

**Barnard College**  
**Department of Political Science**

**COLLOQUIUM: THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY**

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POLS BC

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The origin and development of the contemporary roles of the President as a decision maker and the importance of the presidency in the American Political System. Studies examining the selection process and the relationship between presidents and other decision-making actors, such as the Congress, interest groups, the courts and the bureaucracy, will be used to inform the students to help critically analyze both continuity and changes in the influence of the office.

This course examines the American presidency from both an academic and applied perspective. The executive branch of government has changed more than the others, especially over the past century. As America has moved from a legislative centered government to an executive centered one, it becomes important to understand the intricacies of presidents and of the presidency. This course examines the individuals who have held this office and stand as the head of state and government, along with the institutional structure of the executive branch that consists of departments, agencies, offices that employ over two million people. The course covers the complexities and struggles administrations have in navigating internal politics, along with public expectations and approval, influencing relations with Congress and the courts, and navigating global politics around security and economic interests.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Critically examine the executive branch of American government, including understanding the individual presidents and the institutional structure.
- Apply ideas and concepts from the class to your understanding of future presidential elections.
- Critically evaluate what makes presidents and presidencies successful, as well as presidential elections in the contemporary periods using evidence and reason.
- Apply different types of data as evidence in order to develop and evaluate theories and arguments of the American presidency and elections.
- Independently design, research, and write a substantial research paper (15-20 pages) that investigates a specific question related to the course topics.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, AND GUIDELINES

### *Assignments and grading*

Your grade in this course will be based on three main criteria: class participation, a short essay, and a research paper, as outlined below.

1. Class participation 15%
  - a. Contributions to discussion 5%
  - b. Leading discussion 5%
  - c. Discussion questions 5%
2. Short essay (4-5 pages): 30%
3. Research paper, 55%
  - a. Topic proposal (~1 page), due: 5%
  - b. Research outline: (3-4 pages), due 10%
  - c. Draft and writer's memo (1-2 pages): 5%
  - d. Peer feedback: 5%
  - e. Final draft (15-20 pages) and revision statement (1-2 pages): 30%

You may take an extension of **up to 48 hours on any one assignment, to be used at your discretion**. You do not need to request this extension in advance, but please write EXTENSION at the top of the page. Other late work will be penalized by 1/3 of a grade for each day it is late. If there are extenuating circumstances for which you require a longer extension, please speak to me.

Logistical but important: **please include your name both in the document and in the saved title** (e.g. Keller —Topic Proposal). It will make it much easier for me to keep track of your work!

Learning is always a collective process, and recognizing what we have learned from others is a core academic practice, as reflected in Barnard's Honor Code. Plagiarism, use of others' work without appropriate citation, reuse of one's own material, and other forms of concealing the sources of one's ideas and work are serious academic offenses. **Students who do not abide by the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Board and may fail the course depending on their determination.**

This includes the use of generative AI tools and large learning models like ChatGPT. As you are surely aware, these tools have been the subject of a great deal of academic discussion. Like many other faculty members, I am concerned about the potential effects of ChatGPT use on the development of students' reading, writing, and research abilities. Using ChatGPT to write papers and develop ideas is a waste of both your time and mine: I am interested in what you have to say, not what ChatGPT aggregates from other people's thoughts, and I hope you are too.

That said, organizing assignments and assessments entirely around the aim of blocking your use of ChatGPT or catching you in the act seems to me to be both undesirable and futile. I am here to help you learn, not to discipline you. You may use ChatGPT in early stages of research and compiling sources—although you should always cite it when you do so, and you should be aware that ChatGPT is prone to errors. You should not use it to generate the written material that you submit for your discussion questions, papers, or other assignments. If I do find that you have used ChatGPT to generate writing assignments submitted as your own work, I will treat it as the case of plagiarism that it is. Please ask questions if you are confused about what is permitted.

## Participation

### *In-class participation: Attendance, preparation, and conduct*

As an upper-level seminar, this is a reading-intensive course: we will be reading up to 125 pages per week (sometimes a bit more or less). You should come to class having completed the assigned readings and should be prepared to discuss them. We will often look closely at particular passages in class, and you should be prepared to reference specific parts of the text, so please bring a copy of the assigned reading with you.

The point of colloquia is to work through complicated ideas together and develop our own ideas in conversation—whether by helping one another to understand difficult arguments, considering the different possible interpretations of the same text, or debating the various political conclusions one might draw from it. I expect everyone in section to listen to each other respectfully and engage thoughtfully with one another's ideas, even—indeed especially—when you disagree. Your participation grade will be based on your engagement with the texts and with your classmates, which means that it will reflect listening as well as speaking.

