

**POLS 228 U.S. Congress
Fall 2008**

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The purpose of POLS 228 is to introduce undergraduates to the study of the U.S. Congress. The Congress is a number of things: a major actor in American government, a collective decision making process, a legislature with similarities and differences *vis a vis* legislatures in other democratic governments, the second most studied part of American politics (elections are the first), and a possible producer of and, often, impediment to innovative and effective public policies. Congress is also a great internship for college students.

Because it is a very complex institution with a long history, it is easy for students to get lost in Congress's complexity. Of course, by describing in great detail Congressional institutions and processes and how Members of Congress (MCs) behave, congressional scholars have contributed to this complexity. But congressional scholars have also tried to simplify their students' task by developing and testing fairly broad theories about Congress and legislative politics, theories that can provide road maps for getting through all the complexity. Much of the on-going scholarly research on Congress is devoted to trying to determine which of these theories are better guides. At this point in time several of them seem pretty useful.

Our goal in POLS 228 will be to introduce students to both the complexity and theoretical contours of Congress. The textbook by Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek, *Congress and* will provide an up to date introduction to Congress.

The class lectures will also try to cover both theoretical and descriptive material, with a little more emphasis on the former than the latter. Some xeroxed hand outs may also be provided. In addition to class readings, students will be given an opportunity to work through some important congressional processes for themselves in a class room simulation. The simulation will take several weeks in the latter part of the course.

The requirements for POLS 228 are to attend class, do all of the assigned reading and take a quiz and midterm exam on the readings, participate in and complete all of the writing assignments for the class simulation, and take the final exam.

Students should be prepared every class to answer and raise questions about what is going on in Congress every week. Newspapers (paper and on-line) and a variety of web sites are good sources of such information. See, for example, <http://www.congress.com/>; www.congresslink.org; www.thomas.gov; www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/Legislative.shtml; thehillblog.com; www.dailykos.com; americablog.blogspot.com; <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/TheNote/story?id=156238>; Congressional Quarterly <middayupdate-owner@cq.com> Subject: CQ Today Midday Update

You can also go to Google, type Congress, and click on news or better yet, set up a **Google Alert** for Congress—doing this will result in your receiving an email of every news and/or blog story published anywhere that has “Congress” in its title. This can also be done for “House” and “Senate” and particular parties, committees, members, and policy issues. I will probably assign different students or groups of students to do different weekly searches.

Grades in POLS 228 will be determined as follows:

Seven Quizzes	35%
Midterm Exam	25
Final Quiz	10
Three Simulation	
Assignments (profile, moves, and final report)	30 (10 each)
	100%

Extra credit report:	15% maximum.
Class attendance:	Required (roll will be taken and used to decide marginal grades)

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

I INTRODUCTIONS

Week 1 (August 26, 28) Read DOL Preface and Chapters 1 and 2

- A) Introduction: goals of course.
- B) Two Congresses?
- C) Development (institutionalization?) of Congress

QUIZ 1.

II THE MAIN FEATURES OF CONGRESS

Week 2 (September 2 and 4) Read DOL's Chapters 3, 4, 5)

- A) Electoral Control Theory: Mayhew
- B) Recruitment
- C) Running
- D) Who Makes It to Congress?

QUIZ 2

Week 3 (September 9 and 11) Read DOL's Chapters 6, 7)

*****SUBMIT LEGISLATIVE BIOGRAPHY ON**

SEPT 13)***

A) Leaders

Role of in Arnold
Cox and McCubbins
Cannon, Rayburn, Gingrich, Hastert, Pelosi
Johnson, Fritch, Reid

B) Committees

Cox and McCubbins
Shepsle and Weingast
Krehbiel

QUIZ 3

Week 4 (September 16 and 18), Read DOL Chapter 8 and 9)

A) Rules and Procedures

B) Decision making in Congress

Riker's size principle
Arnold's leaders
Mayhew

QUIZ 4

Week 5 (September 23 and 25) Read DOL Chapters 10 and 11)

C) Congress and President

Theories of split control

D) Congress and the Bureaucracy

QUIZ 5

Week 6 (Sept 30 and Oct 2) DOL Chapters 12 and 13

A) Congress and the courts

B) Interest groups

Quiz 6

Week 7 (Oct 7 and 9) DOL Chapters 14 and 15

A) Budgetary process

B) Congress and national security policy

Quiz 7

Week 8 (Oct 14 and 16) Chapter 16

A) Summary

B) midterm

*****MIDTERM EXAM OCT 16 ON WHOLE BOOK*****

Week 10 (October 21 and 23) (House rules and Procedures)

