

**Syllabus**  
**George Washington University**  
**PSC 250.LH1**  
**“Congress, the Media and Foreign Policy”**  
**Prof. Norm Kurz**  
[normkurz@gwu.edu](mailto:normkurz@gwu.edu) or [normkurz@verizon.net](mailto:normkurz@verizon.net) / 240-678-8864  
**Spring, 2007 – Monday, 6-8 p.m.**  
**Hall of States**

The class will focus on how Congress and the media affect the foreign policy decision-making process. The fundamental questions concern how the legislature and the executive attempt to maximize their power, and the extent to which other important players, such as the media, have the ability to influence outcomes.

Three case studies will be used to illustrate and analyze these issues:

- the controversy over NSA surveillance of Americans and the President’s efforts, until recently, to go outside the FISA court system, notwithstanding strong congressional objections
- the war in Iraq, including the period in the months before the U.S. invaded in 2003 when Congress gave the President use of force authority
- the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians

Two major underlying notions will be posited.

First, that the Congress accurately reflects the level of concern of the American people on issues of national security and the nation’s foreign policy, which is to say that prior to September 11, 2001 there was minimal focus and little understanding. Unfortunately, while Americans intuitively changed their perspective about these matters, Congress was ill-equipped and unable to assert a significant role relative to the White House.

Second, Congress has demonstrated in the ensuing years that while it has the ability to shine a light on issues it deems important, it is relatively impotent in the face of an assertive executive, and that it is institutionally at a major disadvantage.

The fourteen weeks of class will break down as follows:

Overview	Week 1	Jan. 22
Case Study #1	Weeks 2-5	Jan. 29 and Feb. 5, 12, 26
Case Study #2	Weeks 6-9	March 5, 19, 26 and April 2
Case Study #3	Weeks 10-13	April 9, 16, 23, 30
Summary	Week 14	May 2

One of the key features of this class is that outside experts will participate on a regular basis in the class discussions. Ideally, each of the three case studies will include someone from Capitol Hill and someone from the media world. These obviously are busy people with demanding schedules, and it is not possible to share at this time precisely who will guest on which date, but the goal is to have someone join us roughly every other week.

In addition to occasional hand-outs – typically magazine or newspaper articles – following is the *required* reading, all available via Amazon:

Lee Hamilton, **A Creative Tension: The Foreign Policy Roles of the President and Congress**

John Yoo, **War by Other Means**

Michael Isikoff and David Corn, **Hubris: The Inside Story...**

Paul Scham, Walid Salem, Benjamin Pogrund, **Shared Histories: Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue**

Naturally, there are many other books pertinent to subjects we will investigate. Other *recommended* books include:

John Yoo, **The Powers of War and Peace: The Constitution and Foreign Affairs After 9-11**

Tom Ricks, **Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq**

George Packer, **The Assassins Gate: America in Iraq**

Bob Woodward, **State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III**

Rashid Khalidi, **The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood**

Jeffrey Goldberg, **Prisoners: A Muslim and a Jew Across the Middle East Divide**

Shlomo Ben Ami, **Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Arab-Israeli Tragedy**

At the end of each case study, a short take-home writing assignment will be given. The grade for each of these three assignments will comprise 20% of the final grade, for a total of 60%. A final written assignment will make up 30% of the final grade. Class participation will comprise the final 10% of the final grade.

Though only 10% of the final grade, class participation often can be decisive when one is between an A or B, or between a B or C. Generally speaking, there are no “right” or “wrong” opinions (though it is worth bearing in mind the well known statement that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not to their own facts).

Students should feel free to email me at any time. With few exceptions, I am prepared to stay after class to answer any questions, and am available by appointment to meet to discuss classwork and related matters.

STUDENT NAME

EMAIL ADDRESS

1.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
- 25.

1 **what is class about**

A. power politics – not as described in text books – but as practiced  
constitution – how often is the phrase “checks and balances” in there  
congress emasculated – bush admin run roughshod

hagel, dodd, others reminding american public that congress in article I  
how biden working to mold a committee he can use as a tool

B. it’s about how natl security holds a different place in the mind of the nation post 9-11  
vulnerability...security moms

C. how bush admin took advantage of the new insecurity  
an admin run by those shaped in 1970 effort by congress to acquire power  
by reagan effort to reassert, but with mixed results  
finally, 9-11 provided oppt...plus context of unipolar

2 **njk**

3 **talk a little about the 3 case studies**

4 **next week**

read hamilton, and get yoo book