

Special Topics: Congressional Process and Procedure

Political Science 4790H

Spring 2021

Baldwin 104 or Zoom Meeting Room

TR 9:35-10:50am

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Hours: TR 1:00-2:00pm

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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. Throughout this course, we will evaluate existing theories of legislative evolution and policy-making. Students will also be required to complete a detailed analysis of the passage of a landmark piece of legislation.

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 4790H: Congressional Process and Procedure. 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, **January 21st** at 5 pm.
2. Midterm Exams (**40% of final grade**): Two midterm exams will be given on Thursday, **February 25th** and Thursday, **April 22nd**. These exams will be given online. Links to the exams will be e-mailed 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 20% of the final course grade.
3. Reaction Papers (**10% of final grade**): Students will be assigned two completed legislative histories and will be asked to provide short, one-page reactions to them. What did the authors do well? What could they have done better on? What questions about the legislation did you still have after reading it? Further instructions on these assignments will be provided in class. The reaction papers are due on Thursday, **February 4th** and Thursday, **March 18th**. Each reaction paper is worth 5% of the final course grade.

4. **Legislative History (45% 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 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 45% 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 Thursday, **February 11th** at 5pm. It is worth 5% of the final course 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, **March 11th** at 5pm. 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 Thursday, **March 25th** at 5 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. 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 Tuesday, **April 13th** at 5pm. It is worth 10% 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 Thursday, **April 22nd** at 5 pm. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.

(6) A Final Paper that combines the previous five sections and incorporates any instructor comments is due on Friday, **May 7th** at 5 pm. It is worth 5% of the

final course 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 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. However, the instructor will also be available to meet with students either via zoom or in his 407 Baldwin Hall office by appointment. Regularly scheduled office hours will be held in a Zoom Meeting Room.

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. Course meetings will be held in Baldwin 104 and streamed via a Zoom Meeting Room. If students are unable to attend 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:

Date	Topic	Reading
14-Jan	Introduction/Syllabus	
19-Jan	Five Key Take-Away Points about Congress The UGA Congress Project <i>Qualtrics Survey Due</i>	Help! We're in a Living Hell The Georgia Congress Project
21-Jan	Why Rules? Constitutional Foundations of Congress	Cox 2000 U.S. Constitution
26-Jan	How a Bill Becomes a Law CRS and Legislative Process	CRS: Intro to the Legislative Process CRS and Legislative Process
28-Jan	Writing a Legislative History Congressional Resources and Information	Legislative History Resources
2-Feb	Committees in Congress House Party Leaders How to Write a Reaction	The Committee System Party Leaders in the House
4-Feb	History and Evolution of the House <i>Reaction Paper 1 Due</i>	Cooper and Brady (1981)
9-Feb	Spatial Modeling in Congress	Shepsle and Bonchek Ch. 5
11-Feb	The House Rules Committee <i>Summary Section Due</i>	Vick et al. 2020
16-Feb	Considering Legislation on the House Floor Amendments in the House	Legislation on the House Floor Amendments in the House
18-Feb	House Voting Procedures Polarization	House Voting Procedures WaPo: Congress is More Polarized Polarization is Real (and Asymmetric)
23-Feb	Ideological Scaling	Mapping Congressional Polarization
25-Feb	<i>Exam 1</i>	
2-Mar	Working in Congress Congressional Staff	Best Intern Ever: Roll Call's Guide to Acing Your Internship Why Congress Relies on Lobbyists Staff Cuts

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

Date	Topic	Reading
4-Mar	Parties in Congress	Krehbiel 1995 Binder et al. 1999
9-Mar	Measuring Congressional Performance House Rule Choice	Counting Laws Schickler and Rich (1997)
11-Mar	House Rule Choice II <i>Background Section Due</i>	Cox and McCubbins (1997) Binder (1996)
16-Mar	Senate Floor Procedures	Senate Floor Process
18-Mar	The Amending Process in the Senate Filibusters and Cloture <i>Reaction Paper 2 Due</i>	Madonna and Kosar 2015 Filibusters and Cloture
23-Mar	U.S. Senate History	Senate Floor Process Senate: Origins and Development
25-Mar	Resolving Differences <i>Member Spotlight Due</i>	Conference Committees
30-Mar	Congressional Negotiations Delegation	Binder and Lee 2013 Congressional Influence
1-Apr	Appropriations and Budgeting Process and Policy	Intro to Appropriations Oleszek et al. (2012)
6-Apr	Parties in Congress	Krehbiel 1995 Binder et al. 1999
8-Apr	<i>No Class (Instructional Break)</i>	
13-Apr	Legislative History: The 21st Amendment <i>Process Section Due</i>	21st Amendment
15-Apr	Congressional Agenda Control	Finocchiaro and Rohde (2008)
20-Apr	Who Serves in Congress? Congressional Benefits Congressional Fundraising	The 116th Congress Salaries and Allowance Last Week Tonight

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

Date	Topic	Reading
22-Apr	The Evolution of the Senate Filibuster <i>Aftermath Section Due</i>	Wawro and Schickler (2004) Madonna (2011)
27-Apr	“Fixing” Congress Conclusion	Confessions of a Congressman New Directions in Legislative Research: Lessons from Inside Congress
29-Apr	<i>Exam 2</i>	
7-May	<i>Final Legislative History Due</i>	