

POLS 4600: Legislative Process

Fall 2019

Baldwin 301

MWF 10:10-11:00am

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Course Description:

This course is intended as a broad survey of the legislative branch of the American government. In this course we discuss the origins and development of the U.S. Congress, congressional elections, the committee systems, legislative process, the role of political parties, and inter-branch relations. Particular attention is given to changes in Congress, as well as current political and scholarly controversies such as budgetary politics, party effects, and campaign finance reform.

Course Goals:

The primary goal of this course is to familiarize the student with the workings of the United States Congress. The U.S. Congress is not only the oldest popularly elected legislative body, but also one of the most complex and powerful. A thorough understanding of the body 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 attempt to get a handle on this by relating some of the basic political science literature on Congress to contemporary events.

Books and Readings:

The following books are required and can be purchased from amazon.com and at the Campus Bookstore:

Davidson, Roger, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee and Eric Schickler. 2017. *Congress and Its Members*. 16th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Sinclair, Barbara. 2017. *Unorthodox Lawmaking*. 5th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

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 and/or the Washington Post – or at least checking cnn.com. Other political blogs that students may find useful include FiveThirtyEight, Political Wire, The Monkey Cage, The Upshot, Vox, the Drudge Report and Roll Call.

Some optional books you might want to consider purchasing can be found on amazon.com:

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

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.

Murray, Alan and Jeffrey Birnbaum. 1987. *Showdown at Gucci Gulch*. Random House Publishing.

Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. 2nd Edition. Yale University Press.

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

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

Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Additional readings will be posted on the course website. Some 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**): One of the goals for this class is for students to become comfortable discussing congressional institutions, issues, events and research. Hence, class periods will be part lecture and part discussion. Students should be prepared to discuss the reading for the day with their classmates. Students will be given one point for attending the class, and an additional point for adequate participation. The lowest two attendance/participation grades will be dropped. A student's participation grade may also include several small quizzes or assignments.
2. Midterm Exams (**45% of final grade**): Two midterm exams will be given on Friday, **October 4** and Monday, **November 11th**. These exams will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions. The midterm examinations will be non-cumulative. If a student is unable to take the exam on the scheduled date, they should contact the

course instructor beforehand. A missed exam will only be excused for a documented illness (documentation must be provided by a physician) or a death in the family. Each midterm exam is worth 22.5% of the final course grade.

3. **Legislative History (45% of final grade):** In order to demonstrate an understanding of the historical policy-making process, students are required to complete a paper analyzing the consideration and passage of a major piece of American legislation. A list of important laws is available on the Congress Project Website here. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor before selecting a topic. The legislative history assignment will count for 40% of the final course grade, broken up accordingly (more detailed discussions of the assignment will be provided in class):

- (1) A one-page Topic Paper detailing the legislation the student will be analyzing. This paper should include a broad discussion of the policy area, paying close attention to the topic's importance and relevance. The topic paper accounts for 5% of the final course grade and is due on Friday, **September 20**.

- (2) A Preliminary Draft of the legislative history. This should include background information on the legislation, a timeline of events that led to its enactment and three quotes from the floor of the House and the Senate from legislators. The preliminary is worth 5% of the final course grade and is due on Friday, **October 11**.

- (3) A one-page Meet Your Member assignment. This should provide background information on a member of Congress who was influential in your legislative history. The meet your member assignment is worth 5% of the final course grade and is due on Friday, **October 25**.

- (4) A short, 5-6 minute PowerPoint Presentation on your legislative history. Presentations will be given in class from Friday, **November 15** through Monday, **November 25**. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.

- (5) The Final Legislative History assignment. The final legislative history is worth 20% of the final course grade and is due on Monday, **December 9**. It should be a minimum of 10 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, one inch margins, Times New Roman, 12 point font, Chicago style citations). Papers will be docked a full letter grade for each day they are late.

