



Congress and the Legislative Process- GOVT 321

Lafayette College, Fall 2013

Professor Brittany Perry

Time: MWF: 1:10-2:00pm

Location: Kirby Hall of Civil Rights, 204

Office Hours: Thursday noon-1 pm,
Friday 2:15pm-3:30 pm and by appointment

Office Location: Kirby Hall of Civil Rights, 110

Course Description

This course analyzes the structure and function of the United States Congress. As a class, we will investigate the evolution of Congress, how it operates today, and how its members interact with the public, the President, and the judiciary. We will also cover a wide range of past and current policy debates, assessing the success of certain bills and their implications.

Students will take an interactive approach throughout this course, answering questions such as: “Why are cockroaches more popular than Congress?” “Why does Congress have so many rules?” and “Why should we care?” We will pull information from a variety of sources including recent political science literature, polling data, congressional resources, newspapers, and television.

Course Prerequisites: GOVT 101, 211, 217, 311, 316, 320 or permission of instructor

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Explain congressional rules and procedures
- Assess current theoretical arguments in the congressional literature
- Formulate new arguments and theories to explain the institution of Congress and the behavior of its members
- Evaluate congressional districts and the relationship between legislators and their constituents
- Develop a legislative proposal and strategy
- Critically examine a recent policy debate in Congress

Expectations and Assignments

- **Being the Legislator**
 - District Profile: **Due October 11th**
 - Students will research a congressional district of their choice and write a 3-4 page (double spaced) comprehensive report covering district geography, demographics, politics, and key issues.
 - Legislative Proposal and Strategy: **Due November 1st**
 - Students will propose a piece of legislation and map out a strategy for passing this legislation into law. The legislation length will vary, but the strategy must be at least 3 double spaced pages and must reference theories and strategies discussed in assigned readings and in class.
 - Policy Project: **Due December 2nd**
 - In **groups**, students will write a short report (6-8 double spaced pages) outlining a recent policy debate in the U.S. Congress. The report will trace the history of a given policy, discuss its path through Congress and assess how the public, President, and other political actors have influenced the policy's success or failure. In the final week of class, the group will give a 10-15 minute presentation on the final report.
- **Exams**
 - Exams will consist of both short-answer/identification style questions and longer essay length questions. They will 50 minutes and will be completed in-class.
 - **Midterm: October 4th**
 - **Final: TBA**
 - **Note: Please do not schedule flights for Winter Break prior to the release of the final exam schedule!!!**
- **Participation**
 - You will be graded on participation in this class. Your grade will be based on the quality of your contribution to in-class discussions, debates, and assignments (this may include paper assignments, small group activities, and discussion of current events). You will be expected to keep up with current happenings in Congress on a *daily basis* by following national newspapers (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*) or websites specific to Congress (such as *Roll Call*).
 - On a given day you will receive a participation score ranging from 0 to 3. My rubric is as follows:
 - 0: No participation
 - 1: Little participation (surface level engagement, little command of the material)
 - 2: Moderate to active participation (deeper engagement, solid understanding of the material)
 - 3: Active participation (asking challenging questions, going to the extra mile to understand and analyze the material)

- Note on Attendance: You may have one unexcused absence without penalty. Beyond this, each unexcused absence will result in a 5% deduction from your final participation grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from your classmates, as I will not post lecture slides.
- In addition to activities in class, students are expected to attend and engage in assigned out-of-classroom activities. These will include two campus/local events related to the material discussed in this course, video nights (dates TBA), and required office hour/librarian/writing center visits. These activities contribute to the four credit hour requirement for this course.
 - If you have an excused absence for a scheduled out-of-class activity, you must meet with me to discuss a make-up assignment.

Required Texts

- Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, and Frances E. Lee. 2014. *Congress and its Members*, 14th edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Dodd, Lawrence and Bruce Oppenheimer. 2013. *Congress Reconsidered*, 10th edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (*Must be 10th edition!*)
- Any additional articles/chapters will be posted on the Moodle site for this course found at: <http://moodle.lafayette.edu/>. If you do not have a Moodle site for this course or if you have trouble logging in, please let me know ASAP!!

Grading

- **Final Grade**

Participation	20%
District Profile	10%
Legislative Proposal and Strategy	15%
Policy Project and Presentation	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%

- **Notes on Grading**

- Any student who is not satisfied with a grade on a given assignment must submit, in writing, a description of the issue in dispute (i.e. what is allegedly mis-graded and why you believe your work is correct). If necessary, I will set up a meeting with the student to discuss the issue. I will then decide whether to raise, lower, or leave the grade unchanged.
- **All late assignments will be docked one full letter grade for every day they are late.** Make sure you turn in everything on time.

