

# **The American Presidency (POLS 432)**

## **Aguiar, Spring 2009**

### **PAPER ASSIGNMENTS**

The audience for this paper is a political science major who has not taken this course.

Part One:

Part One has two portions. The first portion is conceived as a take-home exam on Neustadt's text. Students will be asked to summarize the theory, highlighting important elements that can be tested with an historical example. In short, students should write this portion of the paper with an eye towards their proposed case study. How does the theory help us understand the case study? Which portion of the theory can be explored with this case study? The second portion of this paper is a brief proposal for a case study. Students will produce a paragraph that overviews the presidential decision. Moreover, students must include an annotated bibliography of at least ten (10) possible sources.

What sorts of presidential decisions are appropriate for a case study? The list of possible topics is immense. Some examples include presidential decisions to send troops into combat situations, negotiate a treaty, propose a new domestic program, produce the annual budget, bargain with members of Congress on a bill, mobilize public opinion about an issue, persuade corporate leaders to invest (or divest) in a particular location, ask the military to change its policies on gays or adultery, and encourage bureaucrats to become more efficient. I suggest that you seek out a case study from the past about which much has been written (i.e., before 2000). Contemporary case studies are much more difficult, because all the evidence is not yet available.

What are some useful sources of information? For more recent events, your best bet would probably be the elite printed press, including the New York Times, Washington Post, US News and World Report, and the panoply of news and analysis magazines. EBSCO Host is a good starting place for this search. For older events, students should be able to locate one or more books on the subject. For example, a treasure trove of treatises on the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, and Watergate exists. However, my guess is that there are fewer texts on topics like the Iran-Contra Scandal.

### Grading Rubric for Part One

(Total Possible Points = 100, which is then converted into a possible 10 points scale to be entered into the final grade sheet.)

Content
<b>Presentation of Theory:</b> Does the paper discuss the prescriptive and empirical facets of the theory? Does it discuss the important following concepts? Does it present an understandable, testable summary of the theory? (50 points)
<b>Case Study:</b> Does the paper propose and describe a case study that is a presidential decision? (10 points)
<b>Annotated Bibliography:</b> Does the bibliography list and describe ten diverse sources of information about the case study? (10 points)
Style
<b>Organization and Clarity:</b> Is the paper organized in discernible sections using transition sentences? Is each paragraph focused on one topic with a thesis statement? (15 points)
<b>Grammar, spelling, sentence structure:</b> Does the text use proper grammar, spelling, and sentence construction? (15 points)

Part Two:

This second part is a full analysis of the case study. It will include a brief historical section, an analysis of the contemporary power situation, and a discussion of the important actors involved. The paper should make some references to relevant parts of the theory you expect to test. The paper should concentrate on answering the following questions: What happened? Who was involved? Which actors were pressuring the president? Who supported and who opposed him? What decision did the president make? What happened as a result of this decision? Who gained or lost from this decision? In short, this paper will provide the evidence necessary to evaluate and test your theory.

**Grading Rubric for Part Two**

(Total Possible Points - 100 which is then converted into a possible 20 points scale to be entered into the final grade sheet.)

Content
<b>Historical section:</b> Does the paper provide an adequate historical context for the decision? (10 points)
<b>Analysis of contemporary power situation:</b> Does the paper analyze relevant facts about the political situation? (25 points)
<b>Discussion of important actors:</b> Does the paper list and describe the interests of relevant actors and institutions? (25 points)
<b>Reference to Theory:</b> Does the paper point out important concepts that might be evaluated using this case study? (10 points)
Style
<b>Organization and Clarity:</b> Is the paper organized in discernible sections using transition sentences? Is each paragraph focused on one topic with a thesis statement? (15 points)
<b>Grammar, spelling, sentence structure:</b> Does the text use proper grammar, spelling, and sentence construction? (15 points)

Final Paper:

***The complete paper will bring together the two previous papers and two new sections into a seamless whole.*** Students may need to substantially revise the first two parts described above to improve them for the final draft of the paper. Then, students will add the following two new concluding sections. The first new section of this paper will analyze the usefulness of the theory. Does the case study suggest that the theory help us to understand what occurred? Does the hypothesized relationship among the variables hold up? Is there insufficient evidence to test fully his theory? If so, what kind of information would help you test it more fully?

The second new section provides students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning about political leadership. First, given the outcome of your case study, what were the successes or failures of the president in this instance? Did he help himself in accomplishing his goals and/or marshaling his power? What advice can you give to this president that might have improved his power situation?

Second, make some general comments about your knowledge of political leadership gained from this case study. What kind of decisions or decision-making process worked or might have improved the president's power? What leadership skills or personal qualities might have changed the situation for the president's benefit?

### **Grading Rubric for Part Three**

(Total Possible Points – 100, which is then converted into a possible 30 points scale to be entered into the final grade sheet.)

Content
Presentation of Theory (in light of case study) (20 points)
Case Study (as a test of the theory) (20 points)
Evaluation of Usefulness of the Theory for Case Study (e.g., support, appropriate data, etc.) (15 points)
Discussion of Political Leadership (15 points)
Style
Organization and Clarity (15 points)
Grammar, spelling, sentence structure (15 points)