POLS 306: Executive Politics  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2018  
MW 3:00-4:15 pm (Natural Resources 108)

Professor: Dr. Mitchell Sellers ([Mitchell.Sellers@colostate.edu](mailto:Mitchell.Sellers@colostate.edu))  
Office: 326 Clark C Hall  
Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesday 10:00-11:30 am (or by appointment)  
Homepage: [http://sites.temple.edu/msellers/](http://sites.temple.edu/msellers/)

- To help me keep track of email messages, please include POLS 306 in the subject line of any email message you send to me.

**Course Description and Objectives**  
This is a course on executive politics. In this course, we will start with an overview of the U.S. presidency and examine how the office has developed and changed. Topics will include: the institution's relationship and interactions with the other two branches of government; and the dynamic relationship between the White House the public, the press, parties, and interest groups.

We will also turn our attention to different types of presidential power. Presidential power stems from the Constitution but also from an individual president’s power to persuade. The Chief Executive’s institutional power also varies depending on the policy issue. The president has greater constitutional autonomy in foreign policy. Typically, their leadership in this area has been accepted by Congress and the American people. Overall, the president’s power to call attention to issues is far greater than their power to act on those issues.

The learning objectives are for students to develop an understanding of:
- How the office has evolved over the years and what we can expect in the future
- The sources of presidential power and what role personality plays in power
- How presidents are constrained by other actors in the American system, particularly Congress, mass publics, interest groups and federal agencies
- Whether we are currently (or perhaps perpetually) in a crisis of presidential leadership
- What IS leadership? What does it mean to be a great president?

**Required Text (copies are on reserve at Morgan Library)**  

**Required Software: Echo 360**  
We will use the program Echo 360 to take attendance, quizzes and foster discussion throughout the semester. **The program is free for students.** It allows students to use their computers or smart phones to answer questions and take attendance in class. Texting in answers is also possible. For alternative ways of participating, such as on paper, please speak with Dr. Sellers. There is no penalty if you do not have these electronics, but you will be asked to sit towards the front of the class, so that you can quickly hand in your answers on paper.
Required Videos (copies are on reserve at Morgan Library)
** 16 for ’16: The Contenders
* Best of Enemies (2015) (1 hr. 28 min)
* Get me Roger Stone (2017) (1 hr. 41 min)
* How to Win the US Presidency (2016) (50 min)
* Miss-Representation (2011) (1 hr. 30 mins)
The Wheelchair President (2015) (1 hr. 30 mins)

*Available streaming on Netflix
** Available on Amazon Prime

Class Participation/Attendance
Students are expected to do the readings, attend class, and participate in class discussions. My lectures will be organized around the topics and readings found in the schedule outlined below. Lectures will include interactive discussion of the core themes of the readings. Students should read the assigned literature before class in order to participate. If a class is canceled due to extenuating circumstances, a video lecture may be posted to keep us on track. I will do my best to not cancel any lectures. As with all the required assigned materials, students are responsible for content covered in these makeup video lectures as well.

You are responsible for the content of all classes, including issues raised in the spontaneous class discussions. Attendance may be checked at random throughout the semester. Also, note that class participation accounts for 15% of your grade, so missing classes will negatively influence your final grade. As a matter of mutual courtesy, please let the instructor know when you’re going to be late, when you’re going to miss class, or if you need to leave early. Please try to do any of these as little as possible. If you must miss a class, please request notes from your classmates prior to contacting me (then you can come to my office for questions).

Class Discussions
The course will have a series of discussions throughout the semester (8 discussion days with 4-6 students participating as leaders in each discussion). Rather than outright debating, each student that serves as a discussion leader for the day will propose solutions or policy reforms to address the problem for the discussion day (transparency, attack ads, political tactics etc.). You are to act as the advocate of your solution for the day. This includes introducing your proposal at the start of class and continuously promoting/encouraging discussion of why these reforms would help. See instructions in Canvas for more details.

Discussion days are selected at the start of the semester. In addition to leading discussion, students are expected to write a 400-600 word paper (due 2 days before the day of their discussion), where they discuss the problems outlined by the assigned materials. The paper will then provide a brief overview of 2-3 possible solutions to the problems discussed. Students are expected to bring in evidence from current events, scholarly articles or reputable news sources to support the arguments made in their paper and during the discussion.

