COURSE OBJECTIVES
The objective of this course, as indicated in SDSU’s 2009-2010 General Catalog is to provide an “analysis of principal institutions, functions and problems of the presidency and federal executive branch. Attention given to presidential leadership, staffing, executive-legislative relations and policy formation.” Students will emerge at the end of the course with a richer understanding of the political history of the American presidency, its place in the United States’ system of governance, and salient comparisons and decisive contrasts between the P.O.T.U.S. and executives in other forms of government.

COURSE OUTLINE
The United States Constitution covers the Presidency in sparse detail, yet this office has become the focal point of American politics. In fact, people have complained since the late 1960s that this country has an Imperial Presidency. Such complaints feed into the fear—some would even say ‘paranoia’—of public power generally that is so central to American political culture. Ordinary Americans usually credit or blame Presidents for almost everything significant that happens in or to the country; hence, the period 1993-2001 was “the Clinton Administration.” Since Bill Clinton was the President during a time of great economic prosperity—the birth of the vaunted “new economy”—he received credit for the good times. In a way, this type of credit or blame by association is reminiscent of the myth of the “fisher king” one sees in Arthurian legends. “The land and the king are one” and thus if Guinevere’s infidelity compromises King Arthur’s health, England’s crops will suffer.

Mythological examples are appropriate here because myths really do matter for real politics. For example, the U.S. Constitution grants much more explicit power to Congress than to the President, and yet most Americans think about politics in terms of the West Wing of the White House. In reading Popkin’s work for this class, students will find that the perceptions of average American voters should not be discounted as merely uninformed and thus trivial. Presidential elections have become the center of the United States’ electoral politics, and Congress often fares well or poorly based on whether the President belongs to the same party as the majority of its membership. Furthermore, because Americans think of Presidents as powerful, this perception has itself aided in empowering the institution. Americans gave Ronald Reagan the power of going public, Samuel Kernell argues, by placing pressure on Congress to follow his lead. Power perceived by the public may become power vested by them in the President.

But the modern American presidency is more than a single individual. The Presidency is a cluster of institutions around the President. This cluster evolved first within the executive branch of government, and over time has created an important bureaucracy called the Office of the President. This Office contains powerful domestic and foreign policy institutions such as the Office of Management and Budget and the National Security Council. The Congress created these offices by delegation and they have further enhanced the President’s agenda-setting powers. Congress has delegated most in periods of national or international crisis, but after the crisis recedes, the institution remains and forms the basis for enhanced authority in the institutional presidency. The readings in the course texts by James Pfiffner and Graham Allison will provide
students with a chance to learn about this more enduring—and indeed seemingly permanent—feature of the American Presidency.

New technologies of communication and transportation have also helped make the President the touchstone of American politics. Granted, one should expect this phenomenon because of the inherent inconvenience of other multiple-player institutions as a single unitary center. Congress has 535 members, the Supreme Court has nine, but the President is one person. It’s easier for people and TV cameras to focus on one person. The Milkis & Nelson text will help students to understand the historical development of the American Presidency through the political and policy-making experiences of the 44 men who have held the office thus far.

Finally, we will examine the President as a leader in foreign policy, both military & diplomatic. In particular, we will interpret important international events through the lenses offered by Graham Allison’s three models in *Essence of Decision*. The media rarely provides the complex perspective on international relations that Allison and Zelikow’s book will help us to achieve. Rather than seeing events in Afghanistan and Iraq (as well as other countries in which the United States is engaged) as merely reflections of personality, these authors help us to understand the organizational and bureaucratic forces at work.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

“At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1) identify major political contributions of most American presidents;
2) trace institutional changes of the presidential institution over time;
3) identify ways to study the president, both as a person and as an institution;
4) understand the methods of and alternatives to current presidential selection procedures;
5) critically assess presidential behavior and public opinion responsiveness.”
6) understand the dynamics between the president and:
   a) the Congress;
   b) the courts;
   c) the executive bureaucracy;
   d) the media.

“10) understand the president’s role with foreign policy and foreign governments” [thanks to the URL [http://webpages.acs.ttu.edu/erbooth/syllabus3327.pdf](http://webpages.acs.ttu.edu/erbooth/syllabus3327.pdf) for this syllabus language].

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your course grade will be based on 3 examinations and an essay. Each of the midterm examinations will consist of up to 100 multiple-choice questions, as well as some questions to be answered as a take-home. Both the multiple-choice and written components of your midterm exams will be drawn from a study guide posted several weeks in advance of your exams. You must take examinations using an 882 type Scantron and a number 2 pencil.

Your take-home midterm examinations and course essay will be submitted to Turnitin on Blackboard. Late submissions will be penalized severely.

The final examination will consist of up to 200 multiple-choice questions, half of which will be comprehensive; the other half will only cover materials we examine after the second midterm.

I will hand out the topics for the essay several weeks before it is due. Please follow the directions for the essay that will be included in the prompt. The instructor will attempt to assist every student who needs help on the essay, but there are many students and only a finite number of office hours. Please make sure to begin the essay as soon as you can; if many students wait until the last minute to seek the instructor’s assistance, then access will be on a first come-first served basis.
The essay must be submitted through Turnitin to ensure that students avoid academic dishonesty. “Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. You may submit your papers in such a way that no identifying information about you is included. Another option is that you may request, in writing, that your papers not be submitted to Turnitin. However, if you choose this option you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate that the papers are your original work and do not include any plagiarized material.”

