

POLS 30006: Executive Politics and the First Year of the Trump Administration (Spring 2018)

Course Information

Class Time: Tues./Thurs., 11:00am–12:15pm

Classroom: Jenkins and Nanovic Halls B032

Professor:

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Office: 2057 Jenkins Nanovic Halls

Office Hours: Tues., 12:30pm–1:30pm

Thurs., 2:00pm–3:00pm

By Appointment

Course Description

It's the beginning of 2018 and President Trump has just completed his first year in office. Over the past year he has staffed his administration, appointed individuals to high-ranking positions and the Supreme Court, presented his agenda to Congress, the bureaucracy, and the American people, and so much more. All of this has been done in a highly polarized political environment amidst significant controversy. In this class, we will use the backdrop of the first year of the Trump administration to examine the most powerful single office in the country. However, rather than viewing the presidency as a sequence of names and biographies, this course will analyze the American presidency as a political institution embedded in a network of often rival actors such as Congress, the courts, the bureaucracy, the electorate, and others. Students will not only be expected to acquire knowledge of substantive terms and concepts, but will also be expected to master analytical concepts and successfully apply them to applications in the realm of U.S. executive branch politics.

Required Materials

The Politics of the Presidency (Ninth Edition) by Joseph A. Pika, John Anthony Maltese, and Andrew Rudalevige

If you choose not to purchase this book, it will be available on course reserve in the library. Readings from this book will be assigned throughout the semester, and they will also serve as useful references for any other readings, online copies of which will be posted on Sakai as needed.

Policy on Plagiarism

As members of the academic community, we each have a responsibility to uphold rigorous standards of integrity. Every student is thus expected to abide by the University of Notre Dame's Academic Code of Honor. [The Code of Honor can be found here.](#) Plagiarism (using the ideas,

words, or work of others without attribution) will result in serious consequences. If you have any questions about the Code of Honor, plagiarism, or academic honesty, please contact the instructor.

Policy on Disabilities

Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Disability Services should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations. Students who are not registered should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#).

Policy on Technology

This course relies on access to computers and the Internet. At some point during the semester you WILL have a problem with technology: your laptop will crash, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Technology problems will not normally be accepted as excuses for unfinished work. Count on “stuff” happening and protect yourself by doing the following:

- Plan ahead — start early, particularly if scarce resources are required.
- Save work often — at least every ten minutes.
- Make regular backups of files in a different location from the originals.
- Save drafts of work at multiple stages.
- When editing an image, set aside the original and work with a copy.
- Practice safe computing when surfing the web and checking email.
- On your personal computer, install and use software to control viruses and malware.

When submitting any assignment electronically in this course, you are responsible for any technological problems (*e.g.*, internet connection difficulties, corrupted files, etc.). To prevent problems along with the associated lateness penalties, you should submit papers well before the deadline and take proactive steps to ensure that the file was not corrupted (*e.g.*, check it after uploading to Sakai or copy yourself on emails and check the attached file). Again, please do not trust your computer to function correctly at the last minute.

All that said, the access to computers and the Internet should be done outside of the classroom. Unless I grant an explicit exception, laptops, cell phones, tablets, and all other electronic devices are not allowed during class. Hand-written note-taking is associated with better comprehension and less distraction (of both the student and those around him/her).

Grading and Course Requirements

Your final grade will consist of several required assignments that everyone has to complete. The following assignments are required:

- ***Appointee Dossier:*** (15% of the total grade). Your first project is to be completed in a group of 4-5. Working together, write a 800-1000 word biographical sketch of one of President Trump's nonjudicial appointees, describe which agenda items might plausibly fall under the authority of the appointee's department or agency, and what the appointee's background and expertise implies for the policy priorities of the President. Why was this person appointed? What does this person's background suggest about the President's policy priorities?

This is due at or before the beginning of class via Sakai on **March 6**.