Because the success of a colloquium depends on participation, **attendance in class meetings is mandatory. You can miss one class meeting for any reason without it affecting your participation grade;** you do not need to tell me why. If you need to miss additional classes, please be in touch.

### *Discussion questions*

Each week before class, please post **three questions or points for discussion** concerning the week's readings to the relevant discussions tab in Courseworks. These are due **by 10 am the morning of class**, so that we can read them in advance; posts submitted after 10 am (give or take a few minutes) will not count. They should be both substantive and substantial; they may raise questions about the assigned reading, critique an author's analysis, or raise an issue or theme that you found to be particularly interesting. Where relevant, they should include citations to the texts in question so we can all locate the passage or phrase in question. I will use these questions to help structure our discussion. I expect them to show thought and care; if I am consistently concerned about the quality of your questions I may ask you to revise them. **You do not need to submit discussion questions the week that you are a discussion leader, and you may skip two weeks at your discretion.**

### *Leading discussion*

Once in the course of the semester, you will be responsible for leading discussion **by giving a ~10 minute presentation about the week's readings and key themes.** This presentation should include:

- Identify **one passage** from an assigned text that you would like us to look at
- **Write a short response (~350 words)** undertaking a close reading of the passage and explaining why you chose it for us to focus on: what idea does it illustrate? How does it operate in the text more broadly? How does it connect or illuminate other readings from this week, or ideas we have discussed in the course more broadly?
- Identify **2-3 substantive discussion questions** (these should follow similar principles to

your usual discussion questions – i.e. broader than just the passage you selected) for the class to address

Please post this assignment to Courseworks **by 9 pm the evening before class (i.e., 6 pm Monday evening)**, so that other students can review it before class. I will generally begin class by giving an overview of the readings, their authors, and their context, then turn it over to the discussion leader. **In class, you will give a short (~ 10 minute) presentation discussing your passage and analysis in the context of key themes (not summarizing the readings) and sharing your discussion questions.**

### *Laptop policy*

In my experience, laptops tend to inhibit our ability to engage with others in the same room, and often prove distracting both to their users and to others. Recent studies also suggest that the use of laptops to take notes has a negative impact on students' grades. Regardless of intent, it is very difficult to avoid looking at a screen when it is in front of you. While I have made course readings available via Courseworks in the interest of accessibility, I strongly urge you to print out the readings or use a tablet to access them, unless you have an approved use of technology as an accommodation through CARDS. **Please do not use your cell phones in class.**

### **Short paper**

There is one short paper for this course, **due**, which is designed to help you think through course themes on a topic related to your final essay. We will discuss your short essay topic in a meeting about your research outline (see below), but you should plan to focus it on a single text or idea. **This essay should be 4-5 pages, and should make a clear and original argument that is supported with textual evidence from the relevant material.** This paper is intended to develop your skills as close readers, interpreters, and critics of texts; as such it should creatively interpret and engage with the assigned readings. It is also intended to help you ground your final research paper in course material. As such, you can use some material from your short essay in the final paper, though you should not reuse the *entire* paper.

### **Research paper**

The major project of this course is a research paper, which you will develop over the course of the semester. You are free to choose a paper topic of personal interest that addresses the themes, ideas, and concepts addressed in the course. The paper does not have to synthesize all course material, but it should reflect an engagement with the subject matter and themes we have addressed throughout the course. The essays you produce should be both analytical and argumentative in nature, not simply descriptive or factual. While we will discuss the process of building an argument over the course of the semester, getting from a topic to an argument requires steady work. With that in mind, you'll be responsible for a series of assignments along the way to help you set up your papers and craft your arguments, with the aim of helping you make steady progress throughout the semester.

*a. Topic statement, due*: A 2-3 paragraph (~250-300 words) statement outlining the topic you plan to research, what interests you about it, what you already know, and what you would like to learn. Think through some of the questions you will need to answer in order to write an effective, informative, and analytical essay on this topic – you can list these in bullet points if you want—and spend a sentence or two describing the kinds of evidence and sources you anticipate using (e.g. historical material, legal

cases).

I realize that this assignment comes early in the course—your topic can change, but it will help to start thinking about it sooner than later.

