

SPECIAL TOPICS: CONGRESSIONAL PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

Political Science 4790H

Fall 2018

TR 2:00-3:15

Baldwin Hall 104

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Course Description

This course is intended to provide students with a background in congressional process and procedure, social science research methods and data collection and management. A thorough understanding of the United States Congress requires not only a familiarity of its evolution and institutions, but a deep comprehension of the trade-offs inherent in policy-making. Throughout this course, we will evaluate existing theories of legislative evolution and policy-making. This will require students to learn data collection and analysis techniques utilized by social scientists. As such, students will work with the instructor in collecting data on congressional politics as well as complete several additional assignments pertaining to the data collection. Students will also be required to complete a detailed analysis of the passage of a landmark piece of legislation.

Required Books

The following book is required and can be purchased from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com):

Oleszek, Walter J., Mark J. Oleszek, Elizabeth Rybicki, Bill Heniff, Jr. 2016. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process, 10th Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

The following books are recommended and can be purchased from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). These all provide discussion of the legislative process through detailed case studies:

Draper, Robert. 2012. *Do Not Ask What Good We Do: Inside the U.S. House of Representatives*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Kaiser, Robert. 2013. *Act of Congress: How America's Essential Institution Works, and How It Doesn't*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf.

Mann, Robert. 1996. *The Walls of Jericho: Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Richard Russell, and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

Sinclair, Barbara. 2016. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the United States Congress, 5th Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Additional recommended readings are listed in the Tentative Readings Schedule. Students will not only be expected to have done the reading assignments, but should also be aware of relevant news stories. As such, I recommend reading a daily newspaper – such as the New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com>)

and/or the Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com>) - or at least checking [cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com). Additional links to political blogs or websites can be found on the instructors' website.

Additional readings will be available via the course dropbox folder. Many of these readings will be highly technical in nature. As such, students are not expected to understand all aspects of each paper. However, they will be held accountable for a basic understanding of the paper's theory and applications.

Course Grading

Your grade in this class will be assigned according to the following:

1. **Class Attendance/Participation (10% of final grade):** Students will be required to attend class to discuss their progress and the broader data collection progress. Additionally, we will be reading literature on congressional politics and applying it to the data collected. Students will be expected to have completed the assigned readings and participate in these discussions.
2. **Data Collection (40% of final grade):** In accordance with the policies established by the University of Georgia's Center for Undergraduate Research, students will be required to spend five hours a week collecting data on congressional politics. To date, students of congressional politics have written extensively about roll call voting and the legislative process in Congress. Using roll call votes, political scientists have demonstrated fairly convincingly that the two political parties are more polarized than they have been since the years leading up to the Civil War. This polarization is commonly treated by the media as being solely driven by ideology. Similarly, campaigns and interest groups routinely use roll call votes as latent or true measures of politicians' attitudes on issues. This suggests that the solution to solving the problem of gridlock is to "vote the bums out" and replace them with less-ideological members.

However, we know comparatively little about how the roll call record has changed over time. Roll call votes need to be formally requested by a member and supported by a sufficient second of one-fifth of a quorum, as specified by the Constitution. The framers debated the roll call voting clause and viewed the sufficient second as a compromise that balanced the need for transparency in government with a fear, as Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts put it, of stuffing the record with "frivolous" votes to "mislead the people, who never know the reasons determining the votes."

A systematic examination of the roll call generating process in both the House and Senate will help us address this issue. Utilizing the *Congressional Record* available on Hein Online and [congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov), students will code the vote type and disposition of key parts of the legislative process during the passage of landmark enactments. This includes final passage in the House and the Senate, votes on the special rule and motion to recommit in the House, votes on the motion to proceed in the Senate and votes resolving differences between the chambers. Students will meet in class to discuss interesting cases and gauge their progress. Students are expected to have completed their data collection by Thursday, **November 28**.

3. **Comparison Assessment (5% of final grade):** Students will be required to turn in a short comparison assignment. Pairs of students will code the first 10 entries to the same bill and write a short paper comparing their data and discussing discrepancies. The comparison assessment is due on Tuesday, **August 28**. A more detailed discussion of the comparison assignments will be provided in class.
4. **Mid-semester Data Assessments (10% of final grade):** Students will be required to turn in two separate mid-semester data assessment assignments (worth 5% each). These assessments should

include a listing and description of bills that the student has analyzed. This listing and description should contain a count of the number of entries coded in the House and the Senate. Each assessment should also include a discussion of specific cases they found particularly interesting, confusing or problematic. The data assessments are due on Tuesday, **October 9** and Tuesday, **November 13**. A more detailed discussion of the assessments will be provided in class.

5. Final Data Assessment (**10% of final grade**): Students will also be required to complete one final data assessment. This assessment should be cumulative and contain a discussion of all bills completed during the semester. The final data assessment is due with the student's completed data on Thursday, **November 28**.

