

# The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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## **M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs**

Spring 2021

February 1 – April 12

## **American Presidency**

LGAF 6219

Mondays, 6-8 PM

Virtual Attendance

## **BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

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### **Instructor**

Lindsay M. Chervinsky, Ph.D. Historian, author of *The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of an American Institution*

### **Contact Information**

Phone Number: (925) 286-1344

Email Address: lchervinsky@email.gwu.edu

### **Communication**

The best way to contact me is by email. If you have an emergency, you are welcome to call. I generally don't pick up the phone if I don't recognize the number, but I will listen to my voicemails and call you right back. You are also welcome to send a text if it is urgent.

## **THE COURSE**

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### **Legislative Affairs Program Objectives**

Upon completion of the Master's degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:

1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

### **Graduate School Expectations**

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

### **Course Description and Overview**

This course will teach you about the evolution of the American presidency and its role in the current political environment. You will analyze the president's relationship with Congress, media, and other public actors, as well as the president's responsibility for foreign affairs, public leadership during crises, and moral suasion. Each week will include three case studies designed to reveal the origins of the presidency, the evolution of its powers, and contemporary application.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

1. Students will understand the historic origins of the presidency, its powers, and relationships with other branches of government.
2. Students will analyze the relationship of the presidency with the American public through the media and other public actors.
3. Students will explore the various checks on presidential authority and how they have been used in history.
4. After examining the case studies, students will then participate in a series of in-class activities to explore how past strategies can be applied to present day.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Students will complete a number of assignments based on presidential staff responsibilities, including a Twitter strategy memo, a virtual town hall address, a press release, and a policy briefing.
2. Read the assigned materials, participate in class discussion, and engage in simulation activities.

### **Required Text and Learning Materials**

Stephen Skowronek. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (1993).  
Jeff Engel, Jon Meacham, Peter Baker, Timothy Naftali. *Impeachment* (2018).

### **Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials**

All other materials will be provided on Blackboard.

### **Blackboard Site**

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or [helpdesk.gwu.edu](mailto:helpdesk.gwu.edu).

**Evaluation and Grading**

Below is the proposed schedule for the course assignments. We will discuss the schedule more on the first day of class. There is some flexibility about due dates.

All assignment should be submitted on Blackboard.

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Twitter Strategy Memo	Draft memo, including Twitter strategy, to announce new policy position online	Feb. 15	15%
Press Release	There is a cabinet scandal and the secretary is resigning. Draft a press release.	March 8	20%
Virtual Town Hall Address	Script virtual town hall address for your boss/candidate to deliver during a pandemic when in-person events are not possible	March 29	20%
Policy Briefing	Pick a subject you feel passionately about and write a policy briefing for your boss to convince them to support it. Include media and congressional liaison strategy.	April 12	25%
Attendance and Participation			20%
Total			100%

For more information about the assignments, please see the assignment folder on the Blackboard course.

**Tentative Course Calendar\***

\*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress, especially as we are all adjusting to the 10 week program. I will do my best to communicate clearly and respond accordingly. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar

Date of Class	Asynchronous	Readings	Assignment	Class
February 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set up Twitter account</li> <li>• create “presidential list” by February 8 (I will explain more in class on Feb. 1)</li> <li>• write brief explanation of how you put together the list and why</li> </ul>	Skowronek, Ch. 2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• blog post introducing yourself (brief background, career goals, why taking the class)</li> <li>• be sure to share your first presidential memory or your sharpest memory in your post</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the course</li> <li>• share memories, introductions</li> <li>• agree on plan for week of Feb. 15</li> <li>• discuss contours of presidential twitter list</li> </ul>
February 8 : Campaigns: Victory and Defeat	<p>Theme: Debates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read Bourdon, “Trains, Canes, and Replica Log Cabins: Benjamin Harrison’s 1888 Front-Porch Campaign for the Presidency,” <i>Indiana Magazine of History</i></li> <li>• Watch video of third Trump/Clinton debate and write up quick response <b>OR</b></li> <li>• watch seminar on First Presidential debate, write up quick response (link on Blackboard)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratcliffe, <i>The One-Party Presidential Contest</i>, ch. 7-8</li> <li>• Thiemann, “President Hoover’s effort on behalf of FDR’s 1932 nomination,” <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i></li> <li>• Ritter and Howell, “Ending the 2000 Presidential Election,” <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i></li> </ul>	None due this week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn why do some candidates lose and some win, evaluate campaign communication and management</li> <li>• Discuss campaign crises, messaging, multiple campaigns</li> </ul>