Students are expected to attend all discussions. The paper is worth 5% of your final grade, your performance in leading discussion is worth 5%, and your participation in other discussions is
worth 10%, for a total of 20% of your final grade. A more detailed explanation of what is expected from discussion participants is provided on Canvas.

**Essays**
Students are expected to write two essays. These essays are intended to stimulate student engagement with the content and to prepare students for upcoming exams. The paper should be between 1,500-1,750 words (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins) and must include a References page (not part of the word count) if outside sources are utilized.

**Essays must be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 pm MST on the due date.** Any assignments submitted after midnight will be treated as late regardless of an excused attendance (submission is online and can be done early). Grades and comments will be returned via Canvas in the grades section. Each essay is worth 10% of your overall grade, which accounts for 20% of your final grade.

A more detailed explanation of what is expected from these essays and how to write a good paper is provided in the files section on Canvas. Note that Vericite evaluates all submissions for plagiarism. Be sure to cite any and all sources that you draw from. Any plagiarism will be given a 0 for the assignment, and will be submitted to the University for Disciplinary Review.

**Midterm and Final Exam**
There are two exams – a Midterm and Final (cumulative). Both exams will test your knowledge of the material covered in the lectures and in the assigned readings/videos. The Midterm will consist of 30 multiple choice questions and 10 matching questions (all questions are worth 2.5 points each). The Final will be 20 multiple choice questions and 10 matching questions (worth 60% of the final) with 2 essay responses (worth 40% of the final). The Midterm is worth 20% of your final grade; the Final is worth 25% of your final grade.

**Make-up Exams, Missed Classes and Late Papers**
As a matter of mutual courtesy, please let Dr. Sellers know when you are going to be late, when you are going to miss class, or if you need to leave early. Please try to do any of these as little as possible. If you must miss a class, please request notes from your classmates prior to contacting me. Students may then supplement their notes by coming to my office during office hours to view slides or ask questions. However, this should be done sparingly, and be aware that I do not give my powerpoint slides to students, except under extenuating circumstances.

It is expected that no students will miss any exams or classes. No make-up exams or participation points will be possible unless due to university excused absences, which will require documentation and must be brought to Dr. Sellers’ attention prior to the class that you know that you will miss. An unexcused absence on an exam results in a grade of 0%. Essays not turned in by their due date will incur a grade reduction of 10% every day after the deadline (and will not be accepted if it is more than 2 days late). Since essays are submitted through Canvas, this applies to all students (even those with excused absences).
**Extra Credit**
Students may receive up to **two points** of extra credit toward their **overall final grade** by investigating an issue or policy area dealing with executive politics. That means if your final grade is an 88, the extra credit will bump your grade to a 90.

To receive credit for the mini-research project: Select a relevant topic regarding executive politics (it does not have to be covered in class) and discuss with Dr. Sellers how best to study it. We will discuss your interests and select a manageable project together. We will decide your research question, how to collect data and what I am looking for in your data presentation/write up. **If you want to conduct research, you must contact Dr. Sellers about it by Friday, December 5.** The project must be approved by Dr. Sellers before data collection begins (or you risk wasting time).

**Summary of Grading**
15% Class Participation/Attendance
5% Discussion Paper
5% Discussion Leader Day
10% General Participation in Discussions
20% Essays (2 worth 10% each)
20% Midterm Exam
25% Final Exam

**Course Grades**
Final grades will be assigned based on the scale below:

- 98% - 100% A+
- 93% - 97.9% A
- 90% - 92.9% A-
- 87% - 89.9% B+
- 83% - 86.9% B
- 80% - 82.9% B-
- 77% - 79.9% C+
- 70% - 76.9% C
- 60% - 69.9% D
- 59.9% or less F

Unless a computational error has been made, grades will not be changed after the end of the semester. Only in the rarest of circumstances will I grant an Incomplete (‘I’).

**Academic Dishonesty**
Students are encouraged to discuss homework and reading outside of class, but I expect all submitted work to be the product of individual effort. Written assignments will be checked for plagiarism using Vericite, which is Colorado State University’s plagiarism detection software. Be sure to cite all sources.

