

POS 3424
M & W 6:25-7:40 p.m.
Primera Casa (PC) 241
Fall, 2002

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Legislative Process

Congress is central to American politics. It creates the laws of our country and is the engine of U.S. democracy. My section of this course introduces students to the U.S. Congress, with emphasis on the New Institutional approach. Roughly half of the course covers "facts" concerning the institutions and history of the U.S. Congress, while the other half introduces formal analytic theory used to explain legislative behavior.

The theoretical parts of the course are based on spatial voting theory. Spatial models are a part of a branch of political science that is similar to economics. Students who loath economics may want to consider another section of this course, while students who find economics at least palatable should find the course interesting and useful for understanding legislative behavior in the U.S. Congress and in other legislatures. We will ask questions like, what motivates politicians? Why are successful politicians predominantly moderate? Does the Speaker of the House or the Rules committee have undo influence on legislative outcomes, and if so, how? Can legislators manipulate the process to their advantage? What does legislative manipulation mean for democracy? Introducing advanced political theory energizes the topics and helps us better understand why the framers feared that Congress would be the most powerful institution in American Politics.

Grading

Your grade will consist of a homework assignment, a research paper, a mid-term exam, and a final exam. I expect students to attend all classes and assume that you are mature enough to understand what happens when you miss a class. Ask another student for notes if you miss a class and make sure that you have read the notes and reading assignment before you ask me of the T.A. for help.

Although I generally think of 90-100 as an A, 80-90 as a B, etc., your overall grade for the course will be determined by the following scale:

	A	94 or above	A-	90-93.99
B+	B	82-87.99	B-	80-81.99
C+	C	72-77.99	C-	70-71.99
D+	D	62-67.99	D-	60-61.99
F		59.99 or below		

Home Work Assignment

You will be assigned one home work assignment worth 10% of your grade. This assignment will test your ability to apply the analytic skills taught in the first half of the class and help you prepare for the midterm exam.

Term Papers and Paper Outlines

30% of your grade is reserved for a five page research paper that asks you to address one of the theoretical issues we learned in class. A short paper assignment such as this may be more difficult than a long paper assignment because it requires you to distill your thoughts into a concise argument. Although the paper topics are designed to make you think about the significance of the course, they may require a fair amount of analysis time and the use of interlibrary loan. I suggest that you start on your paper as soon as the assignment is handed out in class. You will not be able to complete a “term paper” over night.

Exams

The final part of your grade comes from a mid-term exam and a final exam. Both exams may contain multiple choice, fill in the blank, problem solving, and essay type questions worth 60% of your grade. The idea is to give you multiple types of questions to evaluate your understanding of the material, not your aptitude for a particular type of test question.

	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
HOME WORK ASSIGNMENT	Sept 30	10%
MIDTERM EXAM	Oct 16	30%
TERM PAPER	Dec 2	30%
FINAL EXAM	Dec 9	30%

Make-ups

Term papers and homework assignments require research and/or a fair amount of analysis time. Please plan ahead to avoid turning them in late. **Late assignments will be lowered one letter grade for every *working day* they are late.** If an assignment is late, it would be a good idea to stick it under my office door (DM 482B) as soon as possible to avoid any unnecessary late penalties. Grades are lowered for every *working day* they are late, not every class day they are late and no assignment will be accepted after the final exam!

If you miss the midterm exam for a good reason, you will be allowed to complete a make-up midterm on Monday, October 28 at 5:00-6:15 p.m., meeting in DM 482B. **THERE WILL BE NO OTHER TIME TO MAKE UP THE MID-TERM EXAM AND NO MAKE-UP EXAM FOR THE FINAL. NO EXCUSES!** It also should be noted that the make-up exam will be considerably more difficult than the regular mid-term exam and should be avoided. Please plan ahead.

Required Texts

We will read both theoretical and substantive works in this course that vary in length and difficulty. Analytical assignments from the Stewart book are more difficult than substantive assignments from Davidson and Oleszek. The Stewart assignments are likely to require two readings

before they are fully comprehended. Please read the assignment before coming to class. Reading before class helps the discussions run more smoothly, prevents over-lecturing, and allows you to better understand the materials. Remember, if you work hard and complete all the readings, this should be a very rewarding course. Expect two hours of reading for every hour of class time, except during exams.

Two books are required for the course. Both can be purchased from the campus bookstore:

- 1) Stewart, Charles. 2001. *Analyzing Congress*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- 2) Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek. 2001. *Congress and its Members, 8th Ed.* Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

1. Congress in the Government

Aug 28 - * Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 1 & 2.
Sept 4

Sept 2 NO CLASS: Labor Day!

2. Analytical Tools and The Median Voter Theorem

Sept 9 - * Stewart, Chapter 1.
23

3. Lawmaking in Two Different Houses

Sept 25 - * Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 7 - 8.
Oct 7

4. Constitutional Origins of Congress

Oct 9 - * Stewart, Chapter 2.
14

Oct 16 MIDTERM EXAM

5. A Brief History of Congress

Oct 21 - * Stewart, Chapter 3.
28

6. Congressional Elections

Oct 30 - * Stewart, Chapter 4.
Nov 4

7. Parties and Leaders

Nov 6 - * Stewart, Chapter 7.
11

8. Committees in Congress

Nov 13 - * Stewart, Chapter 8.
20

9. Floor Voting

Nov 25 - * Stewart, Chapter 9.
Dec 2

Nov 27 No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday

DEC 2: TERM PAPERS DUE

Dec 4 CATCH-UP & REVIEW

Dec 9 FINAL EXAM (6:25 - 11:05 pm)