

**POLS 228 U.S. Congress  
Spring 2009**

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**and by appointment**

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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 formal part of 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 complicated 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 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, Walter Oleszek, and Frances Lee, *Congress and its Members*, Eleventh Edition, will provide an almost up to date introduction to the U.S. Congress.

The class lectures will also try to cover both theoretical and descriptive material, with more emphasis on the former than the latter. Some xeroxed hand outs will 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 quizzes and a 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 also be prepared every class to answer and raise questions about what is going on in Congress each week. Under "U.S. Congress 111<sup>th</sup> Congress" *Wikipedia* has an up-to-date description of the partisan makeup and members of the House and Senate—addressing who are the new members, which seats are still contested, who is resigning to join the Obama administration, etc.. Daily newspapers (paper and on-line) and a variety of web sites are good sources of current congressional happenings. See, for example, <http://www.congress.com/>; [www.congresslink.org](http://www.congresslink.org/); [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov/); [www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/Legislative.shtml](http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/Legislative.shtml); [thehillblog.com](http://thehillblog.com/); [www.dailykos.com](http://www.dailykos.com/); [americablog.blogspot.com](http://americablog.blogspot.com/); <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/TheNote/story?id=156238>; Congressional Quarterly <[middayupdate-owner@cq.com](mailto: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 "U.S. 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 “U.S. House” and “U.S. Senate” and for particular parties, committees, members, and policy issues. I will probably assign different students or groups of students to do different weekly searches.

Judging by past classes, many students have a hard time with the reading material in POLS 228.. The problem seems to be both remembering the myriad of congressional details and relating the details to broader ideas necessary for understanding the institution well enough to simulate it. Last fall I gave weekly quizzes to help everyone get on top of the readings. The good news is that the class did better than previous classes on the midterm. The bad news is that a lot of students’ grades were pulled down by their grades on the weekly quizzes. This semester I am going to use the “pop quiz approach—both to facilitate preparation for the midterm and because the class is too large for me to grade weekly short essay quizzes. The pop quizzes will be short, objective (i.e., multiple choice or true and false questions), and will only occur when I sense that a lot of students are falling behind on the readings.

**Grades in POLS 228 will be determined as follows:**

<b>Quizzes</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Final</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Three Simulation</b>	
<b>Assignments (profile, moves,</b>	
<b>and final report)</b>	<b>30 (10 each)</b>
	<b>100%</b>

**Note: quizzes may occur in any class period (as well as on March 19).**

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

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

### **I INTRODUCTIONS**

**Week 1 (Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>) Read DOL Preface and Chapter 1)**

A) Introduction: goals of course.

B) Two Congresses?

## **II THE MAIN FEATURES OF CONGRESS**

**Week 2** (Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>) Read DOL's Chapters 2, 3)

A) Development (institutionalization?) of Congress

B) Electoral Control Theory: (Mayhew)

C) Recruitment

**Week 3** (Jan 27 and 29) Read DOL's Chapters 4 and 5.

A) Running

B) Who Makes It to Congress?

**\*\*\*SUBMIT LEGISLATIVE BIOGRAPHY ON Jan 29\*\*\***

**Week 4** (Feb. 3 and 5) Read DOL's Chapters 6 and 7.

A) Leaders

Role of in Arnold

Cox and McCubbins

Cannon, Rayburn, Gingrich, Hastert, Pelosi

Johnson, Fritch, Reid, et.al.

B) Committees

Cox and McCubbins

Shepsle and Weingast

Krehbiel

**Week 5** (Feb 10 and 12) Read DOL Chapter 8 and 9)

A) Rules and Procedures

B) Decision making in Congress

Riker's size principle

Arnold's leaders

Mayhew

**Week 6** (Feb. 17 and 19 Read DOL Chapters 10 and 11)

C) Congress and President  
Theories of split control

D) Congress and the Bureaucracy

**Week 7** (Feb. 24 and 26) DOL Chapters 12 and 13

A) Congress and the courts

B) Interest groups

**Week 8** (March 3 and 5) DOL Chapters 14 and 15

A) Budgetary process

B) Congress and national security policy

**Week 9** (March 10 and 12) Chapter 16

A) Summary

B) Midterm

**\*\*\*MIDTERM EXAM March 12 ON WHOLE DOL BOOK\*\*\***

**Week 10** (March 10 and 12) **First 100 Days: 1933 and 1965**

**Week 11.** (March 17 and 19) **First 100 Days: TBA**

**\*\*\*QUIZ\*\*\***

**Week 12** (Marh 23 and 25) **No class. Spring Vacation.**

**Week 13** (March 31 and April 2) (Senate rules and procedures)

**Week 14** (April 7 and 9) **Simulation**

**\*\*\*SUBMIT SHORT UPDATE OF YOUR SENATOR'S LEGISLATIVE ORIENTATION**

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

**Week 15 (April 14 and 16) Simulation**

**Week 16 (April 21 and 23) Simulation**

**Week 17 (April 28 and 30) End Simulation, Course conclusions, and Final Quiz**

**\*\*\*FINAL EXAM (HOW SIMULATION AND COURSE ARE OR ARE NOT RELATED)\*\*\***

**\*\*\*TURN IN 3 PAGE SUMMARY OF YOUR SENATOR'S SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IN THE SIMULATION\*\*\***

