

## PREFACE



Perhaps the most common debate among presidency scholars centers on the question of how best to study both the presidency as a political institution and the men who have held the office. In developing this textbook, we wanted to provide a comprehensive text that combined both approaches by including contemporary issues surrounding presidents as individual leaders as well as the institutional perspectives and evolution of the office. Our goal was to focus on the “real” presidency; that is, to provide a unique perspective and analysis that explains exactly what a president does on a day-to-day basis and how the governing and institutional environment in which he finds himself affects that daily outcome. We also wanted to incorporate what we consider to be an under-utilized resource on the presidency for undergraduate students, which are the millions of archival documents available at presidential libraries. We have each conducted extensive research at presidential libraries across the country (to date, all of the libraries from FDR through Clinton), and know firsthand the significance and richness of the many memos, letters, and oral histories available to scholars and journalists alike. These documents add a personal knowledge and perspective of what actually happened behind the scenes in the White House and help to explain the strategic and decision-making processes of presidents during the past century. As a result, we believe that these documents add an important pedagogical tool for an instructor’s use at the undergraduate level.

We have also incorporated our own experiences in teaching the presidency over the years into the presentation of the topics throughout the text. Both of us are faculty members at universities (Chapman University and St. John’s University, respectively) that value classroom instruction as much as faculty scholarship. The presidency is, for both of us, not only our major field of expertise but also a favorite course that we each teach regularly. We have learned over the years what works when attempting to engage students beyond a cursory and fleeting knowledge of the material in an attempt to prepare for an exam. We share a pedagogical approach to teaching the presidency that provides students with a deeper understanding of the presidency as an institution and its importance within the constitutional framework of the American government. Specifically, we consider the leadership qualities of the men who have held the office and why that matters for their ultimate success

or failure; and, from a broader perspective, why is it important to develop critical thinking and analytical skills when studying American government. The former two issues serve to pique many students' interest in the subject, while the latter helps students to become more informed citizens.

The plan of the book is straightforward; we cover all of the important topics necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic within a semester/quarter-long course on presidents and the presidency. Chapter 1 provides an introductory discussion on the historical context, theories and methodologies, and sources that are all part of the study of presidents and the presidency. Chapter 2 analyzes the presidency within the framework of the U.S. Constitution and how the various interpretations of presidential powers since the founding era have shaped the office and the decisions made by its occupants. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 consider the public connection of presidents and the presidency to the American electorate—presidential campaigns and elections, presidential communication strategies, the president's relationship with the news media, and public opinion. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 consider the institutional aspects of the office in how presidents interact and manage their relationships with Congress, the federal courts, and the executive branch. Finally, Chapters 9 and 10 cover the important topics of presidential domestic and foreign policymaking and the role that presidents play in the development and implementation of policy outcomes.

Along the way, we also incorporate numerous archival documents to highlight key issues; some show the seriousness and gravity of the decisions that presidents face while in office; others provide an interesting and sometimes light-hearted view of the real governing process in the White House and how partisan concerns can also play a role. In each chapter, we also provide two features: "Then and Now" and "In Their Own Words." "Then and Now" takes a specific issue and compares a more historical approach to a more contemporary approach to analyze how presidents have dealt with certain challenges while in office. For example, "Then and Now" in Chapter 2 considers the political implications of the presidential power to pardon. "In Their Own Words" highlights one archival document that helps to illustrate a specific topic of each chapter. For example, in Chapter 10, which deals with presidents and foreign policy, we highlight a letter from General Lauris Norstad to President John F. Kennedy about the global political implications following the Cuban Missile Crisis. Throughout each chapter, we also have an icon  indicating additional archival documents, audio recordings, video clips and Web links, which can be found on the *Presidents and the American Presidency* website. We also provide a "Suggested Readings" list of some of the most important works (both historical and contemporary) on the presidency, as well as an additional list of Web resources for students in each chapter.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have many people to thank for their contributions to this book. First, we are truly grateful for the guidance and patience of our editor at Oxford University Press, Jennifer Carpenter, who provided encouragement, guidance, and deadlines when needed. Maegan Sherlock also provided much help throughout the editorial process. We are indebted to the many reviewers who took time out of their busy schedules to give helpful feedback on individual chapters as well as the manuscript as a whole:

