

Legislative Process
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
2:00 – 2:50 p.m.

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Room:
Office:
Office Hours:

Course Description

This course is intended as a broad survey of the legislative branch of the American government. In this course we discuss the origins and development of the U.S. Congress, the committee systems, legislative process, the role of political parties, and inter-branch relations. Particular attention is given to changes in Congress, as well as current political and scholarly controversies such as budgetary politics, party effects, and campaign finance reform.

Required Texts

There is no required book for Legislative Process. Instead, links to readings that correspond to each lecture will be provided in the schedule at the end of this syllabus. These will also be posted in ELC. Some of these readings will be highly technical in nature. As such, students are not expected to understand all aspects of each paper. However, they will be held accountable for a basic understanding of the paper's theory and applications.

Students will not only be expected to have done the reading assignments, but should also be aware of relevant news stories. As such, I recommend reading a daily newspaper – such as the New York Times and/or the Washington Post. Other political blogs that students may find useful include FiveThirtyEight, Political Wire, The Monkey Cage, The Upshot, Vox, the Drudge Report and Roll Call.

Some optional books students might want to consider purchasing can be found on amazon.com:

Oleszek, Walter J., Mark J. Oleszek, Elizabeth Rybicki and Bill Heniff, Jr. 2020. Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process. 11th Edition. CQ Press: Washington, DC.

Mann, Robert. 1996. The Walls of Jericho: Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Richard Russell, and the Struggle for Civil Rights. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

Murray, Alan and Jeffrey Birnbaum. 1987. Showdown at Gucci Gulch. Random House Publishing.

Mayhew, David. 1974. Congress: The Electoral Connection. 2nd Edition. Yale University Press.

Draper, Robert. 2012. Do Not Ask What Good We Do: Inside the U.S. House of Representatives. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Kaiser, Robert. 2013. *Act of Congress: How America's Essential Institution Works, and How It Doesn't*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf.

Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

Attendance	5 Points
Participation	5 Points
Background Survey	5 Points
Midterm Exam	20 Points
Final Exam	20 Points
Legislative History	45 Points

Attendance and Participation: Each student will be granted 2 unexcused absences. After those are exhausted, the attendance grade will be the proportion of all classes attended. For example, a student who attends all classes will receive all 10 points. A student who attended all but 2 classes will also receive all 10 points. A student who missed 3 classes but had a university approved excuse will also receive all 10 points. However, a student who used both “freebies” but also missed 10 percent of the classes will only receive 90 percent of the available points.

Background Survey: Students will be asked to fill out a short background survey for the purposes of matching them with a legislative history topic. A link to the survey will be provided by the instructor. The deadline to fill out the survey is Monday, August 23 at 5 pm.

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam in this course. Exams are closed book and will include a mix of identification, short answer, and essay questions. The final exam is cumulative and will include material covered in the class lectures and the assigned reading. Make-up exams will not be allowed without a university-approved excuse. It is the student's responsibility to schedule a make-up exam as quickly as possible after her or she has provided an excuse. Any potential conflicts should be cleared with the instructor as soon as possible. Exams may not be taken early.

Legislative History: In order to demonstrate an understanding of the historical policy-making process, students are required to complete a paper analyzing the consideration and passage of a major piece of American legislation. After filling out the background survey discussed above, each student will be assigned to a legislative history “team.” While students are encouraged to work with their legislative history “teammates,” they are not obligated to do so. Each student will be assigned differing questions and duties related to the legislative history and graded separately. These assignments will be posted by the instructor. Students are also encouraged to use material from their exams in compiling their legislative histories.

