

POLS 4600: Legislative Process

Fall 2023

Baldwin 301

TR 2:20 - 3:35pm

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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 paper topic. The deadline to fill out the survey is Thursday, **August 24** at 5 pm.
2. Class Attendance/Participation (**5% of final grade**): One of the goals for this class is for students to become comfortable discussing political institutions, issues, events and research. Hence, they will be encouraged to attend and participate in course discussions. Students will be given one point for attending the class, and an additional point for adequate participation. The lowest four attendance/participation grades will be dropped. A student's participation grade may also include several small quizzes or assignments.
3. Exams (**40% of final grade**): Two examinations (worth 20% each) will be given during the course. The dates are listed on the syllabus as Tuesday, **October 3** and Thursday, **November 30**. These exams will be given online. Links to the exams will be e-mailed to students at 8 am and they will be due at 8 am the following 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 exams will be non-cumulative and may 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.

4. **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 a 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. A final draft of the paper will be due on Tuesday, **December 12** at 5:00pm. The legislative history assignment will count for 50% of the final course grade.

Students looking for feedback on their legislative history assignment are invited to turn in sections of the paper on the assigned dates below during the semester. The sections and paper grade are discussed below (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 Thursday, **September 21** at 5pm. It is worth 10% of the final paper grade.

- (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 Thursday, **October 12** at 5pm. It is worth 20% of the final paper 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 Thursday, **October 26** at 5 pm. It is worth 10% of the final paper 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 Tuesday, **November 7** at 5pm. It is worth 40% of the final paper 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 Thursday, **November 16** at 5 pm. It is worth 20% of the final paper grade.

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. As noted above, students are not obligated to turn each section in at the assigned date. If they do so, they are welcome to respond to any feedback provided on the section. Their final grade for the section will be the average of their initial and revised scores.

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 contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made. If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>.

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. 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.

UGA is committed to creating a dynamic, diverse, and welcoming learning environment for all students and has a non-discrimination policy that reflects this philosophy. Our class will

respect all students regardless of race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.

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. Specifically, all course work must meet the standards put forth in the University of Georgia's Student Honor Code. See the Academic Honesty Policy for details on what is expected of you.

FERPA Notice:

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar's explanation [here](#).

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu/>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

Tentative Lecture Outline/Readings Schedule:

Day	Topic	Readings
Aug 17	Introduction to POLS 4600	
Aug 22	Five Key Take-Away Points about Congress What is CRS? Congressional Fundraising	Living Hell CRS and Legislative Process Last Week Tonight
Aug 24	How a Bill Becomes a Law: House How a Bill Becomes a Law: Senate <i>Qualtrics Survey Due</i>	CRS: Intro to the Legislative Process
Aug 29	Constitutional Foundations of Congress Why Rules?	U.S. Constitution Cox (2000)
Aug 31	Committees in Congress	The Committee System
Sep 5	Legislative History Groups How to Write a Legislative History Congressional Resources and Information	The Georgia Congress Project Legislative History Resources
Sep 7	The House Rules Committee House Party Leaders	Vick et al. (2020) Cooper and Brady (1981) Party Leaders in the House
Sep 12	House Voting Procedures Polarization	House Voting Procedures WaPo: Congress is More Polarized
Sep 14	Ideological Scaling Using Resources: Voteview	Mapping Congressional Polarization WaPo: Congress is More Polarized
Sep 19	Spatial Modeling in Congress Considering Legislation on the House Floor	Legislation on the House Floor
Sep 21	Parties in Congress <i>Summary Section Due</i>	Krehbiel (1995) Binder et al. (1999)
Sep 26	House Rule Choice	Schickler and Rich (1997) Cox and McCubbins (1997)
Sep 28	Review	
Oct 3	<i>Midterm 1</i>	

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

Date	Topic	Reading
Oct 5	U.S. Senate History Senate Floor Procedures	Senate: Origins and Development Senate Floor Process
Oct 10	The Evolution of the Senate Filibuster	Filibusters and Cloture Wawro and Schickler (2004) Madonna (2011)
Oct 12	Resolving Differences <i>Background Section Due</i>	CRS (2019)
Oct 17	Legislative Sausage-Making	Oleszek and Oleszek (2012)
Oct 19	Writing a Process Section	Legislation on the House Floor Senate Floor Process
Oct 24	Congressional Agenda Control	Finocchiaro and Rohde (2008)
Oct 26	Appropriations and Budgeting <i>Member Spotlight Due</i>	Intro to Appropriations
Oct 31	Measuring Legislative Accomplishment Congressional Productivity	Clinton and Lapinski (2006) Counting Laws
Nov 2	Floor Amendments in Congress An Open Amending Process in the Senate?	CRS (2015) Madonna and Kosar (2015)
Nov 7	“Killer” Amendments? <i>Process Section Due</i>	Gilmour (2001) Finocchiaro and Jenkins (2001)
Nov 9	Congressional Staff Working in Congress	Staff Cuts Best Intern Ever: Roll Call’s Guide to Acing Your Internship Why Congress Relies on Lobbyists

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

Date	Topic	Reading
Nov 14	Supreme Court Appointments	Moraski and Shipan (1999)
Nov 16	Negotiations and Delegation <i>Aftermath Section Due</i>	Binder and Lee 2013
Nov 21	Regular Order Reconsidered	Curry and Lee 2019
Nov 23	<i>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</i>	
Nov 28	“Fixing” Congress Conclusion Review	Confessions of a Congressman New Directions in Legislative Research: Lessons from Inside Congress
Nov 30	<i>Midterm 2</i>	
Dec 12	<i>Final Legislative History Due</i>	

Readings are either linked on the syllabus or will be provided via ELC.