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Teaching the American Presidency

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Teaching the American Presidency

50 Best Books About the Executive Office for College Students

Compiled by Brian Flanagan

In an 1807 letter to President Thomas Jefferson, James Madison explained that often "mere shades of difference" distinguish executive prerogatives from legislative and judicial ones. It's no wonder that even the "Father of the Constitution" would adopt a nuanced view of the institution, after all, only 1,000 words of the 4,500-word Constitution were devoted to the presidency -- more than half of which described election procedures.

During the 200 years since Madison's letter, the power of the presidency and its relationship to Congress, the Supreme Court, the American people, and the world have continued to be subjects of constant debate.

To understand all sides, students of the presidency must first understand the institution's philosophical roots, from 16th-century Florence to 18th-century Britain and France. They must understand British common law and the six-century-long struggle between crown, court, and country; the American colonial experience, revolution, and early republican government under the articles of confederation; the framing of the Constitution, George Washington's presidency, and the evolution of the office through 200 years of presidential campaigns, domestic struggles, constitutional crises, and foreign wars. In short, there is much to learn.

Presented below -- based on syllabi from more than 250 courses taught in college classrooms all over the country -- are the top-50, most-used books on the American presidency.*



#	Title	Author(s) or Editor(s)	Publisher	Last Publication
1.	<u><i>The Presidency and the Political System</i></u>	Michael Nelson	<u>CQ Press</u>	2005
2.	<u><i>Understanding the Presidency</i></u>	James Pfiffner and Roger Davidson	<u>Longman</u>	2006
3.	<u><i>Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making</i></u>	George C. Edwards and Stephen J. Wayne	<u>Wadsworth</u>	2005
4.	<u><i>The Politics of the Presidency</i></u>	Joseph A. Pika and John A. Maltese	<u>CQ Press</u>	2005
5.	<u><i>The American Presidency: Origins and Development</i></u>	Sidney M. Milikis and Michael Nelson	<u>CQ Press</u>	2003
6.	<u><i>Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents</i></u>	Richard Neustadt	<u>Free Press</u>	1991
7.	<u><i>The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style From FDR to Clinton</i></u>	Fred Greenstein	<u>Princeton UP</u>	2004
8.	<u><i>Plan of Attack</i></u>	Bob Woodward	<u>Simon & Schuster</u>	2004
9.	<u><i>The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership From John Adams to Bill Clinton</i></u>	Stephen Skowronek	<u>Belknap Press</u>	1997
10.	<u><i>The Presidency</i></u>	Jeffrey Cohen and David Nice	<u>McGraw-Hill</u>	2002
11.	<u><i>The Road to the White House: The Politics of Presidential Elections</i></u>	Stephen Wayne	<u>Wadsworth</u>	2003
12.	<u><i>The Evolving Presidency: Addresses, Cases, Essays, Letters, Reports, Resolutions, Transcript, and Other Landmark Documents</i></u>	Michael Nelson	<u>CQ Press</u>	2004
13.	<u><i>Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership</i></u>	Samuel Kernell	<u>CQ Press</u>	2006
14.	<u><i>Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership, Nixon to Clinton</i></u>	David Gergen	<u>Simon & Schuster</u>	2001
15.	<u><i>Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive</i></u>	Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson	<u>CQ Press</u>	2006
16.	<u><i>Presidential War Power</i></u>	Louis Fisher	<u>UP of Kansas</u>	2004
17.	<u><i>The Presidential Character</i></u>	James David Barber	<u>Prentice-Hall</u>	1992
18.	<u><i>The Presidency in a Separated System</i></u>	Charles O. Jones	<u>Brookings Institution</u>	2005
19.	<u><i>The Perfect Tie: The True Story of the 2000 Presidential Election</i></u>	James W. Ceaser and Andrew Busch	<u>Rowman & Littlefield</u>	2001
20.	<u><i>The Modern Presidency</i></u>	James P. Pfiffner	<u>Wadsworth</u>	2007
21.	<u><i>Presidential Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics</i></u>	Nelson Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky	<u>Rowman & Littlefield</u>	2007
22.	<u><i>Why the Electoral College is Bad for America</i></u>	George C. Edwards	<u>Yale UP</u>	2005
23.	<u><i>Thinking About the Presidency: Documents and Essays from the Founding to the Present</i></u>	Gary L. Gregg, II	<u>Rowman & Littlefield</u>	2005
24.	<u><i>The Modern American Presidency</i></u>	Lewis Gould and Richard Norton Smith	<u>UP of Kansas</u>	2004
25.	<u><i>New Challenges for the American Presidency</i></u>	George C. Edwards and Philip John Davies	<u>Longman</u>	2003
26.	<u><i>The Power of the American Presidency, 1789-2000</i></u>	Michael Genovese	<u>Oxford UP</u>	2000
27.	<u><i>The Presidency and Domestic Policy: Comparing Leadership Styles, FDR to Clinton</i></u>	William Lammers and Michael Genovese	<u>CQ Press</u>	2000
28.	<u><i>Founding the American Presidency</i></u>	Richard J. Ellis	<u>Rowman & Littlefield</u>	1999
29.	<u><i>The Rhetorical Presidency</i></u>	Jeffrey Tulis	<u>Princeton UP</u>	1988
30.	<u><i>The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled</i></u>	Theodore Lowi	<u>Cornell UP</u>	1986
31.	<u><i>Readings in Presidential Politics</i></u>	George C. Edwards	<u>Wadsworth</u>	2005