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|---|--|
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| Peter J. Bergerson<br><i>Florida Gulf Coast University</i>              | William M. Leiter<br><i>California State University–Long Beach</i>   |
| Curtis R. Berry<br><i>Shippensburg University</i>                       | Rhonda Longworth<br><i>Eastern Michigan University</i>               |
| Meenekshi Bose<br><i>Hofstra University</i>                             | Joshua Meddaugh<br><i>University of Pittsburgh at Bradford</i>       |
| James Cox<br><i>California State University–Sacramento</i>              | Andrew O’Geen<br><i>Stony Brook University</i>                       |
| Jonathan Day<br><i>Western Illinois University</i>                      | John David Rausch, Jr.<br><i>West Texas A&amp;M University</i>       |
| Casey Dominguez<br><i>University of San Diego</i>                       | Geoffrey C. Rogal<br><i>Northern Illinois University</i>             |
| Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha<br><i>University of North Texas</i>               | Margaret E. Scranton<br><i>University of Arkansas at Little Rock</i> |
| Victoria A. Farrar-Myers<br><i>The University of Texas at Arlington</i> | Andrew H. Sidman<br><i>John Jay College of Criminal Justice</i>      |
| John Robert Greene<br><i>Cazenovia College</i>                          | Barry L. Tadlock<br><i>Ohio University</i>                           |
| Jan C. Hardt<br><i>University of Central Oklahoma</i>                   | Adam L. Warber<br><i>Clemson University</i>                          |
| Lionel Ingram<br><i>University of New Hampshire</i>                     | Dana Ward<br><i>Pitzer College</i>                                   |
| Gibbs Knotts<br><i>Western Carolina University</i>                      | Alissa Warters<br><i>Francis Marion University</i>                   |
| Magen Knuth<br><i>American University</i>                               | Timothy Werner<br><i>University of Wisconsin–Madison</i>             |

Your insight, critiques, and expertise were truly appreciated. In addition, the many archivists at presidential libraries that have assisted our research over the years deserve our thanks and appreciation as well. We are also grateful for the many colleagues we have had the pleasure to work with over the years who share our passion for studying the presidency. Our involvement in the Presidency Research Group (now called Presidents and Executive Politics) has enriched our professional lives on many levels. We also consider ourselves blessed to have studied with some of the best researchers of the American presidency, who helped to set us on our own paths as presidency scholars. At the undergraduate level, we took courses with Larry Berman at UC Davis and Theodore Lowi at Cornell University, respectively. And, it is to our

graduate advisors, Bill Lammers at USC and Elmer Cornwell at Brown University, respectively, that we dedicate this book.

Lori Cox Han would also like to thank her husband, Tom Han, and children, Taylor and Davis, for their continued support, inspiration, and unconditional love. In addition, several friends and colleagues at Chapman University deserve special recognition, including Ann Gordon, David Shafie, Chuck Hughes, Drew Moshier, Nadia Arriaga, and Erika Gonzalez, who all make Chapman a better place to work.

Diane Heith would also like to thank her husband, Stephen Kline, and her son Owen, for their love and support. Rosalyn and Elliott Heith also provided much needed support and assistance, which were essential components for finishing a project like this one. At St. John's, Patricia Bittner is the glue that holds everything together, and she deserves much gratitude for all her help.

Finally, the many students over the years who have taken Dr. Han's and Dr. Heith's respective presidency courses at Chapman, Austin College, and St. John's (and even the very first courses at UCLA and Brown) deserve thanks for their contributions to this final product.