

Political Science 339
Legislative Politics
Fall, 2007

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Course Description: The purpose of this course is to acquaint you with role of a legislature in a democratic society. Legislatures have long been considered a key component of a functioning democracy, and the Congress of the United States is certainly no exception to that rule. We will examine Congress from two basic perspectives, external and internal. From the external perspective, will we consider how Congress operates in relation to the other branches of government, issues of representation, and the process by which one becomes a member of Congress. For the internal perspective, we will look at the committee process, the role of political parties, and how policy is made.

Textbooks:

Jacobson, Gary. The Politics of Congressional Elections, 6th edition.

Loomis, Burdett. The Contemporary Congress, 5th edition.

All of the readings are listed in the semester outline at the end of the syllabus. Additional reserve readings will be added as needed. You are expected to come to class with the readings completed.

E-mail: Students need to get into the habit of checking e-mail on a regular basis. You will receive reminders about exam dates, extra credit notifications, and other information. You will also receive notices if the instructor chooses to post assignments on the web. You cannot receive e-mail from the instructor unless you are registered for the class, so please verify your registration status in the course.

Course Requirements: There are several requirements for the course. They are as follows:

Examinations (30%): There will be two exams in the course, a midterm and a final. Each exam counts for 15% of your grade. The exams will be essay and short-answer identification questions. The midterm will be scheduled on or around October 26th. The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, December 19th at 1 PM.

Research Paper (30%): Every student will complete a major research paper for this course. The paper should be no fewer than 15 pages in length and should contain a minimum of ten (10) citations in the bibliography. The paper should follow all of the standards outlined in the writing handout from class. You are welcome to consider any topic dealing with legislative politics, including policy analysis, specific committees or bills, leadership roles, voting patterns, public

opinion on Congress, etc. All topics MUST be cleared with me. **The final research paper is due on December 12th at the start of class.**

Legislator Project (15%): Each student in the class will be responsible for writing a short (4-6 page) profile of a current member of Congress. The paper should include a brief biography, the legislator's status in Congress, recent pieces of legislation, and a discussion of how well the legislator represents the interests of his or her constituents. **The profiles are due on November 2nd.** Profiles will be presented to the class later in the semester as poster presentations. The presentations will take place over three days.

Profile Attendance (5%): The profile presentations are the only point in the class where I will take attendance. Failure to attend the profile presentations will decrease your grade proportionally.

Quizzes (10%): In order to encourage you to do the reading, I will occasionally give quizzes on the reading material for the day. The quizzes will be unannounced, short-answer questions.

Discussion (10%): While attending class is a good thing, participating is better. There will be many days in which the class will be open to debate and discussion on a variety of topics in the course. Failure to participate in these discussions in some meaningful way will lower your discussion grade.

Grade Distribution: The standard 90/80/70/60 curve will be applied to the class.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class, but no formal attendance will be taken EXCEPT during the profile presentations. Be warned, however, that failure to attend will result in missed quizzes and in-class assignments. In addition, a substantial portion of the exams will be based on material covered ONLY in lecture. Consistent failure to attend will lower your grade dramatically. You are responsible for ALL information covered in lecture, including changes in the reading assignments, changes in test dates, and in-class homework assignments. Mentors have been clearly instructed that they are not to give copies of their notes to anyone without permission from the instructor. If you miss class for a legitimate reason, talk to the instructor before talking to the mentors about notes.

Goals of The Baccalaureate: Your work in this course can be used to meet several of the baccalaureate goals for the university. These goals can include an appreciation of the university as a learning environment, the ability to inquire, think, analyze, the ability to write, read, speak, listen, an historical consciousness, an understanding of values, or an understanding of human behavior and human institutions.

Late Assignments: You will lose 10% of your grade for every day or fraction thereof that an assignment is late. An assignment is considered late if it is not handed in when it requested in class.

Students With Disabilities: Any student who has a disability that will in any way impede his or her completion of the course needs to speak to the instructor as soon as possible about alternative

arrangements. All possible arrangements will be made to accommodate students in need of assistance. All assignments handed in more than ten days late will automatically receive a zero.

Cheating and Plagiarism: Do it and you run the risk of failing the course. This should seem obvious, but it must be made clear--if you are caught cheating, every remedy made available to the instructors on this campus will be pursued. Cheating is defined as attempting to improve your grade through any method considered unethical by the university, including copying another student's test, bringing crib sheets for exams, writing notes on your hands or on the brim of your baseball cap, etc.

Plagiarism is defined as claiming any other author's intellectual work as your own. This can include copying parts of another written work and not giving the original author credit for it; using summaries of work written by others and claiming it as your own, etc. Plagiarism is NOT limited to copying another author's work word-for-word. If you use the author's IDEAS without giving the author credit for them, you are just as guilty as if you had Xeroxed the statements and put yourself down as author.

Readings

J=Jacobson, L=Loomis, R=Reserve

9/5	Introductions	
9/7-9/12	Conflict & Competition: The Current Congress in Context	L ch.1 & 10, R: Davidson "Two Congresses"
9/14-9/21	Congress in the System	L ch. 2 & 3, J. ch. 2
9/24-9/28	Defining Representation	L. pp. 54-62
10/1	Congressional Elections Overview	L. pp. 62-80,
10/3-10/5	Who Are the Candidates?	J. ch. 3,
10/8-10/12	The Campaign	J. ch. 4,
10/15-10/22	Congressional Elections	J. ch. 5 & 6
10/24	Elections Wrap-Up	
MIDTERM 10/26		
10/29-11/5	Congressional Committees	L. ch. 5 & 6, R: Deering & Smith "Committees",
11/7-11/9	The Power of Leadership	L. ch. 7 & 8, R; Stewart "Johnson & Mansfield"
11/12-11/16	How A Bill Becomes A Law	L. ch. 9
11/19-11/26	Legislative Reform?	R: Zimmerman & Rule "This Old House" & Lijphart "Reforming The House"
11/28-11/30	Campaign Reform?	R: 75 Stars
12/3-12/5	Where Are We Now?	R: Davidson "Reform & Change"
12/7-12/12	Presentation of Legislative Profiles	
12/14	Wrap Up and Hand in Final Papers	

****FINAL EXAM: 12/19 @ 1 PM*****

STANDARDS FOR GRADING

Geoff Peterson

A: designates work of extra-ordinarily high quality; reflects thorough and comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; arguments are clearly organized with supporting ideas.

B: designates work of high quality; reflects a clearly organized but less than comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; presents organized arguments that are supported by ideas.

C: Designates work which meets the minimal requirements of the assignment; written work reflects adequate organization and development of ideas, but arguments are communicated in a superficial or simplistic manner.

D: Designates work of poor quality which meets the minimum requirements of the assignment, but demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, and spelling; treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic; may indicate that the student has not read assignments thoroughly.

F: Designates work of poor quality that does not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment or task; fails to reflect an understanding of the issues at hand; fails to present organized arguments or fails to adequately support arguments with ideas; or which is not handed in on time.