

**FP471F**  
**Unilateral Executive Power in the U.S. and Abroad**

Spring 2019  
Nimitz G112  
T, Th: 09:55-11:10  
Office: Nimitz G111  
Phone: (410) 293-2996

Dr. John Polga-Hecimovich  
Office Hours:  
Wednesdays 10:45-11:45, 13:30-15:20  
and by appointment  
E-mail: [polgahec@usna.edu](mailto:polgahec@usna.edu)

**Course Introduction and Objectives**

Presidents all over the globe are powerful. They possess a range of formal and informal powers, from decrees, executive orders, signing statements, and presidential memoranda, to things like bureaucratic and judicial appointment power, judicial review, and partisan powers, all of which have consequences for parties, voters, and democracy. This seminar asks the following questions: when do presidents use executive orders or decrees to make policy? What other formal and informal “unilateral powers” do presidents possess, and when do they use them? Are there differences across presidents and countries? Lastly, what implications does the use of unilateral executive power have for democracy? The capstone will use historical accounts and the scholarly literature to unpack these topics and others, as it examines executive policymaking and the changing nature of presidential power in the U.S. and abroad. The course begins with a focus on the U.S. presidency before moving to a comparative analysis of American and foreign presidential power. We will use a “president vs. presidency” theoretical framework of executive power to illustrate how personal ambition and institutional factors interact to condition executive behavior.

Capstone seminars are designed to give First Class Midshipmen a culminating academic experience. You will undertake a significant independent project in which you will conduct original research. Specifically, in this course students will:

- Focus on a topic related to executive political instability that captures their interest
- Identify and articulate a puzzle related to their topic
- Explore relevant prior scholarly research
- Develop empirically testable hypotheses
- Formulate a plan to gather data in order to test their hypotheses
- Collect and analyze data and evaluate how they do/do not support your hypotheses
- Discuss the implications of their research findings
- Present their research in writing and via in-class presentations
- Participate actively in class discussions in a manner that respects others’ perspectives

My role as your professor is to teach you how to conduct systematic and objective political science research. If you choose a topic that interests you, put in substantial and consistent effort, and plan your project well, this course should be one of your most rewarding academic experiences.

**Course Materials**

There is one required book for this class:

- Cooper, Phillip J. 2014. *By Order of the President: The Use and Abuse of Executive Direct Action*. [Second Edition] Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Supplemental readings are available electronically on the class’s Blackboard page.

## Requirements and Grading

Students should complete the assigned readings before each class, and should be prepared to discuss the main point of each reading, your own evaluation of the persuasiveness of the author's argument, and the connection of the reading to the larger questions we address in the course. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. You may seek the feedback of your classmates when working on your research project.

- **Participation, class questions, and intermediate assignments (5%)**

Midshipmen must post two questions regarding each day's reading by 08:30 the day class meets. These will serve as an accountability mechanism and will steer our class discussion that day.

In addition, students are expected to attend class and contribute daily to discussions. Each member of the seminar must participate during each class session. The *quality* of your contribution—reflecting completion of the day's reading assignment—is much more important than the quantity. For this reason, it is important to keep up with the reading assignments and to bring the assigned reading to the appropriate class session. Students may check in with me throughout the semester to gauge their performance along this attendance dimension.

- **Complete rough draft of paper (20%)**

- **Final research paper (70%)**

- **Presentation (5%)**

On the last two days of class, each student will make a 10-minute presentation of their research.

### Paper Expectations:

- You must conduct original research to test hypotheses about a question related to unilateral executive power, either in the U.S. or in a comparative context
- All ideas that are not your own must be cited. Plagiarism violates the Honor Concept and will not be tolerated
- Paper length: 25-30 pages, double spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins (cover page and works cited page are not included in page total)
- You may use any citation style you wish. I recommend that you use parenthetical citations in the text, in accordance with APA guidelines (<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx>).
- You must provide a list of all works cited at the end of the paper.
- Your paper should not include your own unsubstantiated opinions, nor should it be simply a history or summary of a topic. The logic underpinning your hypotheses, the method by which you evaluate your hypotheses, the strength and clarity of your points, the quality of research you have done to make your points, and the logic of the conclusions you draw will determine much of your grade.

### Paper Structure:

1. Title Page
2. Introduction and Statement of your Puzzle/Research Question
  - a. Introduce the topic and grab the reader's interest, while making no unsubstantiated claims
  - b. You should set forth your puzzle/research question, letting the reader know specifically which important dynamics of the presidency you will investigate
3. Literature Review
  - a. What important works have been written about your topic?