- ***State of the Union Memorandum:*** (20% of the total grade). Per Article II, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution, the President is required to periodically give Congress information on the "state of the union" and recommend any measures that he believes are necessary and expedient. Since 1913, with few exceptions, this has taken the form of an annual message before a joint session of Congress, and has been regularly broadcast on radio, television, and the internet since (conditional on those technologies being available). President Trump is scheduled to deliver his State of the Union Address on January 30, 2018, and your assignment will be to watch it and/or read a transcript, and write a 400-600 word memorandum outlining three major agenda items discussed during this address. The memorandum should discuss what the broader agenda items are, what agencies and/or departments might be responsible for their implementation (or whether one will be created for the specific purpose), whether the President has particular policy proposals related to the broader agenda items and whether he proposes they be taken up by Congress or dealt with administratively, and any other relevant items of note. You should also discuss what obstacles might stand in the way of the President, and how he might address them (or whether these problems are fundamentally intractable).

This is due at or before the beginning of class via Sakai on **March 29**.

- ***Agenda Progress Memorandum:*** (25% of the total grade). Your final project is to be completed in a group of 2-3. Working together, write a 1200-1800 word memorandum detailing the progress the President made on his agenda items during his first year in office. Make sure to note which agenda items have been successfully completed, which ones are still in progress, which ones have yet to be addressed, and which ones (if any) were attempted but ultimately failed. For each of the agenda items under discussion, briefly discuss any relevant presidential actions. Has he requested that Congress pass a bill? Has he signed or vetoed any relevant bills? Has he made any relevant appointments? Has he issued any pertinent executive orders? Has he made any public speeches to any relevant effect? Finally, for those agenda items still outstanding, pick three and discuss in depth how the President might go about seeing those agenda items to fruition. Are there any particular members of Congress that should be lobbied (or whose constituencies should be convinced to contact the Congressman in question)? Are there any key vacancies in the administration that need to be filled? Might "going public" on an issue with public support help? Overall, pretend you are a political consultant. What has the President done well with respect to his

agenda, where has he failed, where can he improve, what still needs to be done (and how) in order to ensure the rest of the agenda comes to fruition, and what obstacles might he encounter along the way?

This is due at or before the beginning of class via Sakai on **April 26**.

- **Agenda Progress Presentation:** (25% of the total grade). During the day of class (April 26 and May 1), we will have in-class presentations. With your group, you are to present to the rest of the class your Agenda Progress Memorandum.

Finally, the final 15% are based on your participation in class:

- **Discussion Leadership:** (10% of the total grade). For most of the semester, each week (or approximation thereof) will consist of a central theme, with one day dedicated to me lecturing, and the other dedicated more to discussion and an attempt to understand the lecture material by examining it in the context of what the current President is doing. For each of these discussion days (indicated on the schedule below), I will require several “discussion leaders.” These individuals will have the responsibility of preparing a 1–2 page memorandum for the class (**make sure to bring enough hard copies for the class, including the instructor**) that summarizes the relevant developments as well as how they relate to the theoretical frameworks discussed during the lecture session. Moreover, they will lead an in-class discussion about the topic. Early in the semester, I will schedule sign-ups.

These must be turned in to me via Sakai **at or before the beginning of class on the day you are scheduled to discuss, and enough hard copies for all members of the class should be brought in as well. Failure to do so means you will not be able to discuss and you will lose the associated points.**

- **Discussion Participation:** (5% of the total grade). Make sure to participate in discussions where you are not discussion leader on a regular basis. Additionally, while I do not take attendance in every class, I do reserve the right to do attendance checks periodically throughout the semester. Repeated absences will hurt your participation grade.

Extra Credit Opportunities

There will be one—and only one—opportunity to gain extra credit.

