

POL 203A: Political Influence and the American Presidency
University of California, Davis
Winter Quarter, 2015
Wednesdays 12:10-3:00pm
593 Kerr Hall

Instructor: Dr. Amber Boydstun
Office: 684 Kerr Hall
Email: aboydstun@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours: M 3:30-5:30pm (and by appointment)

This is a graduate course on political influence in the context of the American Presidency. Throughout the quarter, we will consider several different mechanisms of influence, focusing mainly on forms of political communication (or rhetoric), including agenda-setting and issue framing.

This course has two main goals:

1. To examine, from a political science perspective, how U.S. Presidents (and candidates for president, and policymakers in general) use mechanisms of rhetoric, issue-framing, and agenda-setting to advance their political aims and the conditions under which these mechanisms are and are not effective.
2. To become proficient in the use of (quantitative) content analysis as a method for analyzing political mechanisms of influence.

Some terminology:

- From classic roots, the term **rhetoric** (from the Greek *ρητορική*) refers to the art of effective communication. Political rhetoric, then, is the art of effective communication in the context of the city-state (*πόλις*). Of course, communication can take many forms: written text, speech, sound, visual signals, message content, tone of delivery, decisions, actions, behavior... you name it. Under this umbrella concept, anything a political actor says or does (or does not say or do) communicates information.
- The term **agenda-setting** refers to the process distributing attention across some issues (e.g., what the president pays attention to in the form of executive orders, speeches, legislative initiatives, etc.) issues at the necessary exclusion of alternative issues—again, often to political advantage.
- In modern political science, the term **issue-framing** refers to the process of focusing on one dimension of a policy issue at the necessary exclusion of alternative dimensions—once again, often to political advantage.

A syllabus is like a contract, so I have tried to specify lots of details in the document to follow, sometimes in relatively harsh language. Don't be turned off. We will read and discuss a wide variety of very interesting ideas and you'll learn a lot in this class. I am excited to teach it and am looking forward to each week of what follows. I certainly hope it will be one of the best courses you ever take.

Grading

Participation	20%
• Upload two questions each week by Tuesday at 12pm	
• Participate in class	
One-Page Response Papers, 4 x 5% each	20%
• Upload each short paper by Tuesday 10am	
Assignments (toward final project), 3 x 10% each	30%
Research Presentation	5%
Discussant	5%
Research Project	20%
Total:	100%

Participation

There is absolutely no need to have a background in the Presidency before taking this course. What is necessary is that you read, think, and talk—preferably in that order. Each week you should read all the readings, critically, and come to class prepared to discuss them. You do not have to understand the readings (though you should certainly try!). But if there are things you do not understand then I expect you to include your points of confusion in the two questions you send to me prior to class each week (see below), and I expect you to contribute to the conversation about those questions during class. In short, you should come to class prepared with either reactions to the readings, questions about the readings, or (best of all) both. Short of extenuating circumstances—which you should discuss with me on the first day of class if not before—silence is not acceptable in a graduate seminar.

Class participation (showing up, having done the readings, having sent me your two questions in advance, and participating in the discussion with well-reasoned questions and/or responses) is worth 20% of your grade for this class. Since there are only 10 class sessions, that's 2% of your final grade per class based just on participation. You can see this fact as a good thing or a bad thing, depending on your habits of preparation and procrastination. If you're used to coming to your graduate classes fully prepared and excited to participate, great. If not, let this course be a wonderful opportunity for you to turn over a new proverbial leaf.

Falling Behind

Note that it's all too easy to fall behind in a graduate seminar. My best advice to you is this: Don't.

Reading is fundamental. If you ever come to class and for some extraordinary reason you have not done all the readings that were assigned, give me a piece of paper before class indicating what readings you have not been able to do, and go ahead and participate in the seminar when discussion centers on the readings you did complete or on general topics. In other words, don't skip class, ever. If something happens and you can't do the bulk of the reading for some reason some week, give me your slip of paper and attend class anyway. If it is an isolated incident, I'll understand. If it's a pattern, I'll be uncomprehending. And never, under any circumstances, BS about a reading you haven't done. If you don't tell me what you did not read and class discussion reveals it, I'll give you a zero for class participation that day.

Weekly Questions

Each week you will be responsible for uploading two (2) questions you have about the readings to the SmartSite course page (under “Assignments”—inline submissions please) by **Tuesday at noon**.