Plagiarism, failure to cite texts or ideas borrowed from other sources, copying written assignments from other students, falsifying attendance records, and cheating during exams are all acts of academic misconduct. **All academic misconduct will result in a 0 for the assignment, and may be submitted to the University for Disciplinary Review.** This will drop your overall grade significantly. **Repeated academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the course.**
**Academic Freedom Policy**
Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities, which can be accessed through the following link: [https://president.colostate.edu/memorandum-of-understanding-on-academic-freedom/](https://president.colostate.edu/memorandum-of-understanding-on-academic-freedom/)

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**
This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Dr. Sellers privately to discuss the possibility of accommodations as soon as possible.

Colorado State University is committed to providing students with access to its facilities and the technology and information they need to succeed in and out of the classroom, and that these resources are accessible in accordance with applicable law. Students who need accommodations for coursework should contact Dr. Sellers and the Student Disability Center online ([https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/](https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/)), by phone (970-491-6385) or in person in TILT Building, room 121 to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**Counseling and Student Health**
Students may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you or a friend find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and to seek confidential assistance at CSU Health Network Counseling Services: CSU Health & Medical Center, 151 W. Lake St. Drop-in hours: Monday-Friday 9 am- 4 pm (970-491-7121) or Mental Health Crisis Intervention: (970) 491-7111 (after hours emergencies ONLY) Visit their website for more information: [https://health.colostate.edu/mental-emotional-health/](https://health.colostate.edu/mental-emotional-health/).

*FREE Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK (8255).*

**Course Schedule**

**Section 1: Introduction to Executive Politics**

**Week 1: August 20-24**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 20</td>
<td>Intro to Course</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Read: <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/22/in-polarized-era-fewer-americans-hold-a-mix-of-conservative-and-liberal-views/">In Polarized Era, Fewer Americans Hold a Mix of Conservative and Liberal Views</a> (use graphics functions)</td>
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<td>Read: <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2017/09/22/key-findings-on-americans-views-of-the-u-s-political-system-and-democracy/">Key Findings on Americans’ Views of the U.S. Political System and Democracy</a></td>
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**Week 2: August 27-31**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 27</td>
<td>Establishing a Constitutional Presidency</td>
<td>Han: Ch. 2</td>
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Aug 29  Establishing a Constitutional Presidency/Discussion 1
Assigned: Federalist Paper 67, 68, 69 and 70 (Click each number)
Watch: The Wheelchair President (2015) (1 hr. 30 mins)

Week 3: September 3-7
Sept 3  NO CLASS: Labor Day
Assigned: 
Sept 5  Power and Leadership
Assigned: Han: Ch. 12

Section 2: Power: Long Live the President!
Week 4: September 10-14
Sept 10 Evolution of the Presidency
Assigned: Han: Ch. 1
Sept 12 Evolution of the Presidency
Assigned: A History of the Expansion of Presidential Power
The Obama-Trump Voters Are Real. Here’s What They Think
(New York Times)

Week 5: September 17-21
Sept 17 Executive Power and Unilateral Action
Assigned: Neustadts, “Presidential Power in the Modern Era” (Canvas)
Watch: President Trump Takes (Executive) Action (The Daily Show) (6 mins)
Kavanaugh’s Record on Executive Power and Surveillance (15 min)

Sept 19 Executive Power and Unilateral Action/Discussion 2
Assigned: Strangest Thing about Trump’s Approach to Presidential Power
(Atlantic)
Watch: How to Win the US Presidency (2016) (50 mins)

Week 6: September 24-28
Sept 24 Limits of Power: Congress and the Press
Assigned: Han: Ch. 7
Watch: Schoolhouse Rock: How a Bill Becomes a Law (3 mins)
Watch: Utah Legislature: How a Bill Becomes a Law (Fresh Prince Version) (1 min)
Sept 26 Limits of Power: Congress and the Press/Discussion 3
Assigned: Han: Ch. 5
Watch: The Contenders: Episode 1 and 2 (2016) (53 and 53 mins)
Week 7: October 1-5
Oct 1  Subnational Power: Governors and Mayors  
Assigned: Click on: State of the States. Look at how the map changes by  
% Republican/Lean, % Democratic Lean, % Conservative,  
% Moderate and % Liberal  
Read: The Most Liberal and Conservative Big Cities