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Date of Class	Asynchronous	Readings	Assignment	Class
Week of February 15: Presidential Agendas	TBD depending on State of Union (might swap out previous week depending on date) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write up quick reflection of SOTU: what did you think? what stood out to you?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skowronek, Ch. 5, part 2</li> <li>• Badger, <i>FDR: The First Hundred Days</i>, ch. 3-5</li> <li>• McManus, "Behind the Obama Agenda," <i>The New American</i></li> </ul>	Twitter Strategy Memo due day of class this week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• executive orders</li> <li>• legislative cooperation</li> <li>• political strategies</li> <li>• discuss the opportunities to craft and implement legislative and presidential agendas</li> </ul>
February 22: The Cabinet	Design your own cabinet! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• select your nominees</li> <li>• write post explaining why you selected your secretaries, how they would work together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chervinsky, "The Historical Cabinet," <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i>.</li> <li>• Carter, "Eisenhower Versus the Generals," <i>Journal of Military History</i></li> <li>• Walcott and Hult, "The Bush Staff and the Cabinet System," <i>Perspectives on Political Science</i></li> </ul>	None due this week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the benefits of a harmonious cabinet</li> <li>• the limitations of a dysfunctional cabinet</li> <li>• discussion the origins and evolution of the cabinet, particularly White House staff and the National Security Council</li> </ul>

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Date of Class	Asynchronous	Readings	Assignment	Class
March 1: The President's Relationship with Congress	<p>Theme: Congressional Oversight</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estes, Todd, "The Art of Presidential Leadership: George Washington and the Jay Treaty." <i>The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography</i> 109 (2001):127-158.</li> <li>watch recorded session from January 26 GSPM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meacham, Engel, Baker, Naftali, <i>Impeachment</i></li> </ul>	None due this week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how Congress has exercised authority, place constraints on the president</li> <li>how the president has worked around the constraints</li> <li>discuss hearings, censure, legislation, impeachment, war powers, financial powers</li> </ul>
March 8: The Bully Pulpit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pick an inaugural address, read or watch if possible</li> <li>write an analysis: what arguments is the president making? what are the key lines history should remember? what is the context?</li> <li>bonus points if you <i>don't</i> select JFK or FDR's first inaugural, or Lincoln for that matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Howell and Moe, <i>Relic</i>, ch. 3</li> <li>Enli, "Twitter as arena for the authentic outsider," <i>European Journal of Communication</i></li> <li>Cotlar and Ellis, Ch. 9</li> </ul>	Press release due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the enormous persuasive abilities of the president and the unique platform available only to the president</li> <li>power for positive moral suasion</li> </ul>
March 22 (no class March 15, spring break): The President and the Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>watch clips of Kennedy/Nixon debate</li> <li>read FDR and Fala article</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smith, "Francis P. Blair, Pen-Executive of Andrew Jackson," <i>Mississippi Valley Historical Review</i></li> <li>Cotlar and Ellis, ch. 10</li> <li>Skowroneck, <i>Politics Presidents Make</i>, Chapter Six, section 2</li> </ul>	None due this week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine how the media covers the president</li> <li>Discuss how the president uses the media to pursue goals</li> </ul>

