

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Terms and concepts to know:

Article II of the Constitution	Commander-in-Chief
DOS / DOD / CIA	Head of State
Chief legislator	Veto power
OMB / Employment Act of 1946	Electoral mandate
“Bully Pulpit”	The Gallup Poll
Presidential “persuasion”	Presidential advisors / staff
Presidential “effectiveness”	Impoundment
Vietnam and the War Powers Act	Watergate and “executive privilege”
The Iran-Contra Affair	Impeachment
Presidential pardons	Limits on presidential power
“Groupthink”	

Study and discussion questions:

1. How effective is the “bully pulpit”? Are presidents still able to persuade the American public on certain issues?
2. Discuss the reasons for and legacy of the War Powers Resolution of 1973. Does this act put too much restraint on the president’s ability to deal with foreign actors and crisis situations?
3. From a psychological perspective, what type of personality profile can you develop for a person who seeks the presidency?
4. Discuss and debate Genovese’s theories of “accumulation” and “legitimization” to explain how the structure of our political economy imposes a squeeze on the office of the president? In what way does economic “globalization” place new limitations on the president’s power?
5. Do you agree with Miroff’s suggestion that the presidency as spectacle “obfuscates presidential activity, undermines executive accountability, and encourages passivity on the part of citizens”?
6. Phillips claims that the US has the highest inequality ratio of any Western nation. What evidence does he provide of growing economic inequality? How do recent trends follow the patterns of earlier periods of American history?
7. What “system” does the executive branch “guard” according to Parenti? What approach would this follow and do you believe there is any truth to it?

Readings:

Heineman. *American Government*, Chapter 9.
WEB – Genovese, Miroff, Parenti, Grover and Peschek, Phillips.

Video:

Pay To Play.