

Congressional Politics

POL: 790:304
Summer 2015

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Monday (6:00 pm – 9:40 pm) Hickman Hall 210
Wednesdays – Online Exams
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description: The purpose of the course is to learn about the history, development and current state of Congress. The course will examine various internal (i.e. institutional rules and procedures) and external (i.e. elections, interest groups) dimensions of the Congress, as well as focus on the policy process and examine the interaction of legislative branch with other political actors. The general goals of the course are: (1) to provide an understanding of the historical foundations of the modern Congress; (2) provide knowledge about the complex rules, procedures and structures that dictate Congressional functioning and; (3) enable students to develop a more thorough understanding of the American political system as a whole, by examining the interrelationships between Congress and other government actors throughout the policymaking process.

Required Text: Davidson, Oleszek, Lee & Schickler (2013), *Congress and Its Members*, 14th edition, CQ Press. Additional Readings will be provided on Sakai in the Resources Folder

Sakai: To access the class Sakai website, (1) sign on to sakai.rutgers.edu, (2) sign in using your RU screen name, and (3) click on the class tab at the top of the page.

The Sakai site contains a discussion forum (for threaded discussion) and chat room (for general questions/comments). Please use these areas to post materials you may find to be helpful to others as well as any questions you may have about the course. I will check both relatively frequently and try to get back to you within 48 hours.

Course Requirements: This is a Hybrid-course, meaning that half of the sessions are conducted online. By necessity, summer courses are very compressed – we will cover a whole semester's worth of material in only six weeks. It is imperative that students attend all the lectures, complete all the readings, and review all of the online material provided. Our classes will consist of lectures that emphasize the assignment readings (to be read before class), supplemental material, and relevant current events. Both the lectures and the readings will present novel information about Congressional Politics that you will need to be successful in this course.

Online Lectures: Each week you will have to review a set of lectures (Resources tab on Sakai) provided in Power Point and PDF format – both contain the same information. You are responsible for all of the material presented in these lectures and in the text book. You are obviously free to review them whenever you wish. Please use the Discussion

Forum to post any questions you may have about the material from the textbook or lecture in the Forum tab on Sakai.

Exams: Given the truncated schedule, I have decided to make our two exams “Online Take-Homes”. This means that on Wednesday (7/23) and Monday (8/11) you must finish the exam in the “Test and Quizzes” tab on Sakai by 11:59pm that evening. (No late exams will be accepted!) Exams will be available to take starting at 10am. These exams are timed – You will have 2 hours to complete the exam. Because these exams are essentially open-note, the questions will be more challenging and my expectations for quality answers will be raised. In other words, these exams have been created such that you will not have sufficient time to look up answers during the exams. Furthermore, plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. The essay part of the exams will be automatically submitted to Turnitin.com to verify that there is no plagiarism. Exams will consist of both Multiple Choice and Essay Questions.

Grading: Grades will be based upon the 2 exams given during the semester and participation (during lecture and in threaded discussions). Each exam will be worth 33% of your final grade. Participation (including attendance) will be worth 33% of your final grade. The exams (including the final) will not be cumulative – they will only cover the material covered since the previous exam. If for any reason (medical or family emergency) you are unable to take an exam as regularly scheduled, you must obtain a note from your Dean in order to take a make-up exam and contact me immediately to let me know that you are unable to take the exam as scheduled. Absence from an exam because of travel plans will not be excused. No exceptions to this policy will be made.

Threaded Discussions: Discussion questions for each week’s material will be posted at the beginning of each week. You must write a response (approx 300 words) to 2 of them by Noon on Wednesday of that week. You must substantively comment (approx 300 words) on the responses of 2 of your peers by Noon on Friday of that week. I will provide summary comments on the week’s discussion by Sunday of that week. Participation in these discussions is worth 33% of your final grade.

Participation: Based on attendance and performance in the classroom. Students are expected to show up to class having not only read the assigned material, but thought about it as well. Although the format of the class is primarily lecture-based, questions, comments, and discussion are not only encouraged, but necessary. (*Trust me – this class will be much more interesting for all of us if there is active participation).

Class Conduct: Students are strongly encouraged to engage in discussion and ask questions. Students should at all times remain respectful of other’s opinions and perspectives – this does not mean you cannot disagree with other students or the instructor – but that you must do so respectfully. This is especially true in your online interactions!

Behaviors that interfere with effective teaching and learning, such as late arrival, leaving for the bathroom, early departures without instructor permission, talking to each other

during the lectures, sleeping, playing with cell-phones, etc. will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to deduct points from a student's final grade for violations of this policy.

Academic Integrity: If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with Rutgers' academic integrity policy at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. Cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be dealt with according to the policy. I have zero tolerance! If you have any questions about the policy or what constitutes a violation, do not hesitate to ask me.

Absences: Students are expected to attend all classes and participate meaningfully in class discussions. If you will miss a class, you must use the University Absence Reporting Website at <http://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. This system generates an automatic email notifying me of your absence. Should you encounter an emergency or situation that will hamper your ability to attend classes and complete the course requirements, speak to the Dean of students as soon as possible – DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THE SEMESTER!

Syllabus - Draft

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. *If you are absent from class, it's your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were absent.*

Monday (7/07) – Introductions and Historical Overview of Congress

- *Davidson et al Chapters 1 and 2*

Online – Congressional Elections

- *Davidson et al Chapters 3 and 4*

Monday (7/14) – Congressional Public Relations and Review

- *Davidson et al Chapter 5*
- *Fenno – “US House Members in their Constituencies: An Explanation”*
- *Mayhew – “The Electoral Connection”*

Online – Congressional Leaders and Committees

- *Davidson et al Chapters 6 and 7*

Monday (7/21) – Congressional Rules and Procedures

- *Davidson et al Chapter 8 and 9*

Wednesday (7/23) – Exam I

Monday (7/28) – Congress and the President/Bureaucracy

- *Davidson et al Chapter 10 and 11*

Online – Congress and the Courts/Interest Groups

- *Davidson et al Chapter 12 and 13*

Monday (8/04) – Congress and Domestic/Foreign Policy

- *Davidson et al Chapter 14 and 15*

Monday (8/11) – Exam II