Grading Scale

A+	100-98	B+	89-88	C+	79-78	D	69-60
A	97-93	B	87-83	C	77-73	F	<60
A-	92-90	B-	82-80	C-	72-70		

Other Requirements/Course Information

- **The Academic Honesty policy is taken seriously in this class.** Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a violation of College policy and may result in a failing grade and/or other disciplinary measures. Please review the guidelines on “Principles of Intellectual Honesty” (available in the Student Handbook at: http://studentlife.lafayette.edu/files/2011/08/studenthandbook_1112.pdf), which elaborate College policy on plagiarism and academic integrity.
- **You may NOT use your cell phone to email or text message in class.** Before you come to class, make sure that your cell phone is turned off and put away.
- You may use laptops in this class, however, if I see you emailing, surfing the Internet or checking Facebook, I will ask you to put it away and take notes by hand.
- I also expect everyone in this class to be **RESPECTFUL OF THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS.** During class discussions, I ask that you be courteous of other students and the instructor at all times.
- **Accommodations for Students with Disability:** In accordance with Lafayette College policy, reasonable academic accommodations and support services will be available to students who have a documented disability. Students with disabilities should review the information available at: <http://attic.lafayette.edu/disability-services/>.

Federal Credit Hour Statement

- The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four credit hour course. Please see the Registrar’s Office web site (<http://registrar.lafayette.edu/additional-resources/cep-course-proposal/>) for the full policy and practice statement.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

- *This schedule is subject to slight modifications. New video nights and other events will be included as the semester proceeds. You will have advance notification of any changes.*
- *CM: Congress and Its Members Textbook; CR: Congress Reconsidered; W: On Moodle*

Week 1: Introduction

August 26: *Chapter 1 (CM)*

August 28: *Hibbing and Larimer. 2005. "What the American Public Wants Congress to Be." (W)*

August 30: *Weisberg et al. 2000. "The Study of Congress: Methodologies and the Pursuit of Theory." (W)*

Supplementary Readings:

- *Mayhew, David. 1974. Congress: The Electoral Connection.*

Week 2: The Origins and Development of Congress

September 2: *Chapter 2 (CM), U.S. Constitution*

September 4: *Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives" (W)*

September 6: *Nothing new!*

Supplementary Video:

- *The Legislative Branch. 2009. Cambridge Education Films (link found on Moodle)*

Week 3: Elections: Recruitment and Candidacy

September 9: *Chapter 3 (CM) and Bullock, Charles. 2010. Redistricting. Chapter 1. (W)*

September 11: *ACLU History of the Voting Rights Act (W)*

September 13: *Goldmacher, Shane. 2013. "Why Would Anyone Ever Run for Congress?" (W)*

Supplementary Readings:

- *Department of Justice: History of Voting Rights Act (W)*
- *Abramowitz et al. 2006. "Incumbency, Redistricting and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections." (W)*

Week 4: Elections: The Electoral Game

September 16: *Chapter 4 (CM)*

September 18: *Erikson and Wright. 2009. "Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections" (CR)*

September 20: *Haidt and Hetherington. 2012. "Look How Far We've Come Apart" (W)*

Week 5: Hill Styles and Home Styles: Representation

September 23: *Chapter 5 (CM)*

September 25: *Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'." (W)*

September 27: *Fenno, Richard. 1977. "US House Members and Their Constituencies: An Exploration. (W)*

Supplementary Readings:

- Pitkin, Hanna. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*.

Week 6: Finish Up and Review

September 30: “*Call Time for Congress Shows How Fundraising Dominates Bleak Work Life*” (W);
In class video: “*Congress: A Day in the Life of a Representative*”

October 2: Midterm Review

October 4: **MIDTERM!!!**

Week 7: Parties and Leaders

October 7: Chapter 6 (CM)

October 9: Smith and Gamm. 2013. “*The Dynamics of Party Government in Congress*” (CR)

October 11: **DISTRICT PROFILE DUE!!**

Supplementary Readings:

- Aldrich, John. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*.

FALL BREAK: October 14th

Week 8: Committees

October 16: Chapter 7 (CM)

October 18: Aldrich et al. 2013. “*Richard Fenno’s Theory of Congressional Committees and the Partisan Polarization of the House*.” (CR)

Supplementary Readings:

- Deering and Smith. 1997. *Committees in Congress*.

Week 9: Congressional Rules and Procedures

October 21: Chapter 8: pgs. 215-238 (CM)

October 23: Chapter 8: pgs. 238-250 (CM)

October 25: Koger, Gregory. 2013. “*Filibustering and Parties in the Modern Senate*.” (CR)

Week 10: Decision-Making

October 28: Chapter 9 (CM)

October 30: Oleszek and Oleszek. 2012. “*Legislative Sausage-Making: Health Care Reform in the 111th Congress*” (W)

November 1: **LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL AND STRATEGY DUE!!**

Week 11: Congress and the President

November 4: Chapter 10 (CM)

November 6: Kernell, Samuel. 1997. Excerpt from “Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership” (W)

November 8: TBA

VIDEO NIGHT: West Wing: On the Day Before

Week 12: Congress and the Bureaucracy and Courts

November 11: Chapter 11 (CM)

November 13: Chapter 12 (CM)

November 15: Binder and Maltzman. 2013. “Advice and Consent: The Politics of Confirming Federal Judges.” (CR)

Week 13: Congress and Organized Interests

November 18: Chapter 13 (CM)

November 20: Olson, Mancur. 1965. Excerpt from “The Logic of Collective Action.” (W)

November 22: Hall and Wayman. 1990. “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.” (W)

Thanksgiving Break: November 27-29

Week 14: Policy-Making

November 25: Chapter 14 (CM)

Week 15: Future of Congress and Policy Presentations

December 2: Chapter 16 (CM)

December 4: Policy Project Presentations

December 6: Policy Project Presentations