

COURSE: Undergraduate Research Experience – POL 495

PROJECT TITLE: Crisis Rhetoric and Unilateral Presidential Power

ENROLLMENT: One student

SUMMARY: As part of a larger project investigating the use of crisis rhetoric by the President to determine if this type of talk increases unilateral power, and if so, under what conditions, the student will gather data and analyze the results. Previous research has shown that crises – especially foreign policy crises – increase unilateral presidential power. Working from that knowledge, the student will collect all presidential speeches and code them for crisis rhetoric. Michael Baum’s “Going Private” dataset will be updated by the student and merged with an existing dataset to include all speeches from George W. Bush and Barack Obama in accordance with specific coding instructions. In addition, the student will identify to which group each speech was given in order to test the conditions under which the president is most likely to use crisis rhetoric (e.g. hostile groups will receive more crisis talk than supportive groups). During the process the student will learn how to gather and code data as well as take part in the analysis of the data. The student will also learn how to present results and prepare a paper for publication. Finally, the student will write a literature review which identifies the relevant presidential literature that explains the various debates regarding unilateral power and those things which impact the president’s ability to establish policies on his own.

BACKGROUND: This research is an extension of previous work by Laura Young on the impact of crises and Presidential Unilateral Power. This project is an extension of that research.

STRUCTURE: The instructor and student will meet with the student every two weeks to talk about the progress he is making on the project and to help him find any additional resources he may need to complete the update of the dataset. The student will submit a 15 page paper on the topics outlined above at the end of the semester. The student is expected to adhere to specific deadlines for the collection of data, the literature review, and any and all other assigned tasks.