- **Course Evaluations:** (Up to an extra 5% of the grade). If at least 90% of the class completes a course evaluation, everyone in the class will receive one extra percentage point on his or her final grade. For each additional percentage point of the class that completes an evaluation, everyone in the class will receive 2/5 of an additional bonus point (for example, if 95% of the class completes the course evaluation, then everyone in the class will receive three additional percentage points on the final grade). The total amount of extra credit students may receive from course evaluations is five bonus percentage points. **Note that I am unable to see who fills out evaluations. I am also unable to see the contents of the evaluations until after the semester ends. I am, however, able to see what percentage of the class fills them out.**

Grading Scale

Below is how your final percentage grade will be mapped into a letter grade. Because of the substantial opportunities for extra credit, there will be no rounding. So if you get an 89.999999% when the semester is over (for example), your final grade will be a B+. **No exceptions.**

Percentage point range	Letter grade
93+	A
90–92.999...	A-
87–89.999...	B+
83–86.999...	B
80–82.999...	B-
77–79.999...	C+
73–76.999...	C
70–72.999...	C-
60–69.999...	D
0–59.999...	F

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at 11am on the dates indicated on the syllabus. **All papers must be submitted via Sakai; written material must not be submitted in hard copy.** Written material submitted within 24 hours of the deadline will be accepted with a 25% grade reduction. Written material will not be accepted more than 24 hours after the deadline. **Because of the substantial opportunities for extra credit, there will be no exceptions.**

Grade Appeals

All appeals to the instructor must be made in writing. No grade appeals will be considered within the first 24 hours of a grade being posted on Sakai; those that come in within the first 24 hours will be discarded. All grade appeals must be received within five calendar days of the grade being posted on Sakai to be considered; those that arrive after this deadline will be discarded. All appeals must contain the following information:

- The name of the assignment in question.
- The reason why you believe your grade should be higher. Be specific and discuss this in the context of the requirements of the assignment.
- Determine whether you believe it is an error of calculation (that is, the instructor incorrectly tabulated points), judgment (the grade received does not reflect the quality of the assignment), or both.

If the instructor determines that an error of calculation is present, then the correct grade will be calculated and the correct grade will be posted. If it is argued by the student that an error of judgment is present, then the student has the option to have the assignment graded *de novo* by the instructor. Because this will be a regrade, there is the possibility that the grade given to the regraded assignment will be lower than that given to the initial submission. Regardless, all decisions by the instructor are final.

Policy on Email

Any requests to the instructor (e.g., meetings outside of office hours) *must* be made in writing via email so we both have a record of the request and decision. **For emails sent between Monday and Thursday, inclusive, please allow the instructor up to 48 hours to respond. For those sent between Friday and Sunday, inclusive, please allow the instructor up to 96 hours to respond.** The instructor endorses the general principles for email communication (for any professional communication via e-mail, not just those for this class) outlined here.

Course Topics

Note: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. We may not cover all of these topics and/or readings. Conversely, time permitting, other topics and/or readings might be covered in this course (and if so, I will make any required announcements). That said, even if we do not cover something in class, you are still responsible for knowing what is in the readings.

January 16: Introduction (LECTURE)

January 18: Challenges and Opportunities of a New President; Or, What did the President Want to Accomplish? (LECTURE)

- Azari, Julia. 2017. “A President’s First 100 Days Really Do Matter.” *FiveThirtyEight.com*.
- Brands, H. W. 2016. “The promise and peril of the first year.” *The Miller Center at the University of Virginia*.
- Milkis, Sidney M. 2016. “Crucible: the first 365 days.” *The Miller Center at the University of Virginia*.
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige — Chapter 11: The Challenges and Opportunities of a New President.
- Wehner, Peter. 2016. “Dear Mr. President.” *The Miller Center at the University of Virginia*.

January 23: The President’s Agenda After the First Year (LECTURE)

- Baker, Peter. 2017. “For Trump, a Year of Reinventing the Presidency.” *The New York Times*.
- Elephants in the Room. 2017. “Trump’s First Year in Review: Views From the Republican Bench.” *Foreign Policy*.
- Graham, David A. 2017. “Trump Has Quietly Accomplished More Than It Appears.” *The Atlantic*.
- Felton, Lena. 2017. “Donald Trump’s First Year as President: A Recap.” *The Atlantic*.
- Lowry, Rich. 2017. “Give Trump Credit Where It’s Due.” *National Review*.

