

POL 3337: The Congress and Legislatures

3 Credits

Spring 2018

Location: CHSS 232

Class Time: 9:30-11:00am

Instructor: Dr. Heather K. Evans

Very stable genius

...like, really smart

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Office: CHSS 488

Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 Tuesday/Thursday
and by appointment

Course Description: An examination of the powers, organization, procedures, and operations of legislative bodies in the United States. Consideration is given to such matters as selection of legislators, legislative leadership, influence of lobbyists, political parties, legislative committees, executives, and legislative roles and norms.

In this course, we will examine the structure of Congress, congressional elections, representation, policymaking, and the interplay between the three branches of government.

Course Objectives:

- Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.

Required Text: There is only one required text that covers the broad aspects of Congress.

Congress and It's Members, 16th Edition, Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee

ISBN: 9781506369730

This book is available in earlier versions (it has been around since I was in college), but please buy the most recent edition. The reason for this is that there is turnover in Congress, new rules, and new procedures that we will be discussing.

The remainder of the readings will come from political science journals, newspaper articles, or from chapters of other books. Most of the journal articles are available from JSTOR (www.jstor.org). The most recent articles and book selections will be available on the course Blackboard website.

Expectations:

This class will operate like a seminar. I will “lecture” infrequently. Most of our class time will be given over to discussion. At times, I will structure the discussion so that we talk about certain topics or readings. At other times, I hope we can have a more free-flowing discussion in which I play a minimal role. Your participation in class is essential. Three things will make our class meetings more enjoyable. First, before we meet, I expect that you will have completed all of the readings and any other assignments due that day. Second, on the day of class, please **bring the readings with you** so that we can refer to them. Third, come ready to speak up, to answer questions, and most importantly, to listen.

To encourage you to take coming to class and reading seriously, I will be employing a “cold-calling system.” That is, in each session I will “randomly” select about one-fifth of the class roster and during our meeting I will call upon those selected. If I call on you and you are absent, or if you are clearly unprepared for class (it is obvious that you have never cracked the book/ have not been paying attention), I will make a note of it.

If you do not already do so, I encourage you to take notes when you read (as this will likely pay off both in class and on exams). Please see me if you would like further suggestions and/or study tips.

Simulation

During our course, you will play the role of a U.S. Representative or Senator, who you will be assigned on our first day of class. In your character's role, you will give an introductory speech, create a campaign poster, write a bill, write a speech about your bill, participate in committee hearings and votes, speak on the floor, and use your knowledge of Congressional procedure to try to get bills passed, all the while considering constituent preferences, media reactions, and your character's personal motivations. In so doing, you'll get to see legislative process from the perspective of an insider. Each class during the simulation will mimic a stage of the legislative process: introductions, committee hearings, committee markup, floor debate, and floor votes. Students are encouraged to be creative and assertive (but in character) in offering amendments, making speeches, and lobbying fellow members.

You will be graded during this simulation, and your grade will be based upon realistic behavior, not on whether you win or lose.

Throughout the simulation, there will be various written assignments (6). The first assignment requires you to write a background on your Representative or Senator. You will also write two speeches, a bill, create a campaign ad, and a newspaper article.

A note on participation: Please be respectful of others (and their opinions) when participating in class discussion and the simulation. Rude or inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is a requirement in this course. I will be taking attendance each day at the beginning of class. If it is found that someone else in class is signing the attendance sheet for you, you will receive a zero for attendance and participation.

Course Grades:

Simulation Assignments	
Background Paper	10%
Campaign Ad	5%
Introductory Speech	5%
Bill	5%
Bill Speech	5%
Newspaper Article	5%
Simulation Participation	25%
 Class Attendance and Participation	 10%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%

Exams

The midterm and the final exams will both be comprised of short answer/essay questions. Material for each test will come from class lectures, discussions, and readings.

There are NO make-up exams given in this course.

Notes on papers

I will accept papers/assignments up to one week late, but assignments will lose 10 points each day they are late (Saturday and Sunday are included).

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

Over the last few semesters, cheating from Wikipedia and the Internet has become commonplace. If any student is found to have cheated from any online source, they will receive a zero on their assignment.

