

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. Unlike most mainstream commentary on last November’s presidential election, John Peterson contends that “...constant instability and uncertainty is the new norm, and the back-and-forth ping-pong of the two-party system cannot continue indefinitely.” What does he mean by this and what evidence does he bring to his argument that you find (or don’t find) very compelling?
2. How effective is the “bully pulpit”? Are presidents still able to persuade the American public on certain issues?
3. 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?
4. From a psychological perspective, what type of personality profile can you develop for a person who seeks the presidency?
5. Do you agree with Miroff’s suggestion that the presidency as spectacle “obscures presidential activity, undermines executive accountability, and encourages passivity on the part of citizens”?
6. 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?
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 – Readings from “The Executive Branch” links.

Video:

The Corporate Coup D’Etat.