- b. You should discuss at least five relevant works from academic sources (academic journals or books published by academic presses); the number of works you discuss should be determined by the nature of the existing research on your topic
    - c. This section is not a summary of where you found data for your project; rather, you will discuss here other works that are related to your topic and upon which you can build as you write your paper
  4. Theory Development
    - a. A theory is a framework or set of ideas that transcends the individual example and links two or more concepts (e.g. divided government causes presidents to resort to unilateral action more often).
    - b. Ideally, your theory will be your unique take or answer to your research question. This is the meat of your paper and the element that I am most interested in reading! Explain how and why the existing literature is wrong, or incomplete, or using the wrong data, etc., and how your take better explains the relationship between your concepts.
    - c. While you develop your theory, you should be setting forth your expectations about the relationships between your concepts, *but not necessarily the variables you will use to measure those concepts* (e.g. the concept of economic growth versus the variable of GDP per capita to measure economic growth).
  5. Hypotheses
    - a. Your hypotheses are the testable implications of your theory, especially through your expectations about the relationships between your independent and dependent variables in terms of falsifiable claims.
    - b. Hypotheses should be stated in terms of the relationships that you suspect to exist – e.g. “Presidents with larger margins of electoral victory will be less likely to be removed from office before their term ends”
    - c. Your findings might end up supporting your hypotheses or might lead you to reject them; either outcome is perfectly acceptable
    - d. Remember that if your hypotheses are not rejected, you have found evidence to support your theory, but you have **not** proven your theory
  6. Methods
    - a. Describe how you are going to test your hypotheses; what data will you examine, and where will you find the information you need?
    - b. Explain both the strengths and the limitations of your methods
  7. Presentation and Analysis of Findings
    - a. This section is the heart of your paper; here you systematically evaluate evidence that helps you to test each of your hypotheses
    - b. Be sure that you adequately address all of your hypotheses
    - c. Your paper must have at least one table, figure, or chart presenting data that you create yourself. Examples include a table of changing voter turnout rates over time, a timeline of executive orders, or a figure that graphically shows the amounts of money raised in recent presidential elections.
  8. Conclusions
    - a. Explain what you have found, how your findings relate to previous studies, the implications of your findings, and what could be studied in the future
  9. Works Cited
    - a. In addition to citing your source in the text, list every work you have cited in your works cited page, in accordance with whichever citation style you choose (I recommend APA guidelines: <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx>).

### **Late papers**

The late paper policy is simple: I do not accept late papers. Do not wait to the last minute to write or print them. All course requirements must be completed by the last class period on Tuesday, April 30. After the last day of class, students with assignments outstanding will receive a grade of F for the course.

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's words, ideas or work – whether accidentally or deliberately – as your own, without acknowledgment of sources. Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is an honor violation, and all plagiarists will be treated as honor offenders, in addition to receiving a grade of zero for the plagiarized work. Plagiarism may include:

- Copying written work from another source, published or unpublished, without proper acknowledgment of the original;
- Buying papers online or from a paper mill;
- Resubmitting or double submitting work to two different classes;
- Using gouge or company files;
- Submitting someone else's work as your own.

The above list should not be treated as exhaustive. If you are not sure what plagiarism is, find out! It is incumbent on you to do so. Midshipmen are responsible for knowing and understanding what constitutes plagiarism. If in doubt, document your sources, or see me to ask further questions. Please take a close look at the Library's very helpful web site on avoiding plagiarism, which can be found at <http://libguides.usna.edu/plagiarism>.

### **Class Meetings**

We will meet as a class during many but not all of our scheduled class times. On days when we do not meet, the scheduled class time is reserved for your individual research and one-on-one meetings with me. Do not schedule other commitments during our class time. You will spend that time meeting as a group, working on your research, or meeting individually with me.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1**

Thursday, January 10

#### **Course Expectations and an Introduction to Unilateral Executive Power**

- Cooper 2014: Chapter 1

### **Week 2**

Tuesday, January 15

#### **Executive Orders I**

- Cooper 2014: Chapter 2
- \*\*Carey, John M., and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1998. *Executive Decree Authority*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 1 (pp.1-32)

Thursday, January 17

#### **Executive Orders II**

- Cooper 2014: Chapter 3

### **Week 3**

Tuesday, January 22

#### **Presidential Memoranda**

- Cooper 2014: Chapter 4

Thursday, January 24

**Presidential Proclamations + Asking a Good Research Question**

- Cooper 2014: Chapter 5

**Week 4**

Tuesday, January 29

**Signing Statements**

- Cooper 2014: Chapter 8
- \*\* Kaufman, Aaron R., and Jon C. Rogowski. 2018 (Forthcoming). "The Unilateral Presidency, 1933–2017." *American Political Science Review*.