There is no extra credit for this class. I do require that you observe proper classroom etiquette. If you are going to surf the net on your computer, sit in the back row of class. There are to be no private conversations during class time. I only ask that if you must leave a class before a lecture is over, you do it quietly and unobtrusively so that you do not disturb the learning of your fellow students. There will be no extra credit assignments to substitute for poorly done or missed coursework, so don’t ask.

You are permitted to study with others to prepare for exams, and you may talk with other students about your essay assignment, but your exams and essay are not a collective performance. Group work during the exams and submission of substantially identical essays may serve as evidence of academic dishonesty and will be grounds for immediate failure, and appropriate disciplinary action by SDSU administrators. As per university policy, I do want to make it clear that it is NOT acceptable to turn in work that you have drafted in a previous or concurrent class to satisfy your essay requirements for this class. For the purpose of this course, that is academic dishonesty.

**COURSE GRADE CALCULATION**

Students will take two midterm examinations and a final exam, and will also do a course essay. Each of these will be worth 25% of your course grade. This syllabus establishes the dates for the midterms and the final exam, as well as for the course essay. Participation opportunities may arise throughout the class, and can be used to assign 10% of your grade, replacing part of a weaker performance on an exam or essay. These requirements are not negotiable. If you can’t make the deadlines, don’t take the class. All exceptions are by definition discriminatory, making the course unfair for your fellow students. Late work will be penalized severely, unless students provide an excuse that I find acceptable.

**REQUIRED READINGS (latest edition of all texts is a must!)**

6. Any materials posted on Blackboard.

**SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

**Unit One—August 28, 30**

Broad Overview of Course and Concepts; The Presidency as a Focal Point.

*U.S. Constitution; selected Federalist Papers (online).*
Unit Two—September 4
Constitutional Delegation: Presidents and the Prisoner’s Dilemma.
Milkis, Chapters 1-3; Pfiffner, Chapter 1.

Unit Three—September 6, 11
The Origins of the Presidency: George Washington versus King George III;
The Presidency in Comparative Perspective: Parliamentary Systems.
Milkis, Chapters 4-7.

Unit Four—September 13, 18
“Sometimes a cigar…”: Psychoanalyzing the President to Understand the Presidency;
Presidential Realignments: Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, McKinley & FDR.
Milkis, Chapters 8-11.

Unit Five—September 20, 25, 27
From Whigs to Warriors: How Nationalization of Politics Has Strengthened the Presidency;
Wilson’s Congressional Government: The President as Prime Minister.
Milkis, Chapters 12-13; Pfiffner, Chapters 2-3.

Unit Six—September 27, October 2
White House Centralization: What to Do When All the President’s Men “Marry the Natives”;
Milkis, Chapters 14-15; Pfiffner, Chapters 4-5.

Unit Seven—October 4
FIRST MIDTERM EXAMINATION (IN-CLASS PORTION)
Please bring a Form 882 Scantron and #2 pencil to class.

Unit Eight—October 9, 11
Imperial Presidency or Congressional Supremacy: The American Power Pendulum; Presidential Power and Persuasion; Separate Institutions Sharing Powers.
Milkis, Chapter 16; Pfiffner, Chapter 6.

THE TAKE-HOME PORTION OF THE FIRST MIDTERM EXAMINATION IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LECTURE ON OCTOBER 11!

Unit Nine—October 16, 18
Going Public: Making a Campaign Strategy into a Template for Governance;
“The First 100 Days”: FDR as Fireside Chatter and Cunning Bargainer.
Kernell, Chapters 1-4.

Unit Ten—October 23, 25
Kernell, Chapters 5-8; Popkin, Chapter 1.

Unit Eleven—October 30, November 1
Will the Real Beauty Contest Please Stand Up? The Primaries Replace the Conventions;
Popkin, Chapters 2-6.
Third Party Blues: Did Perot and Nader Really Elect Bill Clinton and George W. Bush? President Obama and Campaigning in the Age of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. 

*Popkin, Chapters 7-11.*

**Unit Thirteen—November 13**

SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION (IN-CLASS PORTION)

Please bring a Form 882 Scantron and #2 pencil to class.

**Unit Fourteen—November 15, 20**

View the film *Thirteen Days* in connection with understanding the Cuban Missile Crisis.

*Allison, Chapters 1-2; Pfiffner, Chapter 7.*

**THE TAKE-HOME PORTION OF THE SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LECTURE ON NOVEMBER 20!**

**Unit Fifteen—November 27, 29**

Cuba I and Cuba II: The Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis; Engulfed: The War Powers Resolution and U.S. Involvement in the Tonkin & Persian gulfs;

*Allison, Chapters 3-4; Pfiffner, Chapter 8.*

**Unit Sixteen—December 4, 6**

Watergate, Irangate and Monicagate: High Crimes & Misdemeanors at the Gates. Crises in Policy amid Politics as Usual: Is it good to be “the Ruler of the Free World”? 

*Allison, Chapters 5-7.*

**THE ESSAY IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON DECEMBER 6!**

**Unit Seventeen—December 13**

FINALEXAMINATION—A COMPREHENSIVE OBJECTIVE TEST

As per SDSU’s “Final Examinations” schedule printed in the Fall 2012 Schedule of Classes, the final examination will be held from 1300-1500 on Thursday.