*b. Research outline, due:* Your outline should present **the research question** that your paper will answer, explaining the problem your paper will investigate, the stakes of answering it, and the way that you plan to approach your argument. You should also include **a list of 6-8 sources with short annotations** situating your question within the relevant scholarly literature and explaining how you expect each source will contribute to your paper. These sources **should constitute a preliminary literature review**, showing that you have familiarized yourself with core research on your question. They should *not* be news articles or articles selected at random. This is where you learn what other scholars have said about your topic and think about where your own ideas fall within existing debates.

You should make an appointment to discuss your research outline with me in **Week 8** (I also recommend meeting with Jennie Correia, Barnard's research librarian for the social sciences: <https://library.barnard.edu/profiles/jennie-correia>)

*c. Rough draft, due:* No one does their best work in the first draft: good papers are revised papers. To begin the writing process early enough to revise your work, you will be responsible for **a draft of the first ~10 pages of your paper**, followed by an outline of the remaining sections. This draft does not need to be perfect, and it is obviously not expected to be complete, but it should be written as a paper rather than an extended outline (e.g. full paragraphs rather than bullet points; a clear introduction and thesis; etc.). It should clearly situate your own argument within the literature you have identified in your research outline. I will provide comments on the draft and your plans for completion within one week of receipt to help guide your revision. **You will also be responsible for reading another student's paper and giving peer feedback;** we will review the guidelines for peer feedback in class.

*Writer's memo:* Along with your draft, you should submit a 1-2 page memo addressing the following issues:

- A short discussion of your writing process thus far: have you changed your mind about anything as you conducted research?
- One or two elements you see as strengths of the draft thus far.
- One or two things you would like to improve.
- Anything you are struggling with or would like particular feedback on.

*Peer feedback:* Feedback from peers is another crucial part of the writing process. I will assign writing peers, and you will share your drafts with one another and provide comments (we will discuss the parameters for peer review in class). Your comments should be constructive and respectful. **Peer feedback is due 10 days after draft papers (due)**. We will reserve some time to discuss feedback in class.

Your draft should be formatted in 12 point, Times New Roman font, and double spaced, with 1-inch margins. Please submit your draft as a Word document (or Google doc) so I can easily comment on it.

d. *Final paper, due* : **Final draft of the paper, 15-20 pages, and 1-2 page revision statement.** You do not need to incorporate or accept all of my suggestions for revision, nor those of your peer reviewer—this is your paper, and your argument, and you may disagree with other people’s feedback. It should reflect an engagement with those comments, however. To this end, your paper should be accompanied by a 1-2 page statement explaining how you revised your paper from the rough draft, why you made the changes you did, and whether and how you responded to comments. (If you chose not to adopt certain suggestions, you can say why.)

### *Office hours & communication*

I will hold office hours weekly on **Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 1-2, in my office at 1115 Milstein, or via Zoom.** Office hours will be in person by default; if you want to meet by Zoom you must let me know! You can book a slot in advance at <https://calendly.com/jkeller-barnard> but you should also feel free to stop by without an appointment. If you are unavailable to meet during office hours, please email me to make an appointment and propose at least three possible alternate times for ease of scheduling. Meetings outside of my normal office hours are more likely to be held on Zoom.

You can come to office hours to discuss anything related to the course—a difficult passage from a text, an idea for a paper, questions about my comments on a draft, confusion about an assignment, concerns about your performance. College policies regarding academic honesty, accessibility and disability accommodations, affordable texts, and other issues are listed below, but you should feel free to speak to me about more specific concerns.

You can email me at any time at my Barnard email address ([jkeller@barnard.edu](mailto:jkeller@barnard.edu)), and during the week, I will generally respond within twenty-four hours. (I may be slower to respond on weekends, so please try to avoid making urgent requests on Saturday evenings!) If you email me and don’t hear back, please don’t hesitate to follow up—I will appreciate the reminder. If you have a substantive question (e.g., “what does Paine mean by “nature?”), please stop by office hours or make an appointment to talk in person. If you have a logistical question, check the syllabus first, and email me if you can’t find the answer. I will contact you via your college email address, so please make sure to check it regularly.

### *Other resources*

The course assignments are designed to give you regular practice and feedback on your writing and speaking skills over the course of the semester, and I encourage you to speak with me if there are any particular aspects of these skills that you are struggling with or hoping to improve. However, Barnard also offers many other resources to support you in developing these skills. In particular, **I strongly encourage you to consider working with the Writing Fellows and Speaking Fellows** at the Erica Mann Jong '63 Writing Center, which you can learn more about here: <https://writing.barnard.edu/>

**Research support:** Jennie Correia serves as Research and Instruction Librarian for the Social Sciences, and is available for research consultations here: <https://library.barnard.edu/profiles/jennie-correia>

## COLLEGE POLICIES

### Honor Code

*Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:*

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

### Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS) Statement

If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment due to a documented disability or emerging health challenges, please feel free to contact me and/or the Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS): (212) 854-4634, [cards@barnard.edu](mailto:cards@barnard.edu), or learn more at [barnard.edu/disabilityservices](http://barnard.edu/disabilityservices). CARDS is located in 307 Diana.