32.	<i>War and the American Presidency</i>	Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.	W. W. Norton	2005
33.	<i>Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations</i>	James Thurber	Rowman & Littlefield	2005
34.	<i>The Character Factor: How We Judge America's Presidents</i>	James P. Pfiffner	Texas A&M UP	2004
35.	<i>By Order of the President: The Use and Abuse of Executive Direct Action</i>	Phillip J. Cooper	UP of Kansas	2002
36.	<i>Triumphs and Tragedies of the Modern Presidency</i>	David Abshire	Praeger	2001
37.	<i>Presidents, the Presidency, and the Political Environment</i>	John H. Kessel	CO Press	2001
38.	<i>The Presidency</i>	Richard Pious	Longman	1995
39.	<i>Presidential Selection</i>	James W. Ceaser	Princeton UP	1979
40.	<i>Governing by Campaigning</i>	James C. Edwards	Longman	2007
41.	<i>The Changing American Presidency</i>	Richard Waterman	Atomic Dog	2006
42.	<i>The White House Staff: Inside the West Wing and Beyond</i>	Bradley H. Patterson, Jr.	Brookings Institution	2005
43.	<i>The American Presidency</i>	Alan Brinkley and Davis Dyer	Houghton Mifflin	2004
44.	<i>The Keys to Power</i>	Shirley Ann Warshaw	Longman	2004
45.	<i>Organizing the Presidency</i>	Stephen Hess and James P. Pfiffner	Brookings Institution	2002
46.	<i>Presidential Power: Forging the Presidency in the 21st Century</i>	Kumar Shapiro and Jacobs	Columbia UP	2000
47.	<i>The President as Leaders: Appealing to the Better Angels of Our Nature</i>	Edwin C. Hargrove	UP of Kansas	1999
48.	<i>The Managerial Presidency</i>	James P. Pfiffner	Texas A&M UP	1999
49.	<i>The Politics of Shared Power: Congress and the Executive</i>	Louis Fisher	Texas A&M UP	1998
50.	<i>The Presidential Republic: Executive Representation and Deliberative Democracy</i>	Gary L. Gregg, II	Rowman & Littlefield	1996

* A full list of syllabi reviewed for this project is available through the Presidential Research Group at http://cstl-cla.semo.edu/Renka/PRG/presidency_syllabi.asp.