

# Syllabus, the U.S. Presidency, Fall 2013

## people

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## the basics

There are two major components to this course. The first is a series of lectures and readings that provides basic information on domestic politics, foreign relations, and presidential elections. The second is a series of in-class simulations that are meant to give you direct experience with some of the basic strategic problems that participants in presidential elections face. I will break an evening between these two activities. In each week, you will attend the first of the simulation during the week. The second Thursday meeting will then be devoted to lecture and (time permitting) discussion.

## required books

There is one required book. The solution is not to buy it, but to borrow it from the library.  
 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: 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 scale:

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." Those sessions are held every two weeks. If you miss a session, your final four-point score. An absence is considered unexcused unless you have obtained approval for your absence from me in advance. I will not make exceptions to this policy unless you have advanced approval (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 graded on the same grade, which will be based on the quality of the paper and presentation. The group projects will be assigned 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 of the semester.

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:

$$\text{your extra credit grade points} = \max \left\{ 0, \frac{\text{total fund of simulation points} - \text{total simulation points earned by all members of office}}{\text{total simulation points earned by all members of office}} \times 10 \right\}$$

## 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 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 Companies Won the War in the Tropics" "Clean "Desert" and Its Disorders"
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	
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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