### Wellness Statement

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness—your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <https://barnard.edu/about-counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- Stressbusters Support Network

### Affordable Access to Course Texts & Materials Statement

All students deserve to be able to study and make use of course texts and materials regardless of cost. Barnard librarians have partnered with students, faculty, and staff to find ways to increase student access to textbooks. By the first day of advance registration for each term, faculty will have provided information about required texts for each course on CourseWorks (including ISBN or author, title, publisher, copyright date, and price), which can be viewed by students. A number of cost-free or low-cost methods for accessing some types of course texts are detailed on the Barnard Library **Course Materials** guide (<https://library.barnard.edu/find-borrow/course-materials>).

Undergraduate students who identify as first-generation and/or low-income students may check out items from the **FLI Partnership Libraries** in the Barnard Library (<https://library.barnard.edu/find-borrow/FLIpartnership>) and in Butler Library for an entire semester. Students may also consult with their professors, the Dean of Studies, and the Financial Aid Office about additional affordable alternatives for having access to course texts. Visit the guide and talk with your professors and your librarian for more details.



## READINGS

Required:

Landy and Milkis, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development* (ISBN: 9781071824610)

*The Politics of the Presidency, 11th edition*, by John Anthony Maltese, Andrew Rudalevige, and Joseph A. Pika. 2024. Sage/CQ Press. ISBN 9781071917251

The remaining readings will be made available via Courseworks.

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING LIST

Each week we will do 2 things:

- 1) Overview a historical period in the development of the American Presidency
- 2) Consider theories of presidential power and action

### Week 1: Theories of Executive Power

- John Locke, "Of Prerogative"
- Thomas Hobbes excerpts
- Montesquieu excerpts
- Federalist 69

### Week 2: The Constitutional Presidency: Washington and Adams

- Milkis and Nelson, pgs. 1-65
- The Constitution (Article II)  
Milkis and Nelson, pgs. 9-47
- Federalist 70, 71, 72, 76
- Lori Cox Han, "Studying Presidents and then Presidency"

### Week 3: Jefferson, Jackson; Large "C" vs. Small "c" Constitution

- Landy and Milkis, chapters 4,5
- Tulis, "The Two Constitutional Presidencies"

### Week 4: The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln; Constitutional Crises

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 6
- Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*, chapter 1
- Olsen, Otto H. "Abraham Lincoln as Revolutionary." *Civil War History* 24, no. 3 (1978): 213-224.



**Week 5: The Reaction against Presidential Power: Andrew Johnson to William McKinley; Presidency and the Parties**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 7
- Randall E. Adkins – Presidential Campaigns and Elections
- Julia R. Azari – Presidents and Political Parties

**Week 6: Progressive Politics and Executive Power: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson; Regime Theory I**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 8
- Skowronek, Presidential Leadership in Political Time, chapter 2

**Week 7: The Triumph of Conservative Republicanism; Regime Theory II**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 9
- Skowronek, Presidential Leadership in Political Time, chapter 3

**Week 8: Consolidation of the Modern Presidency: FDR to Eisenhower**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 10
- Skowronek, Presidential Leadership in Political Time, chapter 4

**Week 9: Personalizing the Presidency: John F. Kennedy to Jimmy Carter; Media and the Modern Presidency**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 11
- Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha – Presidents and Mass Media
- Diane J. Heith – Presidents and Public Opinion

**Week 10: A Restoration of Presidential Power?: Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 12

**Week 11: George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Unilateral Presidential Power**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 13
- The Gamble, excerpts
- Jonathan Cohn, “How They Did It” (BB)
- Ezra Klein, “The Unpersuaded” (BB)

**Week 12: Trump, Biden, and the Struggle for a Peaceful Transfer of Power**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 14
- *Trump v. US*

- Galvin, Daniel J. "Party Domination and Base Mobilization: Donald Trump and Republican Party Building in a Polarized Era." In *The Forum*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 135-168. De Gruyter, 2020.

### **Week 13: The Vice Presidency**

- Landy and Milkis, chapter 15
- Joel K. Goldstein, "The Rising Power of the Modern Vice Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (September 2008), pp. 374-389\*

### **Week 14: Student Research Presentations**