6. Landmark Bill History (**25% of final grade**): In order to demonstrate an understanding of the historical policy-making process, students are required to complete a paper analyzing the passage of a "landmark piece" of American legislation. A list of landmark bills will be provided by the instructor. A more detailed discussion of the assignment will be provided in class, however, the analysis should include the following labelled sections: (1) An "Overview" section, which provides identifying information and a brief summary of the act; (2) A "Background" section, which includes information on the broader political context; (3) "Initial House Consideration," which discusses the bills chronological consideration in the House of Representative as observed in the *Congressional Record*; (4) "Initial Senate Consideration," which discusses the bills chronological consideration in the Senate as observed in the *Congressional Record*; (5) A "Subsequent Action" section, which provides an overview of the bills consideration after initial consideration in both chambers; (6) An "Aftermath" section, which includes any relevant information on the bill after enactment and; (7) An "Additional Notes" section, which includes any additional discussion and information you may find relevant. The landmark bill history is due before Thursday, **December 6**.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: 100-93 = A, 90-92 = A-, 87-89 = B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 = B-, 77-79 = C+, 73-76 = C, 70-72 = C-, 60-69 = D, and 60-0. Extra credit assignments will not be given in this course.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to notify the instructor and the Office for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made.

Instructor Availability

Students seeking to contact the instructor are encouraged to stop by during scheduled office hours. Students who are unable to attend office hours should e-mail ahead of time to ensure instructor availability.

Classroom Behavior

Students should behave professionally throughout the course. Due to the large size of the course, disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking and derogatory or offensive comments made during discussion.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will have their names forwarded to the University. It is each student's responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism. Further information regarding academic honesty can be found at <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>.

Tentative Course Outline/Readings Schedule:

August 14-16: Course Overview

Assignments:

None.

August 21-23: Coding Walkthrough.

Assignments:

None.

August 28-30: Congress and Lawmaking

Assignments:

Oleszek et al. Chapters 1-3

Comparison assessment due!

September 4-6: House Process

Assignments:

Oleszek et al. Chapters 4-5

September 11-13: Senate Process

Assignments:

Oleszek et al. Chapters 6-7

September 18-20: Polarization; Ideological Scaling

Assignments:

[Polarization is Real \(and Asymmetric\)](#)

[Mapping Congress' Growing Polarization](#)

September 25-27: Roll Call Votes and the Amending Process

Assignments:

CRS Report 98-853, "The Amending Process in the Senate"

Wallner, James, "Unprecedented: Informal Rules and Leader Power in the United States Senate"

[Vulnerable Senate Democrats Almost Always Voted With Obama](#)

October 2-4: Assorted Procedures; Writing an Assessment

Assignments:

CRS Report 98-995, "The Amending Process in the House"

["Could the Modern Senate Manage an Open-Amendment Process?"](#)

["The Motion to Recommit, Hijacked by Politics"](#)

Lynch, Michael S., Anthony J. Madonna, and Jason M. Roberts. 2016. "The Cost of Majority Party Bias: Amending Activity under Structured Rules." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 41: 633-655.

October 9-11: Working in Congress; Rules

Assignments:

[Best Intern Ever: Roll Call's Guide to Acing Your Internship](#)

Cox, Gary W. 2000. "On the Effects of Legislative Rules." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25: 169-192.

Midterm assessment 1 due!

October 16-18: Measuring Congressional Performance

Assignments:

[Five Reasons why you Can't Judge a Congress by Counting Laws](#)

Clinton, Joshua and John Lapinski. 2006. "Measuring Legislative Accomplishment, 1877-1994." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(1): 232-249.

Howell, William, Scott Adler, Charles Cameron and Charles Riemann. 2000. "Divided Government and the Legislative Productivity of Congress, 1945-94." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25: 285-312.

October 23-25: Committees and Leaders

Assignments:

Cooper, Joseph and David W. Brady. 1981. "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn." *American Political Science Review* 75(2): 411:425.

[What happened to John Boehner hasn't happened in a century. No one knows what comes next.](#)

October 30-November 1: "Fixing" Congress

Assignments:

[Confessions of a Congressman](#)

[Help, We're in a Living Hell and Don't Know How to Get Out](#)

[New Directions in Legislative Research: Lessons from Inside Congress](#)

November 6-8: Writing a Bill History

Assignments:

Midterm assessment 2 due!

November 13-15: Roll Call Voting

Assignments:

Lynch, Michael and Anthony J. Madonna. 2018. *Transparency, Position-Taking and Recorded Voting in the U.S. Congress*. Unpublished manuscript.

Lee, Frances E. 2018. "The 115th Congress and Questions of Party Unity in a Polarized Era." *The Journal of Politics* 80(4).

November 20-22: Thanksgiving Break

Assignments:

None.

November 27-29: Senate Rules

Assignments:

Madonna, Anthony. 2011. "Institutions and Coalition Formation: Revisiting the Effects of Rule XXII on Winning Coalition Sizes in the U.S. Senate." *American Journal of Political Science*, 55: 276-288.

Wawro, Gregory and Eric Schickler. 2004. "Where's the Pivot? Obstruction and Law-making in the Pre-cloture Senate." *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (4): 758-774.

Bill History Due!