Thursday, January 31

**Unilateral Direct Action Outside the U.S.: Limits to Unilateral Power? + Conducting an Annotated Bibliography**

- \*\* Ferreira Rubio, Delia, and Matteo Goretti. 1998. "When the President Governs Alone: The decretazo en Argentina, 1989-93." In *Executive Decree Authority*, ed. J. M. Carey and M. S. Shugart. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- \*\*Remington, Thomas F. 2014. "Vladimir Putin and the Limits of Decrees" in *Presidential Decrees in Russia: A Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Due: Research Topic and/or Puzzle**

You will turn in to me up to one written page discussing one or two options for the general topic and the puzzle/research question that you will address, as well as potential data sources. You will also give an oral presentation to the class so that you can hone your ability to articulate your puzzle and receive feedback from your fellow Midshipmen. You may choose to write up and present one or more than one topic if you are considering multiple options.

**Week 5**

Tuesday, February 5

**Unilateral Direct Action Outside the U.S.**

- \*\*Morgenstern, Scott, John Polga-Hecimovich, and Sarah Shair-Rosenfield. 2013. "Tall, Grande, or Venti: Presidential Powers in the United States and Latin America." *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 5 (2):37-70.

Thursday, February 7

**Concluding Thoughts on Unilateral Direct Action + Literature Reviews**

- Cooper 2014: Chapter 9
- \*\*Carey, John M., and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1998. *Executive Decree Authority*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 10 (pp.274-298)

**Due: Annotated Bibliography**

You will turn in to me an annotated list of sources that you will use in your literature review. Your list will consist of at least five relevant works from academic sources (academic journals or books published by academic presses). The annotations are your notes about what in the book or article is useful; these notes, which can be in bullet point format, will essentially form the skeleton of a rough draft of your literature review. This section is not a summary of

where you found data for your project; rather, you will discuss here other works that are related to your topic and upon which you can build as you write your paper.

**Week 6**

Tuesday, February 12

**Theory Development and Writing a Hypothesis**

**Due: Literature Review**

A literature review is a *not* a summary of different scholarly sources, but rather a synthesis of the main theories, dominant ideas, or basic interpretations of your phenomenon of interest. There are many different ways to write a literature review, but all should somehow link what has been written about your topic to what you will eventually argue—this is a way to set the stage for your own theory.

**Week 7**

Tuesday, February 19

**Choosing the Right Method for your Paper**

**Due: Theory and Hypotheses**

A theory is a framework that goes beyond the individual example and directionally links two or more concepts to each other. Ideally, your theory will be your unique take or answer to your research question and to any weaknesses or shortcoming in the existing scholarly literature.

Your hypotheses set forth your expectations about the relationships between your independent and dependent variables. These can be presented as a series of bullet points and should be stated in terms of the relationships that you suspect to exist – e.g. “Presidents with larger margins of electoral victory will cast fewer Executive Orders.”

**Week 8**

Tuesday, February 26

**Analyzing and Presenting Data**

**Due: Annotated Methods Outline**

Your methods section will describe how you are going to test your hypotheses -- what data will you examine, and where will you find the information you need? For this deadline, you will provide relevant data sources for each hypothesis, accompanied by annotations explaining the value of each source. Keep in mind that for your actual paper, you will discuss in your methods section both the strengths and the limitations of your methods; you do not need to do this for this interim deadline

**Week 9**

Tuesday, March 5

**Due: Outline of Findings Section of Your Paper for Peer Review**

The outline of your findings section is a detailed roadmap of the heart of your project. The purpose of this peer review session is for you to demonstrate how much data you have, whether you have sufficient data to test each of your hypotheses objectively and systematically, and where the (hopefully relatively few) holes are in your project.

At this point, your project should be taking shape. While you will still likely have much to do, requiring you to hold a peer review

session of the outline of your findings section is a way to make sure that you know what you need to do and where you are heading.

**Week 10** No class- Spring Break

**Week 11**

**Week 12**

Tuesday, March 26

**Complete Rough Draft of Your Paper Due.**

While your paper may still be quite rough, I need to see a COMPLETE draft. Some of the most critical work takes place during revisions to your draft. Your goal should be to submit a complete, if unpolished, version of your paper so that you and I can see where you stand and what needs to be improved. Your grade on this draft will count for 20% of your course grade.

**Week 13**

Tuesday, April 2

**How to Conclude Your Capstone Successfully**

**Week 14**

**Week 15**

**Week 16**

Tuesday, April 23

Thursday, April 25

**FINAL PAPER DUE (FINAL DRAFT)**

Presentations

**Week 17**

Tuesday, April 30

Presentations