

POLS 4600: Legislative Process

May 2020

Zoom Meeting Room

M-F 11:00am-1:45pm

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Hours: TH 1:45-2:45pm

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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:

There is no required book for the Maymester POLS 4600: Legislative Process class. Instead, links to readings that correspond to each lecture are provided in the schedule at the end of this syllabus. 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.

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 students might want to consider purchasing can be found on amazon.com:

Oleszek, Walter J., Mark J. Oleszek, Elizabeth Rybicki and Bill Heniff, Jr. 2020. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. 11th 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.

Course Grading:

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

1. Background Survey (**5% of final grade**): Students will be asked to fill out a short background survey for the purposes of matching them with a legislative history topic. A link to the survey will be provided by the instructor. The deadline to fill out the survey is Thursday, **May 14th** at 5 pm.
2. Midterm Exams (**45% of final grade**): Two midterm exams will be given on Friday, **May 22nd** and Thursday, **May 28th**. Links to the exams will be e-mails to students at 11 am and they will be due at 5 pm the same day. The exams will consist of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank and short answer questions. Students are free to use whatever resources they want to answer these exams. The midterm examinations will be non-cumulative and include questions related to a student's assigned legislative history topic. 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 (**50% 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. After

filling out the background survey discussed above, each student will be assigned to one of his 15 legislative history “teams.” While students are encouraged to work with their legislative history “teammates,” they are not obligated to do so. Each student will be assigned differing questions and duties related to the legislative history and graded separately. Students are also encouraged to use material from their exams in compiling their legislative histories. The legislative history assignment will count for 50% of the final course grade, broken up accordingly (more detailed discussions of the assignment will be provided in class):

(1) A brief, three-paragraph Summary detailing the legislation the student will be analyzing. More specifically, the summary section should do three things: Paragraph 1: Tell the reader what the law does/sought to do; Paragraph 2: Tell the reader why the law is or is not considered important today; Paragraph 3: Characterize its passage. Was it controversial? Partisan? What were the key votes/moments that occurred during consideration?. The summary section should not exceed 500 words and is due on Wednesday, **May 20th** at 5pm .

(2) A Background section that answers a specific question assigned by the instructor. Typically, this will necessitate contextualizing either the political climate the legislation was considered in or provide a history of the policy. Ideally, it will demonstrate why the legislation was needed. The background section is due on Tuesday, **May 26th** at 5pm.

(3) A Process section that analyzes committee and floor consideration of the measure during a specific period assigned by the instructor. This may involve House or Senate consideration of a bill or conference report and will likely necessitate the discussion of a given rule or legislative procedure. It will also likely necessitate analyzing a roll call vote. The process section is due on Friday, **May 29th** at 5pm.

(4) A Member Spotlight section. This is a short, one to two-page discussion detailing a member of Congress associated with the passage of the law. It can include either on a broad overview of a member’s career and/or an interesting episode they were involved in. Students are encouraged to focus on whatever details they feel are the most interesting. The Member Spotlight is due on Tuesday, **June 2nd** at 5 pm.

(5) An Aftermath section that analyzes a post-enactment event related to the bill assigned to the student by the instructor. This might include the law being amended by a subsequent piece of legislation, being altered by a series of Supreme Court decisions or its enforcement by the President and bureaucracy. The Aftermath section is due on Friday, **June 5th** at 5 pm.

Each of the sections mentioned above should be clearly labelled, written in Times New Roman 12-point font (main text) and Times News Roman 10-point font (footnotes).

It should be single-spaced and include a Work Cited section if needed.

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. In addition to holding regular office hours in a Zoom Meeting Room, I am available via phone or e-mail.

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. If students are unable to attend Zoom lectures, the recorded lectures will be made available shortly afterwards.

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:

Day	Topic	Readings
May 13	Introduction to POLS 4600 Five Key Take-Away Points about Congress CRS and Legislative Process	Help! We're in a Living Hell CRS and Legislative Process
May 14	Constitutional Foundations of Congress How a Bill Becomes a Law <i>Qualtrics Survey Due</i>	U.S. Constitution CRS: Intro to the Legislative Process
May 15	How to Write a Legislative History Congressional Resources and Information	Legislative History Resources
May 18	<i>No Class (Memorial Day)</i>	
May 19	Committees in Congress House Party Leaders History and Evolution of the House	The Committee System Party Leaders in the House Cooper and Brady (1981)
May 20	The House Rules Committee Considering Legislation on the House Floor Amendments in the House <i>Summary Section Due</i>	Vick et al. 2020 Legislation on the House Floor Amendments in the House
May 21	House Voting Procedures Polarization Ideological Scaling	House Voting Procedures WaPo: Congress is More Polarized Mapping Congressional Polarization
May 22	<i>Exam 1</i>	
May 25	Parties in Congress Congressional Productivity	Krehbiel 1995 Binder et al. 1999 Counting Laws
May 26	U.S. Senate History Senate Floor Procedures <i>Background Section Due</i>	Senate: Origins and Development Senate Floor Process
May 27	The Amending Process in the Senate Filibusters and Cloture Resolving Differences	Madonna and Kosar 2015 Filibusters and Cloture Conference Committees
May 28	<i>Exam 2</i>	

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

Date	Topic	Reading
May 29	Congressional Negotiations Delegation Appropriations and Budgeting <i>Process Section Due</i>	Binder and Lee 2013 Congressional Influence Intro to Appropriations
June 1	Legislative History: The 21st Amendment Who Serves in Congress? Congressional Benefits	21st Amendment The 116th Congress Salaries and Allowance
June 2	Congressional Fundraising Congressional Staff <i>Member Spotlight Due</i>	Last Week Tonight Why Congress Relies on Lobbyists
June 3	"Fixing" Congress Conclusion	Confessions of a Congressman
June 5	<i>Aftermath Due</i>	