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Date of Class	Asynchronous	Readings	Assignment	Class
March 29: Crisis Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch Communication During Covid seminar (Link on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Go back in time. It's January 2020 and your boss (or you!) learn about COVID for the first time. Draft an outline of the steps you would take to communicate, address the crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skowronek, <i>Politics Presidents Make</i>, Chapter Five, part one; Chapter Six, part three; Chapter Seven, part three</li> </ul>	Virtual Town Hall due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what are the different types of crises that might face an administration? what are the tools at the president's disposal</li> <li>• discuss White House Crisis Management, domestic and foreign policy tools, competing and domestic international pressures</li> </ul>
April 5: Foreign Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• watch a cabinet secretary confirmation hearing from 2021 (foreign policy related)</li> <li>• draft a series of questions you would use to question a nominee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dubois, "The Haitian Revolution and the Sale of Louisiana," <i>Southern History Quarterly</i></li> <li>• Fowler, "Lion's Last Roar, Eagle's First Flight," <i>Rhetoric &amp; Public Affairs</i>.</li> <li>• Susan Rice. <i>Tough Love</i>, chapters 13-16.</li> </ul>	None due this week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the various foreign policy objectives pursued by the U.S. since its formation</li> <li>• discuss the tools used to achieve foreign policy aims and outcomes, key actors, spheres of influences</li> </ul>
April 12: Presidents at War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pick an episode of War on the Rocks podcast or Things That Go Boom podcast pertaining to the presidency and war</li> <li>• write a few sentences on the discussion board on Blackboard about the ep. (as well as your other favorite political, foreign policy podcasts. Give your fellow students some recommendations!)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chervinsky, <i>The Cabinet</i>, ch. 6</li> <li>• Trautsch, "Mr. Madison's War," <i>Early American Studies</i></li> <li>• Skowronek, <i>The Politics Presidents Makes</i>, Chapter Six, Part One: Lincoln</li> <li>• Jacobson, "George W. Bush, the Iraq War, and the Election of Barack Obama," <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i></li> </ul>	Policy Briefing due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do presidents manage the challenges of leading a country at war</li> <li>• discuss the difference between war and rogue regimes, alliance building on a national level, military command, expansion of executive authority since 1787</li> </ul>

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*	Grading Standard
A 94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A- 90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+ 87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B 83-86	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is viewed as unacceptable.
B- 80-82	You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+ 77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C 73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C- 70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

**Academic Integrity**

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

### **University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays**

- Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
- Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
- Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

### **Support for Students with Disabilities**

GW's Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at <http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

### **Title IX: Confidentiality and Responsible Employee Statement**

The George Washington University (GWU) and its faculty are committed to helping create a safe and open learning environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. GWU strongly encourages all members of the community to take action, seek support and report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty members are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Mental Health Services through Colonial Health (counselors are available 24/7 at 202-994-5300 or you can make an appointment to see a counselor in person.). For more information about reporting options and resources at GWU and the community, please visit <https://haven.gwu.edu/>.

### **In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class**

If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at **[fill in proximate location]** in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

### **Attendance Policy**

It is my expectation that you will attend class and participate in the discussion. If you know you will miss a session, please let me know as soon as possible and we will come up with an alternative arrangement. Of course, emergencies happen and I'm prepared to make exceptions if you can keep me informed ahead of time.

**Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation**

Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

**Course Evaluation**

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW’s online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

Dr. Casey Burgat  
Director, Legislative Affairs Program  
[cburgat@gwu.edu](mailto:cburgat@gwu.edu) | 202-994-6000

Johanna Galt  
Faculty Affairs Specialist  
College of Professional Studies  
The George Washington University  
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Washington, DC 20052  
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**Copyright Statement**

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden. The Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. § 10) governs the rights attributed to owners of copyrighted work. Under certain circumstances, educational institutions may provide copies of copyrighted works to students. The copies may not be copied nor used for any other purpose besides private study, scholarship, or research. Users should not provide electronic copies of any materials provided on this course’s Blackboard site to unauthorized users. If a user fails to comply with Fair Use restrictions, he/she may be held liable for copyright infringement. No further transmission or electronic distribution is permitted.

*Note: I know reading syllabi can be really boring, but it’s important. So if you are reading carefully and see this note, please send me your favorite Bernie Sanders inauguration meme. I will add an extra credit point to your final grade in gratitude.*

**Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings**

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Please contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Please contact [Disability Support Services](#) if you need additional accommodations for accessing electronic course materials.