



Universidad  
de Alcalá

# GUÍA DOCENTE

## ASIGNATURA

**INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS:  
MEANING AND FUNCTION**

**Máster Universitario en Estudios  
Norteamericanos**

**Universidad de Alcalá**

**Curso Académico 2022/2023**

## SYLLABUS

Course name:	INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS: MEANING AND FUNCTION
Code:	<b>202334</b>
MA Degree:	<b>MASTER EN ESTUDIOS NORTEAMERICANOS</b>
Departamento y Área de conocimiento: Filología Moderna, Filología Inglesa	
Carácter: Obligatoria	
ECTS credits: 5	
Course and semester: 2022-2023 2nd semester	
Professors: Cristina Crespo Palomares Julio Cañero Serrano	
Office hours: To be determined	
Language: English	

### 1. PRESENTATION

This course offers students the possibility of analyzing the presidential figure in the United States from a multifarious approach. Departing from the Supreme Law of the country, the students will have access to the most notable aspects of the American Presidency, from the causes (and, of course, the effects) for its creation, to the less known and more mundane aspects of this national symbol. The presidents of the United States will be scrutinized, then, through their role as national and international leaders to demonstrate whether their presidencies could be considered strong or weak. These inquiries will be based mostly on the presidents' capacity to exercise their political influence over Congress and implement their executive value. Finally,

we will learn about the relationship (if it exists) between the different US presidents and Spain.

Recommendations:

Since all activities will be conducted in English, students are expected to have at least a C.1 level in the language within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

## 2. COMPETENCES

1. To develop the students' critical thinking and to reinforce the idea that Politics and Institutions can be interpreted in manifold ways.
2. To develop the capacities for self-assessment, self-improvement and team work.
3. To be efficient presenting information in an oral report.
4. To be able to explain the principles and major provisions of the three branches of government.
5. To be able to recognize the main ideological principles and political activity of the presidents studied.

## 3. CONTENTS

TOPIC CONTENTS	Classess
1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS	• 3 hours
2. THE BASIS OF US POLITICAL SYSTEM: DEMOCRACY, FEDERALISM & CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES	• 3 hours
3. THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH: THE CONGRESS	• 3 hours
4. THE JUDICIAL BRANCH	• 3 hours
5. THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH: THE ESTABLISHMENT	• 3 hours
6. THE ELECTORAL PROCESS	• 3 hours

7. THE PRESIDENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 hours</li> </ul>
8. THE PRESIDENT AS NATIONAL LEADER AND WORLD LEADER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 hours</li> </ul>
STUDENTS PRESENTATIONS & EVALUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 hours</li> </ul>

## 4. LESSON PLANNING: METHODOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES

### 4.1. Credit distribution

Onsite classess: 40 hours	Classes (lecture and seminars) + other activities + tutorials + Presentations
Work hours: 85 hours	This time includes studying reading texts, seminar preparation, which involves fulfilment of written assignments, researching and working with other students to coproduce different kinds of assignments
Total: 125 hours	125 hours

### 4.2. Methodology strategy, activities & materials

Onsite classess	<p>Lectures will provide the theoretical explanations of the topics under discussion.</p> <p>Seminars will explore the issues in more detail through analysis and discussion in individual and/or group work.</p> <p>Seminars will be based on the interpretation of texts, statistics, maps, newspapers, movies...</p>
Written and oral assignments	Each reading together with the programed activities for each unit will prepare students for active discussion and further reflection in an associated seminar.

Materials will be provided by the lecturer at the beginning of the course or before every onsite class. They will include diverse materials, such as movies, academic articles, political/historical documents, websites, etc. Students may be supported through a platform (EPD), which will be used mainly for class communication.

## 5. EVALUATION: Procedure and evaluation criteria<sup>1</sup>

Students should have acquired the desirable level in each of the competences specified in the assessment criteria:

1. Understanding and interpretation of the different formal aspects related to the three branches
2. Assimilation of the most important aspects about the American presidential figure
3. Recognition of the main ideological principles and political activity of the presidents studied
4. High standards of presentation and of written and oral English in all submitted coursework.

Students should have acquired the desirable level in each of the competences specified in the assessment criteria. Specific assessment criteria are the ability to distinguish between the facts and the abstract patterns which emerge from the facts, and which are elaborated on throughout the course, the ability to memorize and use the most relevant facts, and the ability to recognize the aforementioned patterns in texts. Patterns cover both the more specific knowledge about a culture, as well as the meta-knowledge about the validity of the first set of patterns. The term 'patterns' also covers the acquisition and use of strategies designed to deal with a variety of text-forms, such as statistics, maps, fictional texts, or informational texts. A further assessment criterion is the ability to write an essay in a methodologically and formally correct way.

Students are warned that plagiarism will not be tolerated. The ideas from other sources, regardless of whether they are quoted, summarized or paraphrased, must be documented adequately. According to article 34 of the University regulation on evaluation, any plagiarism found in the final version of a paper will be penalized and could result in the failure of the module. The teacher will provide students with

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<sup>1</sup> *Es importante señalar los procedimientos de evaluación: por ejemplo evaluación continua, final, autoevaluación, co-evaluación. Instrumentos y evidencias: trabajos, actividades. Criterios o indicadores que se van a valorar en relación a las competencias: dominio de conocimientos conceptuales, aplicación, transferencia conocimientos. Para el sistema de calificación hay que recordar la **Normativa del Consejo de Gobierno del 16 de Julio de 2009**: la calificación de la evaluación continua representará, **al menos, el 60%**. Se puede elevar este % en la guía.*

assessment cover sheets for written work, which certifies that their submitted work is entirely their own or appropriately referenced.

