



THE ROBERT H. SMITH
CENTER FOR THE CONSTITUTION

Presidency & the Constitution

The Presidency and the Constitution explores the theoretical foundations of executive power, the place of the executive branch in the framework of the Constitution, the creation of the executive branch at the Philadelphia Convention, the powers of the president, and the expansion of presidential power over time. The course places special emphasis on how James Madison's ideas related to the presidency and executive power.

The president of the United States is one of the most important offices in the world, and its occupant is one of the most recognizable, influential, and powerful leaders both in the United States and abroad. But where did the idea for the presidency come from? How did the Framers of the Constitution conceive of the office at the Philadelphia Convention, and how did they structure the executive branch within the context of the American government as a whole? This course explores these questions, providing rich historical context in which to understand the modern constitutional presidency. It then explores the various powers of the president and how such powers have changed over time, including appointment and removal powers, budget and spending powers, war powers, diplomatic authority and national security, as well as testimonial privileges and presidential immunity. Few would disagree that the executive power in the United States has expanded over time, broadening the scope of the office and influencing how the president interacts with the other branches of government. Finally, the course addresses contemporary challenges complicating our understanding of the presidency and the different conceptions of the office and its powers.