

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Posc 105

THE PRESIDENCY

I. THIS MORNING:

- A. Explaining presidential performance
- B. Film: "What Happened To Bill Clinton"

II. ASSESSING PRESIDENT CLINTON'S PERFORMANCE:

- A. The expectations gap: difference between public wants and what a president can do.
 - 1. Americans expect presidents to be all things to all people.
- B. How do we explain presidential performance.
- C. The American way of judging merit
 - 1. Roles versus incumbents: recall the discussion of "roles"
 - 2. I think a case can be made that people confuse a role such as the presidency with an incumbent such as President Clinton.
 - 3. We think that the office has all sorts of powers and expect to a president to deal with any and all of our national problems.
 - a. Consider the rhetoric of politics:
 - (1) The "Clinton" tax increase (decrease)
 - (2) The "Clinton" failures (successes) in lowering crime, reducing unemployment, ending inflation,...
 - (3) "Who lost _____?!" (Fill in the blank.)
 - 4. Presidents themselves feed these expectations, both while campaigning for the office and after occupying it.
 - a. Campaign promises.
 - 5. When expectations are disappointed we look to the person—his character, background, skills, leadership qualities—for the answers.
 - 6. The film, "What Happened to Bill Clinton?" illustrates this type of analysis.
 - a. Look incidentally for explanations of his behavior in the Monica Lewinsky matter.
- D. Another explanations looks at the interplay between events and the institutional capacity.
 - 1. It argues that many of presidential failures can be attributed to weaknesses in the office and that many successes are either the product of circumstances and luck or skillful "public relations."

III. NEXT TIME:

- A. The strengths and weaknesses of the presidency.

- B. Reading:
 - 1. Patterson, *We the People*, Chapter 12 as needed.