

PSC218 LH Legislative Politics
Summer 2008
T-TH, 6:00-8:00

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Course Objective. The course is designed to provide students with a working knowledge of both the theory and practice of legislative politics. While the course will give students an exposure to the main theories of the field, the main focus will be on the practical aspects of legislating. The design of the course assumes students are familiar with the organization and workings of the US government. This is not a course on legislative procedure, but on the politics of legislating. As such, we will examine where power is situated, the role of institutional arrangements, executive-legislative relations, the influence of electoral politics, and the effects of factors outside of the legislature, such as the media, lobbying, and public opinion.

Expectations. Students are expected to handle a moderately heavy reading load during a very compressed summer semester. Students are expected to fully participate in class discussions. As such, failure to attend class regularly will affect your final grade.

There will be no excused absences for the final exam without a medically documented reason, consistent with university policy. Exams will not occur on any major religious holidays. It is expected that students will comply with all university policies, especially with regard to plagiarism and ethics. No cell phones or other electronic devices are to be used in class, with the exception of laptops for note-taking purposes.

Grades. Grades are awarded on a point earning system. You will have numerous point earning opportunities in order to arrive at your preferred grade. These are your point-earning opportunities:

- Attendance and participation – 15
- Bio – 5
- Paper – 25
- Class discussion essays – 20
- Final – 35

Scores will translate to these grades: 90 to 100 points: A (90-93 is an A-)
80 to 89 points: B (80-83 is a B-)
70 to 79 points: C (70-73 is a C-)

Bio. By the third class meeting (Tuesday, May 27), please email me and the rest of the class a short 2-part bio. *First part:* this is not a resume, but a narrative on your background, academic interests and achievements, non-academic interests, etc, written in the third person. This can be accomplished in one paragraph, or no more than 1/2 page.

Second part: Your bio in 2030. Imagine your life in 2030 and tell us about it, still in the third person, present tense. Ex: Jane Doe is serving in her first term as U.S. Senator from the state of Puerto Rico, etc.) Why are we doing this? Because imagining your future is a huge step to getting there. And, it's an easy 5 points – don't pass it up. It lets us all get to know one another. It gives me some indication of your writing ability.

Paper. Due by the last day of class – no exceptions. Early submissions will be accepted. The length should be approximately 10 to 12 pages, double-spaced, reasonable margins.

Topic. Choose any issue of interest to you and write a legislative strategy. This should not be a paper on the mechanics of the legislative process, but a thoughtful strategy paper that demonstrates your grasp of legislative politics, such as the role of committees and leadership, where power resides in relation to your issue, and the value of constituencies and public relations, including lobbying organizations.

Class Discussion Essays. We meet 12 times during the semester. The last week will not be lectures. That leaves 10 substantive meetings. At our first meeting, students will sign up for two nights in which they will write a 1-2 page essay based on the assigned readings for that evening. The essay should end with a few questions for the class to be used in class discussions. Essays are to be emailed to the entire class no later than the evening prior. If your night is Tuesday, email out the essay no later than COB Monday; if you're on Thursday, no later than COB on Wednesday.

For most of our classes, the first hour will be devoted to discussing the reading assignments. The second hour will often be devoted to a guest speaker.

Final. The final exam is scheduled for June 26. It will cover the entire semester. Format will be short answers and one essay question.

Readings. 3 books are required.

- Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer, *Congress Reconsidered*, 8th Edition, CQ Press, 2004.
- Walter Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, CQ Press, 2007.

- Steven Smith, Jason Roberts, Ryan Vander Weilen, *The American Congress*, 5th Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

2 books are recommended.

- David Mayhew, *The Electoral Connection*, 2nd Edition, Yale University Press, 2004.
- Barbara Sinclair, *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, 3rd Edition, CQ Press, 2007.

Information Resources.

Readings that are not part of the required or recommended textbooks are available through Aladin, or will be distributed by the professor. Check Blackboard files regularly, as some readings will be posted there.

The Congressional Research Service is a valuable source for information on legislative process and specific issues that Congress has under consideration. CRS reports on procedure and process will be posted on Blackboard. Reports on specific issues can be made available on request.

Class Schedule

May 20 I. Overview of course objectives, expectations and syllabus.

II. Role of Theory: What explains legislative behavior and organization.

Introduction to theories of legislative politics.