**How successfully did you represent your senator?**

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

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

## **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 read for 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

## Appendix III

### SENATE SIMULATION Fall 2007

This part of POLS 329 is designed to familiarize students first hand with the legislative process in the U.S. Congress. To that end, each student will take the role of a United States senator and act the way he or she would likely act in particular circumstances based on what you know about the senator, the ins and outs of the legislative process, and the specific policy issue involved.

Thirty-three percent of the grade in POLS 228 will come from your participation in the simulation. The simulation is worth **130 points**. Each student is assigned the role of a senator and must make moves appropriate to that senator as the course and simulation proceeds. Details of the simulation are included below. There are three requirements for the simulation. *First*, each student writes a five **(5) page political profile of the senator and the kinds of political moves the senator is likely to make**. *Second*, each student makes **three (3) moves as her/his senator and offers three (3) justifications for these moves**. *Third*, each student write a **3-page summary of the senator's overall involvement in the simulation**, outlining what the senator accomplished, who attempted to block her/him, how successful she/he was, and how well what happened in the simulation fits with what would “really” happen with the senator in the Senate. As one of the three moves, each student must submit a piece of legislation consistent with the legislation that the senator might introduce in the “real world.” Attendance is critical for class since moves may be made against your senators, and if you are not present at any time during the simulation you will lose **five (5) points** from your total simulation score. Also, if you are not actively involved in the simulation at all times, 5 points will be deducted from the total simulation score.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

There are three requirements for the simulation:

- 1) A 5 page paper offering a political profile of the senator you play.
- 2) 3 independent moves accompanying ½ to 1 page justifications for the moves.
- 3) A three page paper summarizing you role in the simulation.

## **RULES:**

The Players of the simulation consist of members of the Senate from various states played by students. The President, the House of Representatives, and the press is played by the simulation coordinator. Attendance is taken of the Senate (just like in the real legislative world). If a senator is missing on the day of the simulation, s/he loses 5 points from the total simulation score.

The moves of the simulation are of two types: independent moves and outside moves.

A) **INDEPENDENT MOVES:** These are made by individual senators to make something happen. Independent moves can be made publicly or secretly. The moves must be submitted in writing to the simulation coordinator at the beginning of a class hour along with a one-page justification.

Independent moves can be of several types:

- 1) One required form is the introduction of a piece of legislation. The senator making such an independent move must draft the bill in exact language (and for the sanity of the Senate) on a single sheet of paper.
- 2) A different kind of independent move involves a senator engaging in some activity for the folks back home. This may mean returning to the state for some local event, securing an amendment to “ear mark” money for a state pet project, or offering some other form of amendment on a piece of legislation. Because this is the simplest form of an independent move by a senator, you may make only one such move.
- 3) Amendments can only be brought up at the appropriate time: in committee when the chair of the committee is marking up the bill and when the chair is willing to accept the amendment, or on the floor when the Majority Leader has decided to bring the bill to a vote.
- 4) For committee chairs or subcommittee chairs, one common independent move is to call for hearings on a particular topic or a piece of legislation. Another independent move involves when and how to “mark-up” a bill (that is, to review and possibly amend the language of the bill) to the chair’s liking.
- 5) You may also count as an independent move reactions to something another senator, the president, the House, or the press has done. These reactions may be either public or private. That is, you may designate that you want everyone to know your reaction or you may simply want to notify another senator privately of you reaction.

6) You may hold a news conference to criticize another member or members, attack or support the president, or respond to charges of scandal or impropriety made against you.

7) Note: One type of activity that does not qualify as an independent move is voting on a piece of legislation. This is merely considered Senate business. If you have a question about whether something you are thinking about is a proper independent move, talk to the simulation coordinator.

**JUSTIFICATIONS:** Each of the three moves requires an accompanying justification (between ½ to 1 page in length) that briefly outline why the senator made the move s/he did and what you think will happen as a result. Does the move make sense given what you know about the senator? Is it designed to help her/his reelection goals, improve the bill's chances of passage, make a deal with the White House, etc. The justifications need not be elaborate but they are designed to ensure that you play a senator in the "right" way. For instance, someone playing Senator Barbara Boxer (California Democrat), a long time supporter of abortion rights, would not tend to introduce a pro-life bill.

**OUTSIDE MOVES:** These moves come from the President, the House, or press and act as wild cards at any time during the simulation. The simulation coordinator has the ability to make unlimited outside moves.