



### **POLS 4790H: Congressional Process and Procedure**

#### **The University of Georgia Congress Project\***

Prof. Anthony Madonna

University of Georgia

1/14/2021

\*As seen in SPIA Magazine!

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### **Course Description**



Broadly, this course seeks to familiarize students with the United States Congress. Once the centerpiece of American politics, today the "people's branch" is the most unpopular and misunderstood branch of American government.

Despite this, nearly every major political issue or policy in the United States is rooted in a decision made by Congress.

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### **Course Logistics**

**POLS 4790H:** Special Topics: Congressional Process

**Room:** Baldwin 104

**Instructor:** Anthony Madonna

**Personal Email:** [ajmadonn@uga.edu](mailto:ajmadonn@uga.edu)

**Phone:** 314-313-9937

**Website:** [www.tonymadonna.com](http://www.tonymadonna.com)

**Zoom:** <https://zoom.us/j/ajmadonn>

**Office:** 407 Baldwin Hall

**Office Hours:** TR 1:00-2:00pm

**Project Twitter:** Congressional Quotes

Syllabus will be e-mailed and on the class website.



Above: Former House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) AFTER leaving the U.S. House.

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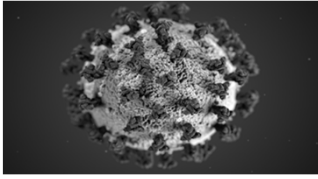
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## Course Logistics



### COVID-related Logistics:

This course is being offered as a "hybrid." Broadly speaking, what that means is that you're going to have the option of taking this class in-person or online.

My current plan is to give the standard lectures from the currently assigned classroom, Baldwin 104. The lectures will be simultaneously broadcast via zoom. If you can't attend a live lecture, they will be recorded and posted online (links will be provided).

In order to comply with the University's maximum occupancy rules (11 for Baldwin 104), I will need you to feel out the survey that's been distributed. Should the number of students attending live lectures surpass the room's maximum occupancy, I'll be breaking you into live discussion groups.

I will be as flexible as possible with both office hours and in accommodating students put in difficult situations via COVID. Just contact me if you have questions/issues.

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## Who Am I?

I've been a professor in the political science department here at UGA since the 2008-2009 academic year.

I'm originally from Michigan and attended Michigan State for undergrad. Prior to coming to UGA I spent some time working on campaigns and in the Michigan State Senate. I then received my PhD from Washington University in St. Louis.

My primary research interests are U.S. congressional politics, American political history and procedural rules. I spent an academic year as a American Political Science Association fellow at the Congressional Research Service.

With Prof. Michael Lynch, I also operate an undergraduate research program I initially titled "The Congress Project" under the assumption I would come up with a better title at a later date.

Today, it's known as "The Congress Project."



Above: An awkward photo of me and my dogs.

Below: My son, expressing a commonly held view of the U.S. Congress.

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## Who Am I?

### A Warning: Prof. Madonna and ZOOM

I am often working from my House. My House has a 7 year old and 4 year old. I have a spouse who is working and two dogs, neither of whom does a good job watching my kids.

As a result, I may have to run off briefly during a Zoom meeting. Rest assured, it wasn't because of something you said.

Probably.

You may notice during a meeting that I am frowning and shaking my head angrily off camera. This is my "dad face" and don't worry, you are not the intended target.

Probably.

It is distinctly possible that at some point during a ZOOM meeting I may abruptly yell "STOP THAT AND PUT SOME PANTS ON!" Again, I am not yelling that at you.

Probably.

Thank you for your patience with all of this.



Above: My 4 year-old is anti-pants.

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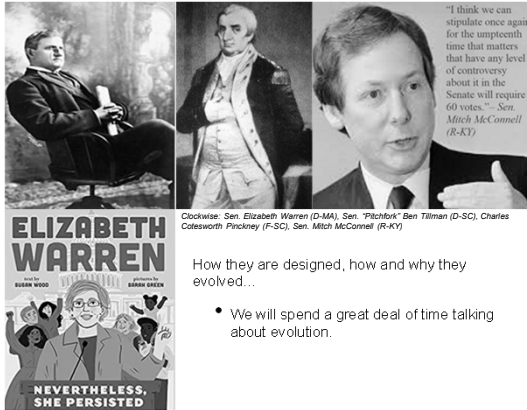
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## Institutions Are Important



How they are designed, how and why they evolved...

- We will spend a great deal of time talking about evolution.

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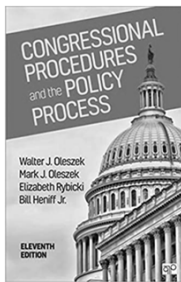
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## Books and Readings



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.

I do have a number of recommended texts, the most relevant of which is below:

- 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.

It's an especially useful book to own if you're planning on spending any time in DC working/interning for Congress. But you can also pick up an older edition for a lot cheaper.

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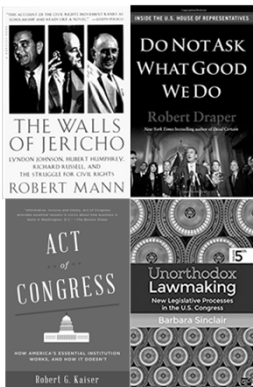
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## Books and Readings



More book recommendations below. Feel free to e-mail me for additional ones.

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.

Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

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.

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

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## Books and Readings



**Congressional Research Service**  
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Most of the assigned readings are "background" readings. Essentially, these are CRS reports meant to supplement information provided to you in slides and lectures.

As noted on the Federation of American Scientists website, "The Congressional Research Service, a component of the Library of Congress, conducts research and analysis for Congress on a broad range of national policy issues. While many CRS memoranda are generated in response to individual Member or staff inquiries and are confidential, most CRS reports are available to anyone who has access to a congressional intranet."