The final legislative history should include the following labelled sections: "Overview," which provides identifying information and a brief summary of the act; "Background," which includes information on the broader political context; "Initial House Consideration," which discusses the bills chronological consideration in the House of Representative as observed in the *Congressional Record*; "Initial Senate Consideration," which discusses the bills chronological consideration in the Senate as observed in the *Congressional Record*; "Subsequent Action," which provides an overview of the bills

consideration after initial consideration in both chambers; “Aftermath,” which includes any relevant information on the bill after enactment and; “Citations,” which should include any newspaper or academic sources used in the legislative history; “Additional Notes,” which includes any additional discussion and information you may find relevant.

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 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 and disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking and derogatory or offensive comments made during discussion. Students will be held responsible for all material discussed or assigned.

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 Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule:

Week	Topic	Readings
Aug 14	Introduction/Syllabus	
Aug 16	How a Bill Becomes a Law	
Aug 19	How a Bill Becomes a Law (cont)	
Aug 21	The Two Congresses	DOLS Ch. 1
Aug 23	Path Dependency	Pierson 2000
Aug 26	Path Dependency (cont)	
Aug 28	Evolution of the Modern Congress	DOLS Ch. 2
Aug 30	<i>No Class (APSA)</i>	
Sep 2	<i>No Class (Labor Day)</i>	
Sep 4	Elections: Going for It	DOLS Ch. 3
Sep 6	The Electoral Game	DOLS Ch. 4
Sep 9	Picking a Legislative History Paper Topic	
Sep 11	Hill Styles and Home Styles	DOLS Ch. 5
Sep 13	Leaders and Parties	DOLS Ch. 6
Sep 16	Leaders and Parties (cont)	Explaining Boehner's Resignation
Sep 18	Committees: Workshops of Congress	DOLS Ch. 7
Sep 20	Committee Development <i>Legislative History Paper Topic Due</i>	Gamm and Smith (1989)
Sep 23	Committee Development (cont)	Jenkins (1998)
Sep 25	Congressional Rules and Procedures	DOLS Ch. 8
Sep 27	Congressional Rules and Procedures (cont)	

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule (cont):

Date	Topic	Reading
Sep 30	Decision-Making in Congress	DOLS Ch. 9
Oct 2	Decision-Making in Congress (cont)	
Oct 4	<i>Midterm 1</i>	
Oct 7	How to Write a Legislative History	Norsworthy 2019
Oct 9	How the Process has Changed	Sinclair Ch. 6
Oct 11	Congress and Health Care <i>Legislative History Outline Due</i>	Sinclair Ch. 7
Oct 14	Congressional Leadership	Cooper and Brady (1981)
Oct 16	Parties in Congress	Cox and McCubbins (2002)
Oct 18	Parties in Congress (cont)	Finocchiaro and Rohde (2008)
Oct 21	Spatial Modeling in Congress	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 5
Oct 23	Spatial Modeling in Congress (cont)	
Oct 25	Supreme Court Appointments <i>Meet Your Member Due</i>	Moraski and Shipan (1999)
Oct 28	Supreme Court Appointments (cont)	
Oct 30	House Rules	Schickler and Rich (1997) Cox and McCubbins (1997)
Nov 1	<i>No Class (Fall Break)</i>	
Nov 4	House Rules (cont)	Binder (1996)
Nov 6	Senate Rules	Wawro and Schickler (2004) Madonna (2011)
Nov 8	Measuring Legislative Accomplishment	Clinton and Lapinski (2006) Counting Laws

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule (*cont*):

Date	Topic	Reading
Nov 11	<i>Midterm 2</i>	
Nov 13	How to Write a Legislative History (cont)	Intlekofer 2018
Nov 15	<i>Bill Presentations</i>	
Nov 18	<i>Bill Presentations</i>	
Nov 20	<i>Bill Presentations</i>	
Nov 22	<i>Bill Presentations</i>	
Nov 25	<i>Bill Presentations</i>	
Nov 27	<i>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</i>	
Nov 29	<i>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</i>	
Dec 2	“Fixing Congress”	Confessions of a Congressman
Dec 4	“Fixing Congress” (cont)	Help, We’re in a Living Hell and Don’t Know How to Get Out
Dec 9	<i>Legislative History Final Draft Due</i>	