Think of these questions as the next step in your “conversation” with the readings after you have:

- done the readings
- grappled with the material
- written your one-page response paper (if you’re writing one that week)
- allowed everything percolate in your brain

Your questions need to be compelling and well-reasoned, but they need not be deep or complicated. For example, “What does Figure 1 really tell us?” and “What are the far-reaching implications of this work for our understanding of democracy?” are both great questions—as long as you’ve spent some time mulling over these questions yourself and you articulate the relevant context of each question. In other words, I would never want to see either of these questions by themselves, but rather every question should be more like a paragraph, in which your prerequisite mulling is evidenced.

The questions you and your colleagues submit each week—in combination with the one-page response papers—will help shape the agenda for our class session. When we discuss one of your questions in class I certainly don’t expect you to have the answers (or else you wouldn’t have been wondering about that question in the first place), but I will expect you to contribute to the conversation by helping to articulate and motivate your question.

One-Page Response Papers

You will be responsible for writing a total of four (4) one-page response papers over the course of the quarter. During those weeks that you write a response paper, these response papers are due to me via SmartSite (under “Assignments”) by **10am on Tuesday** the day before class, but should not be distributed to the other students.

Each paper should meet the following guidelines:

- name, date, and title listed at the top of the first page
- max 1 page in length, not including bibliography
- single spaced
- 12pt Times New Roman font
- max 0.75 inch margins on all sides
- parenthetical citations
- bibliography on pg. 2 if needed

Like the questions each of you will submit each week, these response papers will help provide structure for our in-class conversations. Thus, I will ask you to spread out your papers across the quarter. Class discussions on each reading will start with an assigned student first giving an overview of the reading (the author, topic, theoretical question, methodological approach, findings), and then posing questions or making comments about the quality of the work, unanswered questions, or comparisons to the other readings from the same week or from previous weeks. Response papers should cover the descriptive material (summarizing the approach and findings of the article) in one paragraph, then use the remainder of a single-spaced page to pose questions, discuss implications, and suggest future directions. In class,

students must participate actively with regard to discussion of all the readings, but will play a leading role and be prepared to answer questions with regard to their assigned readings on a rotating basis. Thus, in composing your response paper, you should ground your discussion in the relevant readings for that week (as well as readings from previous weeks if you want). However, your paper should *not* be a lit review but rather a critical engagement of the literature, complete with your own well-reasoned and well-supported argument in response to the readings. You can agree with the readings, disagree with them, or suggest a different dimension of discussion altogether. What's important is that you engage the readings and, in doing so, engage the larger questions under investigation.

Assignments, Presentation, and Final Research Project

In addition to the material we discuss in class, the core focus of this course will be on your research project. It will be impossible to do well in this project by starting at the last minute, so I have three interim assignments designed to keep you on track throughout the quarter. These assignments also allow me to give you feedback along the way to push your project to a higher level. The grades associated with these interim assignments are not huge, but they do add up, so make sure to hand them in on time and to take them seriously. You will be pleasantly surprised what a good research project you can do if you work on it regularly rather than all in a rush at the last second. (It may become a habit, who knows!)

In developing each new assignment from the starting point of the previous one, you should be sure to update your previous work to reflect my feedback as well as any additional insights you may have had in the interim. I will be very forgiving about scattered thoughts and ideas the first time I see them, but each assignment should be an improvement on the last and the final paper/presentation itself should be highly polished.

The more complete each of these assignments is, the more helpful my feedback to you will be. Staying on target and getting lots of feedback will lead to a better final project. Take advantage: I'll give you lots of feedback, but only based on what you give me.

Each week that an assignment is due, you are responsible for uploading your assignment to the SmartSite course page (under "Assignments") and submitting it in hard copy form in class. Please use a folder to keep all your assignments in.

I will encourage discussion of your projects in class discussion so that all students can get a feeling for the range of studies being done and the strengths and problems of each approach.

Finally, you will be able to showcase your research project at the end of the quarter—we will have a presentation session on the last day of class (just for our class, but feel free to invite friends and colleagues). You will also be asked to serve as a discussant for one of your fellow classmates, giving them feedback on their presentation and on their draft research assignment.

Assignment #1

1. What puzzle motivates your research? That is, explain the interesting phenomenon you are trying to get at and why it is important.
2. What is your research question? It's okay to submit multiple questions; I can help you choose.
3. What text and/or visual data sources are you content analyzing in order to help answer your question? And are there additional data sources you would need to use for your final project? If so, what are they and how hard will they be to collect? Just give me your basic plan of attack, and again it's fine to describe different options.

Assignment #2

1. What puzzle motivates your project?
2. What is your research question?
3. Why is your question significant?
4. What are your hypotheses?
5. What data sources are you content analyzing in order to help answer your question?
6. What are your research methods? (Be specific!)

