and to critically discuss the readings. If a student must miss a seminar meeting, please let me know in advance (in person, or by phone, e-mail, or voice-mail) whenever possible.

Grades will be determined according to the following distribution:

Questions/comments	10%
Critical book review	30
Annotated bibliography	20
Overview & assessment	25
Seminar participation	15

Other Notes

If the University is closed due to weather, class will *not* be held. We will decide on ways to make up the missed seminar either via e-mail or at the next seminar meeting. (To check on possible closings, call 231-6668 or listen to local radio or TV.)

The Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code is in effect throughout the course. Any student with special needs or circumstances should feel free to meet with me.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Aug 25 Seminar Introduction

Sept 1 NO CLASS (APSA)

Sept 8 **I. Setting the Stage: Issues, Boundaries, and Context**

Reading: Nelson, "Evaluating the Presidency," in Nelson, ch. 1
Rockman, "The American Presidency in Comparative Perspective,"
In Nelson, ch. 2
Tulis, "The Two Constitutional Presidencies," in Nelson, ch. 3
Skowronek, "Presidential Leadership in Political Time," in Nelson, ch. 4
Hargrove, chs. 1-2
Jones, ch. 1
Helms, ch. 1
* Zegart, "September 11th and the Adaptation Failure of U.S. Intelligence
Agencies," *International Security* 29 (Spring 2005): 78-111

**Selection of book for review due in seminar Sept 15th.

Sept 15 **II. Presidents as Leaders?**

Reading: Hargrove, chs. 3-7
Jones, ch. 2
* Goethals, "Presidential Leadership," *Annual Review of Psychology* 56
(2005): 545-70

III. Inside the Executive Branch

Sept 22 **A. Institutional Presidency**

Reading: Burke, in Nelson, ch. 14
Jones, ch. 3
* T. Moe, "The Politicized Presidency," in *The New Direction in American
Politics*, ed. by Chubb & Peterson (Brookings, 1985), pp. 235-71
* Durant and Warber, "Networking in the Shadow of Hierarchy: Public
Policy, the Administrative Presidency, and the Neoadministrative State,"
Presidential Studies Quarterly, 31 (June 2001): 221-44
* Lewis, "Staffing Alone: Unilateral Action and the Politicization of the
Executive Office of the President, 1988-2004," *Presidential Studies
Quarterly* 35 (Sept 2005): 496-514

**Initial selection of subject area for annotated bibliography due in seminar Sept 29th.

Sept 29 **B. Core Executive Leadership**

- Reading:** Helms, ch. 2-4
Campbell, in Nelson, ch. 16
Rudalevige, in Nelson, ch. 20
- * West, "The Institutionalization of Regulatory Review: Organizational Stability and Responsive Competence at OIRA," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35 (March 2005): 76-93
 - * Maranto and Hult, "Right Turn? Political Ideology in the Higher Civil Service, 1987-1994," *American Review of Public Administration* 34 (June 2004): 199-222
 - * Cooper, "George W. Bush, Edgar Allan Poe, and the Use and Abuse of Presidential Signing Statements," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35 (Sept 2005): 515-32

IV. Other Influences

Oct 6 **A. Publics and Executives**

- Reading:** Hetherington and Globetti, in Nelson, ch. 9
Miroff, in Nelson, ch. 10
Milkis, in Nelson, ch. 13
Jones, ch. 4
- * Furlong and Kerwin, "Interest Group Participation in Rule Making: A Decade of Change," *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory* 15 (July 2005): 353-70
 - * Dometrius, "Gubernatorial Approval and Administrative Influence," *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 2 (Fall 2002): 251-67

Oct 13 **B. Lawmaking**

- Reading:** Jones, chs. 5-8
Dickinson, in Nelson, ch. 17
Quirk and Nesmith, in Nelson, ch. 19

Oct 20 **C. Competition for Control**

- Reading:** Helms, chs. 5-7
- * Aberbach, "What's Happened to the Watchful Eye?" *Congress & the Presidency* 29 (Spring 2002): 3-23
 - * Moe, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure," in *Can the Government Govern?*, ed. by Chubb & Peterson (Brookings, 1989), pp. 267-329

Oct 27 **D. Agency Design**

Reading: Lewis, entire

Nov 3 **E. Judicial Impact: The Shadow of the Court**

Reading: Yalof, in Nelson, ch. 18

- * Canes-Wrone, "Bureaucratic Decisions and the Composition of the Lower Courts," *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (April 2003): 205-14
- * Goldman, Slotnick, Gryski, and Schiavoni, "W. Bush's Judiciary: The First Term," *Judicature* 88 (May-June 2005): 244-275
- * Solberg, "Diversity and George W. Bush's Judicial Appointments: Serving Two Masters," *Judicature* 88 (May-June 2005): 276-83

V. Performance and Policy

**Annotated bibliography due in seminar Nov 10th.

Nov 10 **A. Decision-making**

Reading: Kowert, entire

Nov 17 **B. Policy Dynamics**

Reading: *Krause, "The Secular Decline in Presidential Domestic Policy Making: An Organizational Perspective," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (Dec 2004): 779-92

*Jacobs and Page, "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?" *American Political Science Review* 99 (Feb 2005): 107-123

* Baum, "How Public Opinion Constrains the Use of Force," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (June 2004): 187-226

* Balla, "Administrative Procedures and Political Control of the Bureaucracy," *American Political Science Review* 92 (Sept 1998): 663-73

Nov 24 NO CLASS –Thanksgiving "break"

Dec 1 **VI. Conclusions**

Reading: Helms, ch. 8

- * Skelcher, "Jurisdictional Integrity, Polycentrism, and the Design of Democratic Governance," *Governance* 18 (January 2005): 89-110

** FINAL WORK DUE NO LATER THAN December 14th, 5 p.m.