

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

**Instructor: Barry Rundquist**  
**Class Room: 369 BSB**  
**Office Hours: After class**  
**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 complicated institution with a fairly 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 the 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 provide 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*, Twelfth Edition, will provide an almost up-to-date introduction to the U.S. Congress. This edition was published in July.

The class lectures will also try to cover both theoretical and descriptive material, with more emphasis on the former than the latter. Some emailed 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 day. 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, etc. Daily newspapers (hard 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/); [ww.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 may 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. Another problem with grading in the last few classes is that they have convinced me to grade on the curve. The problem is that the average grade turns out to be around 50 percent correct. This semester we will grade on an absolute scale—over 90, A; 80 to 90, B; 70 to 80, C; 60 to 70, D; and below 60, F.

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

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

**Note: quizzes may occur in any class period**

**Extra credit reports: 20% maximum, graded on the above scale**

**Class attendance:** Required (attendance will be taken and used to decide marginal grades)

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

### **I INTRODUCTIONS**

**Week 1 (August 25 and 27) Read DOL Preface and Chapter 1**

**A) Introduction: goals of course.**

**B) Two Congresses?**

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

**Week 2 (Sept.1 and 3) Read DOL's Chapters 2, 3)**

**A) Development (institutionalization) of Congress**

**B) Electoral Control Theory: (Mayhew)**

**C) Recruitment**

**Week 3 (Sept. 8 and 10) Read DOL's Chapters 4 and 5.**

**A) Running**

**B) Who Makes It to Congress?**

**Week 4 (Sept 15 and 17) Read DOL's Chapters 6 and 7.**

**A) Leaders**

**Role of in Arnold**

**Cox and McCubbins**

**Cannon, Rayburn, Gingrich, Hastert, Pelosi**

**Mitchell, Reid, et.al.**

**B) Committees**

**Cox and McCubbins**

**Shepsle and Weingast**

**Krehbiel**

**\*\*\*SUBMIT LEGISLATIVE BIOGRAPHY ON Sept. 17th\*\*\***

**Week 5 (Sept. 22 and 24) 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 (Sept 29 and Oct. 1) Read DOL Chapters 10 and 11)**

**C) Congress and President**

**Theories of split control**

**D) Congress and the Bureaucracy**

**Week 7. (Oct. 6 and 8) DOL Chapters 12 and 13**

**A) Congress and the courts**

**B) Interest groups**

**Week 8. (Oct. 13 and 15) DOL Chapters 14 and 15**

**A) Budgetary process**

**B) Congress and national security policy**

**Week 9 (Oct. 20 and 22) Chapter 16**

**A) Summary**

**B) Midterm**

**\*\*\*MIDTERM EXAM Oct. 22 ON WHOLE DOL BOOK\*\*\***

**Week 10. (Oct. 27 and 29) First 100 Days: 1933 and 1965**

**Week 11. (Nov. 3 and 5) First 100 Days: TBA**

**Week 12. (Nov. 10 and 12)**

**Week 13 (Nov. 17 and 19) (Senate rules and procedures)**

**Week 14 (Nov. 24. No class on Thanksgiving) 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. (Dec. 1 and 3). 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 which must be given in the week that the class is discussing the general topic of the article. Additional articles will be provided later this week.

**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 II**

**SIMULATION**

**TO BE ANNOUNCED**