You should understand how to read and access these reports. But you do not need to memorize them before exams.

There are also a few assigned scholarly readings, as well as newspaper articles. You'll want to read the scholarly articles as they're assigned. It's likely you'll have questions about them that you'll need answered before tests.

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## Attendance and Participation

For those of you attending the class via zoom, I would encourage asking questions in the chat box, which I'll be monitoring throughout the lecture.

Please also don't hesitate to interrupt to ask questions or simply yell stuff at me.

As we get moving with the content and legislative history project, I would look to set up an office hours meeting to ask questions about your specific policy area though. And this does not have to be done during my set office hours (most meetings won't be). Setting up an appointment usually works a bit better and we can do it either via zoom, phone or simply through e-mail.

**Congressional Quotes**  
@congressquotes

1908: The often quotable minority leader, Rep. John Sharp Williams (D-MS), bemoans that the House has "gotten to the point where [its] procedures lie within the secret conscience of the Speaker."

We have finally gotten to the point where the procedures of this House lie within the secret conscience of the Speaker. There is no duty any more for him to communicate his reasons, his motives, or his rulings to the House. He can make a so-called ruling and submit it to the control of God, and then pass upon it himself, without even submitting it to an appeal to God in this world, whatever may be the case in the next, much less any control from the House.

12:15 PM - May 23, 2019 - Twitter Web Client



Above: The Congress Project's twitter account. Not bragging, but that tweet got "four" likes.

Left: House Minority Leader John Sharp Williams (D-MS). He was frequently intoxicated on the House floor.

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## Grading

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

**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.

In this course, students will be drafting a detailed legislative history on an assigned piece of legislation. In order to match you to a measure, please rate your level of interest in the following policies/legislation. The broader policy is listed first and the specific bill in parentheses next to it.

	Strongly Disinterested	Moderately Disinterested	Indifferent	Moderately Interested	Highly Interested
Agriculture (Farm Bill of 2018)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Regulation ( Dodd-Frank 2010)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campaign Finance (BCRA of 2002)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Civil Rights (Civil Rights Act of 1967)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Criminal Justice (Violent Crime Act of 1994)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education (No Child Left Behind of 2001)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environment (Clean Air Act of 1970)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Executive Power (Defense Production Act of 1950)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Above: A key question from the Background survey. Please note: I'm trying to account for your level of interest in a topic/bill compared to other topics/bills. It shouldn't be measured against "watching tv" or "reading old books about the Civil War."

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## Grading

**Midterm Exams (40% of final grade):** Two midterm exams will be given on **Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>** and **Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>**. These exams will be given online. Links to the exams will be e-mails 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. Specifically, you might asked questions like "Who sponsored your bill in the House?" or "Using the *Congressional Record*, provide me a quote from the House floor by a member in favor of the bill."

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.

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## Reaction Papers



**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 goal is to get feedback in order to put this histories on the Congress Project website. The reaction papers are due on **Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>** and **Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>**. Each reaction paper is worth 5% of the final course grade.

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## Grading



Above: Real life "bill buddies." Senators Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM), spent a week together on a deserted island.

**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 his 15 legislative history "teams."

While students are encouraged to work with their legislative history "teammates," (or "bill buddies") 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):

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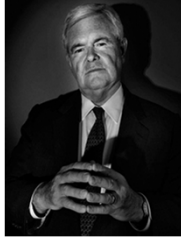
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## Grading

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, March 11th** at 5pm. It is worth 5% of the final course grade.



Above: Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA). The man knows how to take a "power photo".

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 25th** at 5pm. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.

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.

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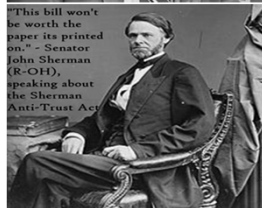
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## Grading

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, April 13th** at 5pm. It is worth 10% of the final course grade.

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.

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.




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## Legislative History Tips



Look to [www.thecongressproject.com](http://www.thecongressproject.com) for examples! But don't kill yourself trying to match the style.

You have the flexibility to focus on aspects of the law/bill you find the most interesting...

You don't have to know anything about Congress to do this assignment. Just ask questions...

### The goals of a legislative history

1. Explain to the reader why the issue matters
2. Explain why Congress acted the way they did
3. If the policy evolved afterwards, provide a brief explanation of how and why
4. Tell the reader where to find more information

### Things you should take away

1. How to research federal laws and legislation
2. Greater knowledge of a specific policy and its evolution
3. More incite on the lawmaking process
4. How to use footnotes...

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## Bill History



www.TheCongressProject.com

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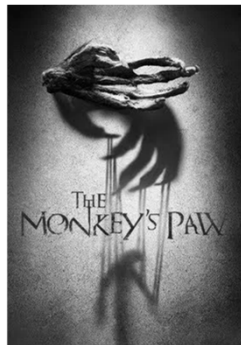
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## Extensions?

Two points on this...

#1: If you want an extension, I am generally happy to give you one.

#2: You absolutely do not want an extension.




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## Cheating and Plagiarism



Above: A reference you all are too young to get. But they cheated. That's the point.

Will not be tolerated. Further information regarding academic honesty can be found at <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>.

[INSERT ANGRY WIKIPEDIA RANT HERE]

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## 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.

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## Instructor Availability



Above: More awkward photos.

Students seeking to contact the instructor are encouraged to do so by scheduling an appointment via e-mail or stopping by my zoom room or Baldwin 407 during scheduled office hours. I am also available via phone or e-mail.

To be clear: You absolutely should have questions. Please do not be embarrassed asking me things. As will be clear, I absolutely love this stuff.

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## Questions, Concerns, Angry Rants?



Tuesday: Congress refresher.

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