

Syllabus, the U.S. Presidency, Fall 2013

people

professor stu jordan stuart.jordan@rochester.edu office hours: 1 to 3 tuesdays, Dewey 4-141

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the basics

There are two major components to this course. The first is a series of lectures and readings that provide a basic overview of three major aspects of the presidency: domestic policymaking, foreign policymaking, and presidential campaigns. The second is a group of in-class simulations that we will operate throughout the semester. The simulations are meant to give you direct experience with some of the basic strategic problems that participants in presidential policymaking and campaigns face. Our classtime will be broken up evenly between these two activities. In each week, we will "play" the simulation during the class meeting on Tuesday. Part of the Tuesday meeting and all of the Thursday meeting will then be devoted to lecture and (time permitting) discussion.

required books

There is one required book. The bookstore is not stocking it, so make sure that you order it from amazon asap.

Cohen, Karol, Noel and Zaller (2008) **The Party Decides**. University of Chicago Press.

course requirements and grading

Your grade in this course is based on participation in the simulation, three midterm examinations, a group project you do as part of the simulations, and a small amount of "extra credit" meant to entice you to participate in the simulation with vigor. You will be given grades on a four point scale for each midterm and for your group project. Your final grade will then be given as follows. First, I calculate a final four point score according to this formula:

$$\text{final four point score} = (\text{average of four point scores from midterms and group projects}) - 0.1(\text{number unexcused absences from simulation sessions}) + (\text{extra credit earned from simulation})$$

You will then be assigned a letter grade according to the following rules:

| final point score | final letter grade |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| at or above 3.85 | A |
| at or above 3.5, less than 3.85 | A- |
| at or above 3.15, less than 3.5 | B+ |
| at or above 2.85, less than 3.15 | B |
| at or above 2.5, less than 2.85 | B- |
| at or above 2.15, less than 2.5 | C+ |
| at or above 1.85, less than 2.15 | C |
| at or above 1.5, less than 1.85 | C- |
| at or above 1, less than 1.5 | D |
| less than 1 | E |

As you can see in the formula above, "participation" in the simulation really just means attendance at "simulation sessions." These sessions are held every tuesday of every week. **So if you have problems getting out of bed on Tuesdays, this is not the class for you.** Each unexcused absence during the semester costs you 0.1 grade points off your final four-point score. An absence is considered unexcused **unless you have obtained approval for you absence from me via email at least 24 hours before the session in question.** I am happy to approve absences ahead of time for religious holidays, deaths in the family, potentially contagious illness etc. I will not approve absences because of work you need to do in other classes (e.g. preparation for midterms, paper deadlines). I make exceptions to this only when there are dire circumstances for which advanced approval is impossible (e.g. you get run over by a car on your way to class).

The midterm exams will be short-answer and essay based, and will focus on both the content of the assigned reading and the material covered in lecture. At this point, I am not sure whether they will be held in class or on a take-home basis, but this will be decided within the first couple of weeks.

I'll introduce all of the details of the group projects during the second meeting of class. For now, it suffices to say that you will work in groups of 4 to 5 students, with students assigned to groups randomly. Each group must write a short (5 to 10 page) paper and give a 15 to 20 minute in-class presentation. The members of each group will all be given the same grade, which will be based on the quality of the paper and presentation. The group projects will be staggered, with 1/3 of the groups' projects due at the end of the first third of the semester, 1/3 due at the end of the second third, and the rest due at the end.

Finally, the "extra credit": The simulation works like a game in which you are a player. As a player, you accumulate "points" during the course of the game. In addition, there is a total "fund" of points that gradually accumulates over the semester, and from which points can be (but aren't necessarily) awarded. At the end of the semester, a total of 10 grade points of extra credit are distributed to members of the class, with the individual amounts depending in part on the fraction of the total "fund" of points distributed, and in part on the amount of points each player earned relative to other players. Finally, there is a "cap" on the amount of grade points you can earn in extra credit of 0.5. Specifically:

$$\text{your extra credit grade points} = \max \left\{ 0.5, \frac{\text{total simulation points earned by all members of class}}{\text{total fund of simulation points}} \times \frac{\text{your total simulation points}}{\text{total simulation points earned by all members of class}} \times 10 \right\}$$

schedule

| week | dates | topic | reading |
|------|----------|--|--|
| 1 | 9/3,5 | intro to course | none |
| 2 | 9/10,12 | philosophical background | john locke "two treatises on government". Book II, chapters IX, XI, XII, XIII, XIV |
| 3 | 9/17,19 | domestic policymaking institutions | the U.S. Constitution; Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966; NHTSA regulations on airbags; Supreme Court Decision on airbags |
| 4 | 9/24,26 | case.study: auto safety regulation | reading packet on auto safety regulation |
| 5 | 10/1,3 | case study: auto safety regulation | |
| 6 | 10/8,10 | midterm 1 | |
| 7 | 10/15,17 | presentations of first third of group projects, foreign policy overview | |
| 8 | 10/22,24 | foreign policy overview | National Security Act of 1947, Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, Katherine Boo "How Congress Won the War in the Gulf", Cogan "Desert One and Its Disorders" |
| 9 | 10/29,31 | case study: nicaraguan intervention | National Security Act of 1947 and Chapters 2 and 3 of Zegart Flawed by Design |
| 10 | 11/5,7 | case study: nicaraguan intervention | reading packet on nicaragua |
| 11 | 11/12,14 | midterm 2 | |
| 12 | 11/19,21 | presentation of second third of group projects, electoral institutions | carol cohen noel and zahler, chapters 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8 |
| 13 | 11/26,28 | nominations (no class on 11/28) | |
| 14 | 12/3,5 | nominations | |
| 15 | 12/10,12 | presentation of third third of group projects, nominations | |

midterm 3 held during final exam slot – 12/20 at 4pm

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Author:

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