Assignment #3

1. What puzzle motivates your project?
2. What is your research question?
3. Why is your question significant?
4. What are your hypotheses?
5. What data do you use?
6. What are your research methods?
7. What are your preliminary findings?

Final Research Project

1. What puzzle motivates your project?
2. What is your research question?
3. Why is your question significant?
4. What are your hypotheses?
5. What data do you use?
6. What are your research methods?
7. What are your findings?
8. What are the implications of these findings?

Late Work

Response papers are due 26 hours before the start of class (i.e., by Tuesday morning at 10am). Response papers submitted after that, but before class, will be accepted but marked down a full letter grade. Response papers are not accepted after the respective class begins—even if you don't attend class. It's simply not fair to write a paper on a topic that has already been discussed.

Assignments toward the completion of your final research project are due in class. Assignments submitted after class will be accepted but marked down one half letter grade for each 24 hours after the deadline. For example, an assignment due Wednesday by 12pm but not submitted until sometime

between 12pm on Sunday and 12pm on Monday would be marked down two full letter grades below the earned grade. Bottom line: Don't go there.

The final research project will not be accepted after the deadline, period. You are responsible for staying in touch with me throughout the quarter about your progress on your research project, especially if you experience any difficulties.

Classroom Items

Disabilities

Please let me know in the first two weeks of class if you need any accommodation for a disability. No problem. But don't delay in letting me know.

Academic Honesty

Study together but make sure the work you hand in is your own. I will not tolerate plagiarism or deception in any form.

Effort

Don't come to class unprepared to participate.

Diversity of Approach

Students in this class may be coming from American or comparative politics within our department, from other departments at UC Davis, or from universities overseas. Therefore you may see a diversity of approaches and backgrounds. Take advantage of that fact and take seriously what you can learn from engaging with unfamiliar approaches. After all, if any one approach could answer every question in this literature, we would be in a very different world.

Computers, Tablets, and Cell Phones

Turn them off, period. Pay attention to the discussion. Bring paper copies of the readings, and a pad and pen to take notes.

Books to Purchase

The following books are available at the UC Davis campus bookstore, though for the sake of your bank account I encourage you to consider buying used copies (in a bookstore or online). I'm also happy to loan an extra copy if I have it.

REQUIRED

Brader, Ted. 2006. *Campaigning for Hearts and Minds: How Emotional Appeals in Political Ads Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Erikson, Robert S. and Christopher Wlezien. 2012. *The Timeline of Presidential Elections: How Campaigns Do (and Do Not) Matter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kernell, Samuel. 2006. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. 4th Edition. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Vavreck, Lynn. 2009. *The Message Matters: The Economy and Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

OPTIONAL

Aristotle. Kennedy, George A., Trans. 2007. *On Rhetoric*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aune, James Arnt and Martin J. Medhurst (Eds.). 2008. *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2008. *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2005. *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Shogan, Colleen J. 2006. *The Moral Rhetoric of American Presidents*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

Stuckey, Mary E. 1991. *The President as Interpreter-in-Chief*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Tulis, Jeffrey K. 1987. *The Rhetorical Presidency*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wood, B. Dan. 2007. *The Politics of Economic Leadership: The Causes and Consequences of Presidential Rhetoric on the Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Weekly Topics and Assignments

You should do the assigned readings before the seminar. All journal articles are available as links on the SmartSite course page. Everything is required unless noted as optional. Each week, readings are listed in the suggested order in which to read them.

Week 1

January 7: Introduction and Overview

- In Class: Go over syllabus; watch Presidential Debate video

Week 2

January 14: The Bully Pulpit

- Kernell, Samuel. 2006. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. 4th Edition. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press.
 - In Class: Quantitative Content Analysis workshop

Week 3

January 21: Agenda-Setting, Priming and Framing

Assignment #1 Due in Class

- Druckman, James N. 2011. What's It All About? Framing in Political Science. In Keren, Gideon (ed.), *Perspectives on Framing*. New York: Psychology Press / Taylor & Francis: 22.
- Cohen, Jeffrey E. 1995. Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda. *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(1): 87-107.
- Druckman, James N., Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Eric Ostermeier. 2004. Candidate Strategies to Prime Issues and Image. *The Journal of Politics* 66 (4): 1180-1202.
- Boydston, Amber E., Rebecca A. Glazier and Matthew Pietryka. 2013. Playing to the Crowd: Agenda Control in Presidential Debates. *Political Communication*, 30(2): 254-277.
 - In Class: Content Analysis reports

Optional, in case you're interested:

- Petrocik, John R. 1996. Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(3): 825-850.
- Jerit, Jennifer. 2008. Issue Framing and Engagement: Rhetorical Strategy in Public Policy Debates. *Political Behavior*, 30(1): 1-24.
- Binder, Michael, Matthew Childers, and Natalie Johnson. 2014. Campaigns and the Mitigation of Framing Effects on Voting Behavior: A Natural and Field Experiment. *Political Behavior* (): 1-20.

