

# **POLS 4600: Legislative Process**

## **Spring 2020**

### **Class Schedule**

Tuesday and Thursday  
9:30 AM – 10:45 AM  
Baldwin 301

### **Instructor**

Prof. Jordan McKissick  
Office: TBD  
Email: [jordanmm@uga.edu](mailto:jordanmm@uga.edu)  
Office Hours: Wed 11:00 AM to 2:00PM, and by appointment

### **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. 2020. *Congress and Its Members*. 17th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

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

We will also have several articles and book chapters assigned that will either be available online or will be emailed to the class.

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.

### **Course Grading:**

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

1. Class attendance and participation (10% of final grade): I expect you to attend class daily and participate in discussions and simulations. To fully participate you should read any assigned materials and use these materials to actively engage the class in discussion.
2. Written Assignments (40% of final grade): There are four assignments scheduled for this class.
  - Reaction Paper (10%): You are to write two reaction papers detailing the readings of any week of your choosing. These reviews should briefly summarize, analytically synthesize, and critique the week's literature in the particular area of emphasis and should run about 3-4 pages. You have some leeway in terms of when to turn in your reaction papers, with the only restriction being that one must be completed prior to spring break and the remaining paper will be due before the end of the semester.
  - Legislative History (10%): You will describe the state of the federal law for a particular area of interest to you. You will include a legislative history of this area, highlighting any recent successful or failed attempts at changing the law. **Due March 5th .**
  - Original Bill (20%): You will propose a bill on an area of interest to you (ideally the same area as the legislative history). In addition to writing a bill, you will write a "Dear Member" letter that explains its value to other members of Congress and present it in class. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one letter grade for each day they are late. **Due April 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.**
3. Midterm Exam (25% of final grade): Please take note of the date for the midterm exam and mark it on your calendar now.
4. Final Exam (25% of final grade): Please take note of the date for the final exam and mark it on your calendar now.

Missed exams will only be excused for a documented illness (documentation must be provided by a physician) or a death in the family. If you are excused from an exam, I reserve the

right to alter the format and substance of the makeup exam (e.g. you may not get the same exam as everyone else).

Course grades will be assigned as follows: 93{100% = A, 90{93% = A-, 87{90% = B+, 83{87% = B, 80{83% = B-, 77{80% = C+, 73{77% = C, 70{73% = C-, 67{70% = D+, 63{67% = D, 60{60% = D-, 0{60% = F.

**Other Issues**

1. **Disabilities:** Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to tell me at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made.
2. **Instructor Availability:** I am available to meet with students by appointment if anyone cannot attend my posted office hours. Please email me to schedule a meeting.
3. **Technology in the Classroom:** Technology, used correctly, has the potential to greatly improve the quality of our lives. Technology, used incorrectly, has the potential of making the instructor very angry. Turn o\_ your cell phone while in class (some exceptions may apply - i.e. you are volunteer firefighter or a transplant surgeon awaiting the arrival of a donor heart). Laptops may be used to take notes in class, but not for playing games, checking email, or surfing the internet.
4. **Cheating and Plagiarism:** Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F for the course and their names will be forwarded to the University for potential further disciplinary action. It is each student's responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism. If you do not know, please come ask me.

**Tentative Schedule:**

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan 7	Introduction/Syllabus	
Jan 9	<b>No Class (SPSA)</b>	
Jan 14	How a Bill Becomes a Law	
Jan 16	How a Bill Becomes a Law (Cont.)	
Jan 21	The Two Congresses	DOLS Ch. 1, Mayhew 1974
Jan 23	Evolution on the Modern Congress	DOLS Ch. 2
Jan 28	Elections	DOLS Ch. 3

Jan 30	The Electoral Game	DOLS Ch. 4, Carson et al
Feb 4	Hill Styles and Home Styles	DOLS Ch.5
Feb 6	Leaders and Parties	DOLS Ch. 6
Feb 11	Workshops of Congress	DOLS Ch. 7
Feb 13	Committee Development	
Feb 18	Rules and Procedures	DOLS Ch. 8
Feb 20	Rules and Procedures (cont.)	
Feb 25	Review	
Feb 27	<b>Midterm</b>	
Mar 3	Decision-Making in Congress	DOLS Ch. 9
Mar 5	Decision-Making in Congress (cont.)	
Mar 10	<b>No Class Spring Break</b>	
Mar 12	<b>No Class Spring Break</b>	
Mar 17	How the Process has Changed	Sinclair
Mar 19	(cont.)	Curry excerpts
Mar 24	Parties in Congress	Krehbiel 1995, Binder et al. 1999
Mar 26	Spatial Modeling in Congress	
Mar 31	Congress and the President	DOLS Ch. 11
Apr 2	Congress and the Courts	DOLS Ch. 12; Moraski & Shipan
Apr 7	House Rules	Schickler and Rich (1997)
Apr 9	House Rules (cont.)	Cox and McCubbins (1997)
Apr 14	Senate Rules	Wawro&Schickler (2004), Madonna
Apr 16	Measuring Leg. Accomplishment	Clinton and Lapiniski (2006)

Apr 21	Original Bill Presentations	
Apr 23	Original Bill Presentations	