

Selected Topics in Foreign Policy: Congress, Committees and Homeland Security

PSc250

Masters of Arts in Legislative Affairs Program
Fall Term 2004

Instructor:

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Meeting Time and Location:

Thursday evenings from 6pm-8pm.
September 2 through December 9, 2004
Room 235 or as assigned
444 North Capitol
Hall of the States Building, 2nd floor (see room listing at guard desk, main floor)

Office and Advising Hours:

By appointment during the day on Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays at GWU office.

Overview of the Course

After September 11, 2001 the United States entered a new age characterized by an ongoing threat from terrorism on a wide, deadly scale. The responses to this threat affect both domestic and international politics and policymaking. This seminar is part of a legislative affairs curriculum and thus examines the decision-making structures within the U.S. Congress dealing with homeland defense. This course focuses particularly on the legislative workshops of the House and the Senate: the committees and subcommittees and to probe how these they have evolved over time to address new circumstances such as global terrorism.

As a graduate seminar, active class discussion is valued and encouraged throughout the semester. Congressional staff, security specialists and journalists and a surprise guest to two may join these discussions from time to time. The goal for the class is to provide students with a better understanding of the congressional responsibilities especially those of congressional committees while providing a clearer appreciation for the many facets of homeland defense.

Expectations for students and grading

- participate in all class discussions, 15%
- complete two, small analytical papers, 20%
- take a mid-term essay exam, 25%
- provide a twenty-page research brief and with an oral presentation of findings in the form of testimony before a congressional committee, 40%.

Texts

Committees of Congress, by Christopher J. Deering and Steven S. Smith
The 9-11 Commission Report

Other Reference Material

Additional articles, handouts and reports including public documents on the Department of Homeland Security and related topics will be distributed regularly.

Some reference books are available from the instructor:

Turf Wars: How Congressional Committees Claim Jurisdiction, by David C. King
Protecting the American Homeland: Preliminary Analysis, edited by Michael E. O'Hanlon, et al.
Legislating the Revolution: The Contract with America and its First 100 Days, James G. Gimpel
The Postreform Congress, Roger H. Davidson
Congress and Its Members, 8th edition, Roger H. Davidson and Walter J. Oleszek
Why Congressional Reforms Fail: Reelection and the House Committee System, E. Scott Adler
Organization of Congress, Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress
Protecting the American Homeland: One Year On, Michael E. O'Hanlon, et al.

Absences and Tardiness

Some students may have responsibilities that intrude on class time. These students should inform the instructor in advance when such circumstances may arise. Absences from more than two classes during the term may result in a grade of incomplete.

The beginning of each class period will be devoted to a review of current issues pertaining to domestic terrorism, homeland security and news from Capitol Hill. Students are invited to clip articles, download Web information and/or suggest sources relevant to class topics. Student discussion leaders may be assigned for some classes.

Final Project

The issue of national security and domestic terrorism is complex. This complexity is mirrored by the organizational structure of the Department of Homeland Security and by the committees of Congress that fund and oversee the department's operations.

Choose an aspect of homeland security such as airport security or border protection. Then analyze the current state of affairs and make case for action. Identify important concerns or flaws and argue for improving or eliminating the system. You may suggest more funds or greater oversight or both. A simulation in the form of a congressional subcommittee hearing will be part of your final exam. Maybe a congressional staff member or two will sit in on it.

Clarity of expression, factual integrity and effective communication skills are the tools of the legislative professional. Graduate study in courses like this offer the opportunity to hone these skills in front of your peers, professors and occasional guests. This project requires both scholarship and political intuition. An obvious objective of this course is to test your skills and your judgment.

The final legislative brief should be about 20 double-spaced pages and handed in on the final day of class. Provide a one paragraph executive summary and footnote all references. A bibliography should be included.

If you wish to have your paper returned to you with comments, please make two copies of the brief and include a self-addressed, stamped document sized envelope when you hand in the paper on the last day of class.

Statement on Scholarly Ethics

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, as in all courses, students are expected to be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, recycled assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

Report any such violations you witness to your instructor. You may also consult director of the program or the associate dean of the college.

Class Schedule and Assignments (version 04.d)

1. September 2 (no class, Dr. K in NYC at the GOP Convention)

2. September 9

Course expectations, assignments and format
Congress and committee structure, preliminary view
Homeland security: concepts and definitions

Reading Assignment:

Deering and Smith, Chapters 1

Begin reading The 9-11 Commission Report

3. September 16

A historical look at Congress and committees
Evolution and change in committees, Part I

Reading assignment:

Deering and Smith, Chapter 2

4. September 23

Evolution and change in committees, Part II.
Essay #1 assigned

Reading assignment:

Deering and Smith, Chapter 3

5. September 30

Committee assignments, Part I

Essay #1 due

Reading assignment:

Deering and Smith, Chapter 4

6. October 7

Committee assignments, Part II
Congressional campaigns

Reading assignment:

Handouts and 9-11 Report

7. October 14

Committee jurisdiction, Part I

Reading assignment:
Handouts and 9-11 Report

8. October 21

Committee jurisdiction, Part II
Leadership

Reading assignment:
Deering and Smith, Chapter 5

9. October 28

Mid-term examination

Reading assignment:
9-11 Report

10. November 4

Post election special discussion with JHU student guests

Reading assignment:
9-11 Report

Small paper #2 assigned.

11. November 11

Reforms

Small paper #2 due

Reading assignment:
9-11 Report

12. November 18

Referees

Reading assignment:
9-11 Report and research

13. November 22 (special Monday class with Johns Hopkins University students)

Class Time and location TBA

Topics in Homeland Security with guests

Reading assignment:
9-11 and research

14. December 2

Turf wars

Reading assignment:
9-11 completed and research

15. December 9

Oral presentations
Summary comments
Final paper handed in

(Provide 2 copies of paper and a self-addressed, stamped, document size envelope if you wish a copy returned to you with comments)