The legislative history assignment will count for 45 points of the final course grade, broken up accordingly:

- A one-page Topic Paper detailing the broader issue the student will be analyzing. This paper should include a broad discussion of the policy area, paying close attention to the topic's importance and relevance. The topic paper is due on Friday, September 17 at 11pm. It will not be combined with the broader legislative history paper.
- A Background section that answers a specific question assigned by the instructor. Typically, this will necessitate contextualizing either the political climate the legislation was considered in or provide a history of the policy. Ideally, it will demonstrate why the legislation was needed. The background section is due on Friday, October 1 at 11pm.
- A Member Spotlight section. This is a short, one to two-page discussion detailing a member of Congress associated with the passage of the law. It can include either on a broad overview of a member's career and/or an interesting episode they were involved in. Students are encouraged to focus on whatever details they feel are the most interesting. The Member Spotlight is due on Friday, October 22 at 11 pm.
- A Process section that analyzes committee and floor consideration of the measure during a specific period assigned by the instructor. This may involve House or Senate consideration of a bill or conference report and will likely necessitate the discussion of a given rule or legislative procedure. It will also likely necessitate analyzing a roll call vote. The process section is due on Friday, November 12 at 11 pm.
- An Aftermath section that analyzes a post-enactment event related to the bill assigned to the student by the instructor. This might include the law being amended by a subsequent piece of legislation, being altered by a series of Supreme Court decisions or its enforcement by the President and bureaucracy. The Aftermath section is due on Friday, November 19 at 11 pm.
- A Final Paper that combines the background, member spotlight, process, and aftermath sections and incorporates any instructor comments is due on Tuesday, December 7 at 11pm. The final paper should also include a brief, three-paragraph Summary detailing the legislation and issue the student will be analyzing. Specifically, the summary section should do three things: Paragraph 1: Tell the reader what the law does/sought to do; Paragraph 2: Tell the reader why both the underlying issue and law are (or are not) considered important today; Paragraph 3: Characterize its passage. Was it controversial? Partisan? What were the key votes/moments that occurred during consideration?

Overall Grades: Grades are constructed to reflect the university standards, which are summarized below. Grades will be based on how many points you earn according to the following distribution:

A = 93-100 A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89 B = 83-86 B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79 C = 73-76 C- = 70-72
D = 60-69 F = 0-59

How to Succeed in this Course

- Be respectful of your own and others' ideas.
- Attend class consistently.
- Keep up with the readings.
- If something is not clear, ask a question.
- Clarify expectations with the instructor.
- Utilize all resources available to you.

Course Schedule (Subject to change as events warrant):

8/18 Introduction

8/20 Five Key Take-Away Points about Congress
Congressional Fundraising

8/23 How a Bill Becomes a Law: House

8/25 How a Bill Becomes a Law: Senate

8/27 Congressional Resources and Information

9/1 Lincoln

9/3 Lincoln

9/6 No Class – Labor Day

9/8 Constitutional Foundations of Congress

9/10 Why Rules?

9/13 Committees and Leaders

9/15 Power in the House

9/17 The House Rules Committee

Topic Paper Due

9/20 Spatial Modeling in Congress

9/22 Committee-Gatekeeper Games

9/24 Committee-Gatekeeper Games

9/27 The House Floor

9/29 Ideological Scaling

10/1 Ideological Scaling II

Background Section Due

10/4 House Rule Choice

10/6 House Rule Choice II

10/8 **Exam 1**

10/11 Parties in Congress I

10/13 Parties in Congress II

10/15 Parties in Congress III

10/18 Senate Floor Procedures

The Amending Process in the Senate

10/20 Senate Origins and Development

10/22 Senate Origins and Development II

Member Spotlight Due

10/25 The Evolution of the Senate Filibuster

10/27 Senate Filibuster II

10/29 **No Class – Fall Break**

- 11/1 Supreme Court Appointments
- 11/3 Supreme Court Appointments II
- 11/5 Process Sections
- 11/8 Congress and Health Care
- 11/10 Congressional Agenda Control
- 11/12 Congressional Agenda Control II

Process Section Due

- 11/15 Resolving Differences
- 11/17 Negotiations and Delegation
- Working in Congress
- 11/19 Who Serves in Congress?

Congressional Benefits

Aftermath Section Due

- 11/22 Congressional Staff
- 11/24 **No Class – Thanksgiving Break**
- 11/26 **No Class – Thanksgiving Break**
- 11/29 Appropriations and Budgeting
- 12/1 Campaign Spending
- 12/3 Campaign Spending II
- 12/6 “Fixing Congress”

Summary Section Due

Final Legislative History Due

- 12/13 **Exam 2**