January 25: The Presidency and the Role of the Executive (LECTURE)

- Hamilton, Alexander. 1788. *Federalist 70*.
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige — Chapter 1: The Changing Presidency

January 30 and February 1: Presidential Power (LECTURE)

- Azari, Julia. 2017. “Trump Came In As A Weak President, And He’s Made Himself Weaker.” *FiveThirtyEight.com*.
- Glassman, Matthew. 2017. “Donald Trump is a dangerously weak president.” *Vox.com*.
- Nathan, Richard P. 1976. “The Administrative Presidency.” *The Public Interest* 44:40–54.
- Neustadt, Richard E. 1991. “Chapter 3: The Power to Persuade.” In *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. Revised Edition. New York: Free Press.
- Moe, Terry M. and William G. Howell. 1999. “Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29(4):850–873.

February 6: NO CLASS

February 8 and 13: Personnel and Politics — Staffing the Bureaucracy (LECTURE)

- Hollibaugh, Gary E., Jr., Gabriel Horton, and David E. Lewis. 2014. “President Obama placed his most competent appointees in agencies most important to—and most resistant to—his political agenda.” *LSE-USAPP*.
- Jones-Rooy, Andrea. 2017. “The Incredibly And Historically Unstable First Year Of Trump’s Cabinet.” *FiveThirtyEight.com*.
- Lewis, David. 2017. “Trump’s slow pace of appointments is hurting government — and his own agenda.” *The Washington Post*.
- Moe, Terry. 1985. “The Politicized Presidency.” In *The New Direction in American Politics*, eds. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Ostrander, Ian. 2017. “Senate Democrats are battling every Trump nomination. Here’s how that can hurt Trump’s policies.” *The Washington Post*.
- Patterson, Bradley H. and James P. Pfiffner. 2001. “The White House Office of Presidential Personnel.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 31(3): 415–438.
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige — Chapter 6: Executive Politics
- Rein, Lisa and Andrew Ba Tran. 2017 “How the Trump era is changing the federal bureaucracy.” *The Washington Post*.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. 2017. “The Cabinet was the easy part. Staffing (and steering) the bureaucracy takes much more work.” *The Washington Post*.

February 15: Personnel and Politics – Staffing the Bureaucracy (DISCUSSION)

February 20 and 22: Policymaking and the President (LECTURE)

- Brands, Hal. 2016. “**The Vision Thing.**” *The Miller Center at the University of Virginia.*
- Engel, Jeffrey A. 2016. “**Hippocratic Diplomacy.**” *The Miller Center at the University of Virginia.*
- Howell, William and Jon Rogowski. 2013. “**During wartime Congress is more willing to defer to the president on matters both foreign and domestic.**” *LSE-USAPP.*
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige – Chapter 8: The Politics of Domestic Policy
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige – Chapter 9: The Politics of Economic Policy
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige – Chapter 10: The Politics of National Security Policy
- Tama, Jordan. 2017. “**So Congress is challenging the president about sanctions? That has a long history.**” *The Washington Post.*
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1966. “**The Two Presidencies.**” *Trans-Action* 4(2):7–14.