Oct 3  Subnational Power: Governors and Mayors  
Read: How States and Localities are Filling the Gaps Left by  
Washington’s Gridlock (Washington Post)  
Read: What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural  
Communities (webpages 1-8)

****************************************************************** Essay 1 Due in Canvas ******************************************************************

Week 8: October 8-12
Oct 8  Discussion 4/Catch Up Day  
Assigned: Watch: The Contenders: Episode 4 and Episode 7 (53 and 53 mins)

Oct 10  Midterm Exam

Section 3: The President in Action
Week 9: October 15-19
Oct 15  President as a Party Leader  
Assigned: Han: Ch. 4  
Read: President Washington’s farewell address. Pay extra attention  
to the sections that discuss the dangers of political parties

Oct 17  President as a Party Leader/Discussion 5  
Assigned: Read: The President and Political Leader  
Watch: Best of Enemies (2015) (1 hr. 28 min)

Week 10: October 22-26
Oct 22  Elections: Primaries, Nominations and More!  
Assigned: Han: Ch. 3

Oct 24  Elections: Primaries, Nominations and More!  
Assigned: Read: Revenge of the Forgotten Class (propublica.org)  
Watch: Primaries & Caucuses (Last Week Tonight) (14 mins)

Week 11: October 29-November 2
Oct 29  The Institutional Presidency  
Assigned: Han: Ch. 9  
Watch: Federal Budget (Last Week Tonight) (12 mins)
Oct 31 The Institutional Presidency/Discussion 6
Assigned: Read: *Who’s in Donald Trump’s Cabinet?* (Atlantic)
Read: *Four Takeaways from the Short-Lived Shutdown* (Washington Post)
Watch: Miss-Representation (2011) (1 hr 30 mins)

**Week 12: November 5-9**

Nov 5 Congress and the Chief Legislator
Assigned: Han: Ch. 10

Nov 7 Congress and the Chief Legislator
Assigned: Read: *Trump and Staff Rethink Tactics After Stumbles* (New York Times)
Read: *Yes, Congress Could Give Trump a Line-Item Veto. And it Might Want to* (Washington Post)

**Week 13: November 12-16**

Nov 12 Presidents and the Courts
Assigned: Han: Ch. 8

Nov 14 Presidents and the Courts/Discussion 7
Assigned: Read: *With Another Supreme Court pick, Trump is leaving his Mark on higher federal Courts* (Pew Research)
Read: *How Much Power would Brett Kavanaugh Give Trump* (LA Times)
Watch: Get me Roger Stone (2017) (1 hr 41 mins)

**************************************** Essay 2 Due in Canvas ****************************************

**Week 14: November 19-23**

**************************************** NO CLASS: Fall Break ****************************************

**Week 15: November 26-30**

Nov 26 Foreign Policy, War Powers and Other Nations
Assigned: Han: Ch. 11

Nov 28 Foreign Policy, War Powers and Other Nations
Assigned: Read: *The Battle over War Powers* (LA Times)
Read: *The Best and Worst Foreign Policy Presidents of the Past Century* (Atlantic)
**Week 16: December 3-7**

Dec 3  Foreign Policy, War Powers and Other Nations  
Assigned:  Read: [US Power Increasingly Seen as Threat to Countries](Pew Research)  
Read: [Global Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy](Pew Research)  
Read: [The War Powers of President Trump](New Yorker)

Dec 5  Discussion 8/Review Session  
Assigned:  The Contenders: Episode 7 and 8 (53 and 53 mins)

********** Final Exam is Monday, December 10, 2018 from 4:10-6:10 pm **********

**Important Dates:**

- Oct 3  Essay 1 Due 11:59 pm
- Oct 10  Midterm Exam (In-Class)
- Nov 14  Essay 2 Due 11:59 pm
- Dec 10  Final Exam from 4:10-6:10 pm (In-Class)

End Course Withdrawals ("W") Period, Repeat/Delete Deadline Monday, Oct 15, 2018  
Last day of classes Friday, Dec 7, 2018