

POLS 4600: Legislative Process

Fall 2021

Baldwin 301

MWF 12:40 - 1:30

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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, 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 POLS 4600: Legislative Process. Instead, links to readings that correspond to each lecture are provided in the schedule at the end of this syllabus. These will also be posted in ELC. 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 Monday, **August 23** at 5 pm.
2. Exams (**40% of final grade**): Two exams will be given on Friday, **October 8** and Monday, **December 13**. The exams will consist of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank and short answer questions. The exams 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 20% of the final course grade.

3. **Legislative History (55% 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 a legislative history “team.” 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. These assignments will be posted by the instructor on eLC. Students are also encouraged to use material from their exams in compiling their legislative histories. The legislative history assignment will count for 55% of the final course grade, broken up accordingly (more detailed discussions of the assignment will be provided in eLC):

(1) A one-page Topic Paper detailing the broader issue 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 17** at 11pm. It will not be combined with the broader legislative history paper.

(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 Friday, **October 1** at 11pm. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.

(3) 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 Friday, **October 22** at 11 pm. It is worth 5% of the final course grade.

(4) A Process section that analyzes committee and floor consideration of the measure during a specific period assigned by the instructor. The 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, **November 12** at 11 pm. It is worth 15% of the final course grade.

(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, **November 19** at 11 pm. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.

(6) A Final Paper that combines the background, member spotlight, process, and aftermath sections and incorporates any instructor comments is due on Tuesday, **December 7** at 11pm. The final paper should also include a brief, three-paragraph Summary detailing the legislation and issue the student will be analyzing. 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 both the underlying issue and law are (or are 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 is worth 5% of the final course grade. The final paper with edits is worth an additional 5%.

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.

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 set up a meeting. In addition to holding regular office hours both in person and in a Zoom Meeting Room, I am available via phone or e-mail.

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
Aug 18	Introduction to POLS 4600	
Aug 20	Five Key Take-Away Points about Congress Congressional Fundraising	Help! We're in a Living Hell Last Week Tonight
Aug 23	How a Bill Becomes a Law: House <i>Qualtrics Survey Due</i>	CRS and Legislative Process
Aug 25	How a Bill Becomes a Law: Senate	CRS: Intro to the Legislative Process
Aug 27	Fall 2021 Legislative History Groups Congressional Resources and Information	The Georgia Congress Project Legislative History Resources
Aug 30	Lincoln <i>Zoom Group Meeting Week</i>	Binder (2012)
Sep 1	<i>Zoom Group Meeting Week</i>	
Sep 3	<i>Zoom Group Meeting Week</i>	
Sep 6	<i>No Class - Labor Day</i>	
Sep 8	Constitutional Foundations of Congress	U.S. Constitution
Sep 10	Why Rules?	Cox 2000
Sep 13	Committees and Leaders	The Committee System Party Leaders in the House
Sep 15	Power in the House	Cooper and Brady (1981)
Sep 17	The House Rules Committee <i>Topic Paper Due</i>	Vick et al. 2020
Sep 20	Spatial Modeling in Congress	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 5

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

Date	Topic	Reading
Sep 22	Committee-Gatekeeper Games	
Sep 24	Committee-Gatekeeper Games with Bad Stick Figures	
Sep 27	The House Floor	Legislation on the House Floor House Voting Procedures
Sep 29	Ideological Scaling	WaPo: Congress is More Polarized
Oct 1	Ideological Scaling II <i>Background Section Due</i>	Mapping Congressional Polarization
Oct 4	House Rule Choice	Schickler and Rich (1997)
Oct 6	House Rule Choice II House Rule Choice II	Cox and McCubbins (1997) Binder (1996)
Oct 8	<i>Exam 1</i>	
Oct 11	Parties in Congress I	Krehbiel 1995
Oct 13	Parties in Congress II	Binder et al. 1999
Oct 15	Parties in Congress III	
Oct 18	Senate Floor Procedures The Amending Process in the Senate	Senate Floor Process Madonna and Kosar 2015
Oct 20	Senate Origins and Development	Senate: Origins and Development
Oct 22	Senate Origins and Development II <i>Member Spotlight Due</i>	
Oct 25	The Evolution of the Senate Filibuster	Filibusters and Cloture
Oct 27	Senate Filibuster II	Wawro and Schickler (2004) Madonna (2011)

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

Date	Topic	Reading
Oct 29	<i>No Class - Fall Break</i>	
Nov 1	Supreme Court Appointments	Moraski and Shipan (1999)
Nov 3	Supreme Court Appointments II	
Nov 5	Process Sections	Sinclair Ch. 13
Nov 8	Congress and Health Care	Oleszek and Oleszek 2012
Nov 10	Congressional Agenda Control	Finocchiaro and Rohde (2008)
Nov 12	Congressional Agenda Control II <i>Process Section Due</i>	
Nov 15	Resolving Differences	Sinclair Ch. 4 Conference Committees
Nov 17	Negotiations and Delegation Working in Congress	Binder and Lee 2013 Best Intern Ever: Roll Call's Guide to Acing Your Internship
Nov 19	Who Serves in Congress?	The 116th Congress
	Congressional Benefits <i>Aftermath Section Due</i>	Salaries and Allowance
Nov 22	Congressional Staff	Staff Cuts Why Congress Relies on Lobbyists
Nov 24	<i>No Class - Thanksgiving Break</i>	
Nov 26	<i>No Class - Thanksgiving Break</i>	

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule (cont):

Date	Topic	Reading
Nov 29	Appropriations and Budgeting	Intro to Appropriations
Dec 1	Campaign Spending	Jacobson (1978)
Dec 3	Campaign Spending II	Green and Krasno (1988)
Dec 6	“Fixing Congress”	Confessions of a Congressman New Directions in Legislative Research: Lessons from Inside Congress
Dec 7	Conclusion <i>Summary Section Due</i> <i>Final Legislative History Due</i>	
Dec 13	<i>Exam 2</i>	

Readings are either linked on the syllabus or will be provided via ELC. The final exam for this course (Exam 2) is scheduled from 12-3:00 pm on December 13th in Baldwin 301.