February 27: Domestic Policy and the President (DISCUSSION)

March 1: Beyond Domestic Politics – Foreign Affairs and the “Two Presidencies” (DISCUSSION)

March 6: Conflict and Cooperation with Congress (LECTURE)

- **APPOINTEE DOSSIER DUE BEFORE CLASS.**
- Binder, Sarah and Mark Spindel. 2017. “**This is why Trump’s legislative agenda is stuck in neutral.**” *The Washington Post.*
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige – Chapter 5: Legislative Politics
- Pfiffner – Chapter 6: Moving the President’s Legislative Agenda
- Wagner, John and David Nakamura. 2017. “**Trump turns to executive powers in bid to force Congress into action.**” *The Washington Post.*

March 8: Conflict and Cooperation with Congress (DISCUSSION)

March 13 and 15: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

March 20: NO CLASS

March 22: The President and the Bully Pulpit (LECTURE)

- Edwards, George C., III. 2016. “**Can Donald Trump persuade Americans to support his agenda? It’s not likely.**” *The Washington Post.*

- Klein, Ezra. 2012. “**The Unpersuaded.**” *The New Yorker*.
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige — Chapter 3: Public Politics
- Sheshol, Jeff. 2016. “**Not so bully pulpit.**” *The Miller Center at the University of Virginia*.
- Sheshol, Jeff. 2017. “**Trump Abandons the Bully Pulpit.**” *The New Yorker*.
- Sides, John. 2011. “**What Can Presidential Speeches Do? A Dialogue.**” *The Monkey Cage*.

March 27: The President and the Bully Pulpit (DISCUSSION)

March 29: Going Around Congress — Executive Orders and Recess Appointments (LECTURE)

- STATE OF THE UNION MEMORANDUM DUE BEFORE CLASS.
- Bailey, Jeremy D. and Brandon Rottinghaus. 2014. “**In deciding how to exercise power via Executive Orders, US Presidents appeal to Congress only if it can be united.**” *LSE-USAPP*.
- Chiou, Fang-Yi and Lawrence S. Rothenberg. 2014. “**Executive orders are not a viable route around political gridlock.**” *LSE-USAPP*.
- Chu, Vivian S. and Todd Garvey. 2014. “**Executive Orders: Issuance, Modification, and Revocation.**” *Congressional Research Service*.
- Ostrander, Ian. 2015. “**Powering Down the Presidency: The Rise and Fall of Recess Appointments.**” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 45(3):558–572.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. 2012. “**Executive Orders and Presidential Unilateralism.**” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42(1):138–160.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. 2013. “**Recess is Over?**” *The Monkey Cage*.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. 2017. “**Candidate Trump attacked Obama’s executive orders. President Trump loves executive orders.**” *The Washington Post*.

April 3: Going Around Congress — Executive Orders and Recess Appointments (DISCUSSION)

April 5: NO CLASS

April 10: The President and the Judiciary (LECTURE)

- McCann, Allison and Taylor Dolven. 2017. “**Empty Seats: Republicans handed Trump more than 100 empty federal judge seats to fill.**” *VICE*.
- Pika, Maltese, and Rudalevige — Chapter 7: Judicial Politics
- Savage, Charlie. 2017. “**Trump Is Rapidly Reshaping the Judiciary. Here’s How.**” *The New York Times*.
- Wheeler, Russell. 2016. “**How Trump could reshape the lower federal courts.**” The Brookings Institution.

April 12: The President and the Judiciary (DISCUSSION)

April 17: The President as a Partisan (LECTURE)

- Baker, Travis J. 2016. “Why talking won’t help presidents win bipartisan support.” *LSE–USAPP*.
- Filindra, Alexandra and Laurel Harbridge-Yong. 2017. “This is why more Republicans in Congress haven’t criticized Trump.” *The Washington Post*.
- Karol, David. 2017. “No, Republican opposition to Trump won’t hurt Democrats.” *The Washington Post*.
- Rottinghaus, Brandon. 2013. “Going Partisan: Presidential Leadership in a Polarized Political Environment.” *The Brookings Institution*.
- Stein, Jeff. 2016. “This study shows American federalism is a total joke.” *Vox.com*.

April 19: The President as a Partisan (DISCUSSION)

April 24: Conclusion — The President’s Agenda to Date (LECTURE)

April 26 and May 1: Student Presentations

- AGENDA PROGRESS MEMORANDUM DUE BEFORE CLASS ON APRIL 26.