Readings: Nelson Polsby and Erick Schickler, "Landmarks in the Study of Congress since 1945," in *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2002, Volume 5, Issue 1. (Available in Aladin.)

May 22 I. Overview of Congress

Readings: Oleszek: Chapter 1, *Congress and Lawmaking in Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*.

Smith, Roberts, and VanderWeilen, (TAC) Chapter 1 of *The American Congress: Modern Trends*.

Recommended: John Kingdon, *America the Unusual*.

May 27 **Origins and Development of Congress**

Readings: Veillette and Deering, “The Evolution of the American Parliament” from professor.

Polsby, Chapter 5: “Overview: How Congress Evolves” from professor.

Smith et al (TAC) Chapter 2: *Representation and Lawmaking in Congress: The Constitutional and Historical Context.*

Dodd, Chapter 18: “Re-envisioning Congress: Theoretical Perspectives on Congressional Change,” Dodd and Oppenheimer.

May 29 **The Electoral Connection**

Readings: Mayhew, “*Congress: The Electoral Connection.*”

Smith et al (TAC) Chapter 3: *Congressional Elections and Policy Alignments.*

Robert Erikson and Gerald Wright, Chapter 4: “Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections,” in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

Oppenheimer, Chapter 6: “Deep Red and Blue Congressional Districts: The Causes and Consequences of Declining Party Competitiveness,” in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

Guest Speaker: TBA: Staying Incumbent

June 3 **The Legislative Process – the Role of Rules**

Oleszek, Chapter 10: “A Dynamic Process.” Skim chapters 4-8.

Smith et al (TAC) Chapter 7: *The Rules of the Legislative Game*

Sinclair: *Unorthodox Lawmaking*, Chapter 6: “Why and How the Legislative Process Changed.” and Chapter 13; “The Consequences of Unorthodox Lawmaking.”

Guest Speaker: Judy Schneider, Senior Specialist, Congressional Research Service

June 5 **Committees – the workshops of Congress**

Readings: Christopher J. Deering and Steven S. Smith, *Committees in Congress*, Third Edition 1997, CQ Press, Chapter One: “Committees in Congress.”

Oleszek: Chapter 3: “Preliminary Legislative Action.”

Smith et al (TAC) Chapter 6: *The Standing Committee*

John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, Chapter 11: “Congressional Committees in a Partisan Era,” in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

Guest Speaker: Jessica Lewis, Office of Majority Leader Reid.
(invited.)

June 10 **Parties and Leadership**

Smith et al (TAC) Chapter 5: *Parties and Leaders*.

Steven Smith and Gerald Gamm, Chapter 8: “The Dynamics of Party Government in Congress,” in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

Eric Schickler and Kathryn Pearson, Chapter 9: “The House Leadership in an Era of Partisan Warfare,” in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

C. Lawrence Evans and Daniel Lipinski, Chapter 10: “Obstruction and Leadership in the U.S. Senate,” in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

Guest Speaker: Ted Van Der Meid, former General Counsel, Speaker Hastert.

June 12 **Budget and Appropriations**

Readings: Oleszek, Chapter 2, The Congressional Budget Process,

Smith et al (TAC) Chapter 12: *Congress and Budget Politics*

Richard Fenno, “The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System: The Problem of Integration.” *American Political Science Review* 56 (June 1962): 310-323.

Joshua B. Gordon, Chapter 12, The (Dis)Integration of the House Appropriations Committee, in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

Guest Speaker: Kenneth Kraft, Associate Staff, House Appropriations Committee

June 17 Legislative Oversight and Congressional-Executive Relations

Mathew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: police patrols versus fire alarms,” in *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (February 1984).

Oleszek, Chapter 9: “Legislative Oversight.”

Louis Fischer, *The Politics of Shared Power: Congress and the Executive*, Fourth Edition, Texas A&M University Press, 1998, Chapter 2: “President As Legislator” and Chapter 3: “Congress As Administrator.”

Smith et al, Chapter 9: *Congress and the President*.

Guest Speaker:

June 19 External Influences on Congress – Media, Lobbying, and Public Opinion

Smith et al (TAC) Chapter 11: *Congress, Lobbyists, and Interest Groups*.

John R. Hibbing and Christopher W. Larimer, Chapter 3: “What the American Public Wants Congress to Be,” in Dodd and Oppenheimer.

Article on role of media --- TBD.

Guest Speaker: TBA.

June 24 Review for Final Exam

**June 26 Final Exam.
Papers due.**