Week 4

January 28: Campaign Messaging and the Economy

- Vavreck, Lynn. 2009. *The Message Matter: The Economy and Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 5

February 4: Campaign Messaging Dynamics

Assignment #2 Due in Class

- Erikson, Robert S. and Christopher Wlezien. 2012. *The Timeline of Presidential Elections: How Campaigns Do (and Do Not) Matter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 6

February 11: The Tone of Campaign Messaging

- Lau, Richard R. and Ivy Brown Rovner. 2009. Negative Campaigning. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12: 285-306.
- Druckman, James N., Martin J. Kifer, and Michael Parkin. 2010. Timeless Strategy Meets New Medium: Going Negative on Congressional Campaign Web Sites, 2002–2006. *Political Communication*, 27(1): 88-103.
- Fridkin, Kim L., and Patrick Kenney. 2011. Variability in Citizens' Reactions to Different Types of Negative Campaigns. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(2): 307-325.
- Krupnikov, Yanna, and Nichole M. Bauer. 2014. The Relationship between Campaign Negativity, Gender and Campaign Context. *Political Behavior*, 36(1): 167-188.

Optional, in case you're interested:

- Freedman, Paul and Ken Goldstein. 1999. Measuring Media Exposure and the Effects of Negative Campaign Ads. *American Journal of Political Science*, 43(4): 1189-1208.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Shanto Iyengar and Adam Simon. 1999. Replicating Experiments Using Aggregate and Survey Data: The Case of Negative Advertising and Turnout. *The American Political Science Review*, 93(4): 829-838.

Week 7

February 18: Campaign Messaging—Emotion

Assignment #3 Due in Class

- Brader, Ted. 2006. *Campaigning for Hearts and Minds: How Emotional Appeals in Political Ads Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Optional, in case you're interested:

- Jerit, Jennifer. 2004. Survival of the Fittest: Rhetoric during the Course of an Election Campaign. *Political Psychology*, 25(4): 563-575.

Week 8

February 25: Campaign Messaging in a Changing Media Landscape

- Druckman, James N. 2003. The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate Revisited. *Journal of Politics*, 65(2): 559-571.
- Baum, Matthew A. 2005. Talking the Vote: Why Presidential Candidates Hit the Talk Show Circuit. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49 (2): 213-234.
- Fowler, James H. 2008. The Colbert Bump in Campaign Donations: More Truthful Than Truthy. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 41 (3): 533-539.
- Baumgartner, Jody C., Jonathan S. Morris and Natasha L. Walth. 2012. The Fey Effect: Young Adults, Political Humor, and Perceptions of Sarah Palin in the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 76(1): 95-104.

Week 9

March 4: Presidential Agenda Influence

- Barabas, Jason. 2008. Presidential Policy Initiatives: How the Public Learns about State of the Union Proposals from the Mass Media. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38(2): 195-222.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(2): 313-329.
- Young, Garry, and William B. Perkins. "Presidential rhetoric, the public agenda, and the end of presidential television's "golden age". *Journal of Politics* 67.4 (2005): 1190-1205.
- Chapter 1 from: Eshbaugh-Soha, Matthew, and Jeffrey Peake. 2011. *Breaking through the Noise: Presidential Leadership, Public Opinion, and the News Media*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Optional, in case you're interested:

- Edwards, George C. and B. Dan Wood. 1999. Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media. *The American Political Science Review*, 93(2): 327-344.
- Hayes, Danny. 2007. Does the Messenger Matter? Candidate-Media Agenda Convergence and Its Effects on Voter Issue Salience. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(1): 134-146.
- Peake, Jeffrey S., and Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha. 2008. The Agenda-Setting Impact of Major Presidential TV Addresses. *Political Communication* 25(2): 113-137.
- Benoit, William L. and Henson, Jayne R. 2012. Political TV Advertising and Debates. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*, 5(2): 20.

Week 10

March 11: Research Project Presentations

- 12 minutes for presentation
- 2-3 minutes for discussant
- 2-3 minutes for Q&A
- 2-3 minutes for general feedback
- 3-5 minutes for lotus or pigeon position

Finals Week

Wednesday, March 18: Final research projects due by 9am