III SIMULATION

Weeks 11 (October 28 to November 30) Simulation

*****SUBMIT SHORT UPDATE OF YOUR REPRESENTATIVE'S
LEGISLATIVE ORIENTATION**

*****SUBMIT THREE (3) MOVES AS HER/HIS REPRESENTATIVE AND
OFFER THREE (3) JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THESE MOVES *****

IV COURSE CONCLUSIONS

Week 16 (December 2 and 4) Course Summary and Final quiz

*****TURN IN 3 PAGE SUMMARY OF YOUR REPRESENTATIVE'S
SUCSESSES AND FAILURES IN THE SIMULATION*****

How successfully did you represent your representative?

**How successful were your moves—e.g., did your bill or
bills become law?**

**How successfully did the simulation portray real-world
House politics?**

*****DECEMBER 4 : FINAL QUIZ (HOW SIMULATION AND
COURSE ARE OR AREN'T RELATED)**

Appendix I

An Online Packet of Readings About Congress

(Google UIC Library, Go To Alphabetical List of Electronic Resources, JSTOR, type in the title and/or author)

These are *some* of the research articles that will be referred to in the class and text. You may want to read the originals as we go along. They can also be the subjects of extra credit reports.

Partisanship, Blame Avoidance, and the Distribution of Legislative Pork, Steven J. Balla; Eric D. Lawrence; Forrest Maltzman; Lee Sigelman, *American Journal of Political Science* > Vol. 46, No. 3 (Jul., 2002), pp. 515-525

Policy and Pork: The Use of Pork Barrel Projects to Build Policy Coalitions in the House of Representatives Diana Evans, *American Journal of Political Science* > Vol. 38, No. 4 (Nov., 1994), pp. 894-917

The Power of Subcommittees Richard L. Hall; C. Lawrence Evans *The Journal of Politics* > Vol. 52, No. 2 (May, 1990), pp. 335-355

Representation and Public Policy: The Consequences of Senate Apportionment for the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds, Frances E. Lee, *The Journal of Politics* > Vol. 60, No. 1 (Feb., 1998), pp. 34-62

Senate Representation and Coalition Building in Distributive Politics Frances E. Lee, *The American Political Science Review* > Vol. 94, No. 1 (Mar., 2000), pp. 59-72

Political Parties and the Distribution of Federal Outlays, Steven D. Levitt; James M. Snyder, Jr., *American Journal of Political Science* > Vol. 39, No. 4 (Nov., 1995), pp. 958-980

The Impact of Federal Spending on House Election Outcomes, Steven D. Levitt; James M. Snyder, Jr., *The Journal of Political Economy* > Vol. 105, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), pp. 30-53

The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nelson W. Polsby *The American Political Science Review* > Vol. 62, No. 1 (Mar., 1968), pp. 144-168

The Growth of the Seniority System in the U. S. House of Representatives Nelson W. Polsby; Miriam Gallaher; Barry Spencer Rundquist, *The American Political Science Review* > Vol. 63, No. 3 (Sep., 1969), pp. 787-807

A Dead Senator Tells No Lies: Seniority and the Distribution of Federal Benefits Brian E. Roberts, *American Journal of Political Science* > Vol. 34, No. 1 (Feb., 1990), pp. 31-58

Corrupt Politicians and Their Electoral Support: Some Experimental Observations

Barry S. Rundquist; Gerald S. Strom; John G. Peters,
The American Political Science Review > Vol. 71, No. 3 (Sep., 1977), pp. 954-963

The 2000 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Race
Barry Rundquist; Ola Adeoye; Julia Dowse; Chris Christenson; Randy Smith
PS: Political Science and Politics > Vol. 34, No. 2 (Jun., 2001), p. 270

Bill Construction in Legislative Committees: A Study of the U. S. House
Barry S. Rundquist; Gerald S. Strom
Legislative Studies Quarterly > Vol. 12, No. 1 (Feb., 1987), pp. 97-113

A Revised Theory of Winning in House-Senate Conferences
Gerald S. Strom; Barry S. Rundquist, *The American Political Science Review* > Vol. 71, No. 2 (Jun., 1977), pp. 448-453

The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power, Kenneth A. Shepsle; Barry R. Weingast, *The American Political Science Review* > Vol. 81, No. 1 (Mar., 1987), pp. 85-104