### Grading criteria

The final grade of the students will depend on their active and valuable participation in class (20%), class activities (20%), the preparation of an oral presentation (30%), an individual research paper (30%). Participation in class is HIGHLY encouraged and it will be assessed accordingly. Active participation will not only be restricted to the seminars, but also to lectures, which will also be conducted upon the comments and ideas posed by students.

Likewise, their final grade will be based on the following grading criteria:

- **Outstanding (MH):** Students display an outstanding grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been achieved at an exceptionally high level. Performance in all the tasks shows that students have read and thought at a level well beyond what is expected in the module. Students attend lectures and are always well-prepared for discussion in seminars. They obtain outstanding results in the exams.

- **Excellent (SB):** Students display an excellent grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been achieved at a very high standard and an exceptionally high level. Performance in all the tasks shows all or most of the appropriate characteristics expected for this type of work. Students attend lectures and are practically always well-prepared for discussion in seminars, with almost no absences. They obtain excellent results in the exams.

- **Very Good (N):** Students display a very good grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met fully and many have been achieved at a good or very good standard. Performance in all the tasks shows a good knowledge of the syllabus contents. Students attend lectures and seminars, with few absences, and have done most of the preparation for them. They have a good foundation in the prescribed readings and build on ideas put forward in lectures and seminars. They obtain very good results in the exams.

- **Satisfactory (A):** Students show a satisfactory grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met, but some barely exceed the threshold standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows some of the appropriate characteristics in relation to content, illustration, organisation and

expression. Students are present in lectures and seminars, with few absences, and occasionally contribute to discussions. They obtain acceptable results in the exams.

- **Fail (S):** Students show an unsatisfactory grasp of the aims and contents of the module. Some assessment criteria do not reach the threshold standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows limited understanding of essential concepts and/or minimal research. Students have multiple absences and when they come, they are often not prepared or they do not say much. Their results in the exams are insufficient considering the requirements of the course.

### **Assessment procedures**

**Continuous evaluation:** The main assessment process in this course will be continuous. Thus, students have to attend at least 80% of the classes, including lectures, seminars, workshops and ECTS tutorials. They also have to do and submit all the activities requested in them, which are the following:

- Make an individual presentation in the last week of the course
- Hand in an academic essay (2,000-2,500 words)

**Final evaluation:** If students consider that they will not be able to follow the continuous assessment process, within the first two weeks of the course they will have to request the Master Commission to be exempted from this assessment process and to be assessed through a comprehensive final exam.

In accordance with the University regulation on evaluation, for those students who are not able to follow the continuous assessment scheme there will be one final summative two-hour written exam over the material covered during the module. This exam may include objective test questions, short answer questions and discussion questions. Students who fail the ongoing evaluation cannot sit this final exam in May.

There will be a resit opportunity at the end of the second semester for students who have failed their ongoing examination or the final exam. This will also take the form of a two-hour written exam, with a similar format to the above-mentioned final examination, which will constitute 100% of the resit mark.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Baptiste, H. Prentice and Rebecca Sanchez (2004). "American Presidents and their Attitudes, Beliefs, and Actions Surrounding education and Multiculturalism: Examining Presidents George Washington, James K. Polk, and Franklin D. Roosevelt". *Multicultural Education*. 12.1: 33-40.
- Golman, Jerry et al. (1989). *The Challenge of Democracy*. Princeton, N.J.: Houghton Mifflin.
- Lewis, David E. and James M. Strine (1996). "What Time Is It? Use of Power in Four Different Types of Presidential Time". *The Journal of Politics*. 58.3: 682-706.
- Lowi, Theodore J. (1984). "Ronald Reagan –Revolutionary?". *The Reagan Presidency and the Governing of America*. Ed. Lester M. Salmon et al. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.
- Neustadt, Richard E. (1954). "Presidency and Legislation: The Growth of Central Clearance". *American Political Science*. 48: 1954: 641-71.
- Novak, Michael (1974). *Choosing Our King*. N.Y.: Macmillan.
- Peterson, Paul E. (1994). "The President's Dominance in Foreign Policy Making". *Political Science Quarterly*. 109.2: 215-234.
- Rubin, Ernest (1964). "Questions and Answers". *The American Statistician*. 18.2: 27-29.
- Schlesinger, Jr. Arthur (1997). "Rating the Presidents: Washington to Clinton". *Political Science Quarterly*. 112.2: 179-190.

## 7. ORGANIZACIÓN DOCENTE ANTE UN ESCENARIO CON RESTRICCIONES DE MOVILIDAD O DE PRESENCIALIDAD

Classes will be held online if there is a Covid-19 outbreak in the classroom following the protocol established by the University of Alcalá.

If the Spanish authorities establish a general lockdown due to Covid-19, classes will also be held online until said lockdown is no longer applicable.