Americans with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the

university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Classroom Rules of Conduct

Students are expected to abide by the Classroom Rules of Conduct as outlined by the Dean of Students: http://www.shsu.edu/students/StudentGuidelines2007_2008.pdf.

Cell Phones and Laptops

All cell phones must be switched to off or silent during class. Personal computers certainly may be used to take notes or if otherwise needed for in-class activities, but may not be used during class for anything else.

Other SHSU policies can be found at <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>

Class Schedule:

1/18 – Class Begins!

Pick U.S. Senator/Representative and set up Google Alerts

Photos will be taken of each class Senator/Representative

1/23 - The Evolution of Congress

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 1 & 2

Reading Questions:

- 1. What are the 2 Congresses?**
- 2. What kind of legislature did the Framers construct?**
- 3. Why is a legislature of this type necessary in a representative democracy?**

1/25 – Individual Members of Congress

Fenno – Home Style, Introduction, Chapter 1 & 2 (Blackboard)

Section 1: Elections

1/30 – Congressional Elections

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 3 & 4

Reading Questions:

- 1. What does it take to get elected to Congress? Why do people choose to run for Congress?**
- 2. What are the rules regarding campaign financing? What are the politics of redistricting?**

SIMULATION ASSIGNMENT 1: Due 1/30 on Blackboard by 11:59pm

Senator/Representative Simulation background paper: In this paper you will describe the Senator/Representative you have been assigned to play and describe the strategy you will employ during the simulation. To do this, you will study your Senator's state constituency/Representative's district and consider how your Senator/Representative would act in the situations he/she faces in the legislative simulation. Be sure to discuss the characteristics of your state/district, your committee assignments, policy agenda, and any leadership roles that you play in your political party. How close was your last election? Is there anything notable about you in the news currently? This paper should be 5-10 pages, 12 point font, double spaced, Times New Roman font. Be sure to properly cite the material and include a list of references. References MUST include CQ Politics in America.

2/1 -- Incumbency Advantage

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan. "Out of Step Out of Office" Available at: <http://authors.library.caltech.edu/27582/1/CANapsr02.pdf>

Sulkin, Tracy "Promises Made and Promises Kept" (Blackboard)

Hopkins, Dan. "Being an Incumbent Isn't as Fun as it Used to Be." <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/being-an-incumbent-isnt-as-fun-as-it-used-to-be/>

Brown, Lara. "Out with the Old" <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/lara-brown/2015/11/23/out-with-the-old-incumbency-is-a-liability>

2/6 – Campaigns (Media – Traditional and Social Media)

Schaffner, Brian F. and Patrick J. Sellers. "The Structural Determinants of Local Congressional News Coverage" (Blackboard)

Evans, Heather K., Victoria Cordova, and Savannah Sipole. (2014) "Twitter-Style: An Analysis of How House Candidates Used Twitter in their 2012 Campaigns" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 47(2): 454-462. Available on JSTOR.

SIMULATION ASSIGNMENT 2: Due 2/6 on Blackboard by 11:59pm

In this assignment, you will design a poster that you used during your last campaign. Details about this will be handed out in class.

2/8 – Representation (Overall and Female)

Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 5

Reading Questions:

- 1. What is the difference between Hill style and Home style?**
- 2. What does constituency mean?**
- 3. What is representation?**

Swers, Michele L. "Are Women More Likely to Vote for Women's Issue Bills than their Male Counterparts?" Available on JSTOR

Check out: <http://womenincongress.house.gov/>

2/13 – Representation (Latino and Black)

Pantoja, Adrian D. and Gary M. Segura “Does Ethnicity Matter? Descriptive Representation in Legislatures and Political Alienation Among Latinos” Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1540-6237.8402014/pdf>

Preuhs, Robert R. “The Conditional Effects of Minority Descriptive Representation: Black Legislators and Policy Influence in the American States” Available on JSTOR

Check out: <http://baic.house.gov/>

SIMULATION ASSIGNMENT 3: Due 2/13 on Blackboard by 11:59pm

In this assignment, you will write a speech where you will describe the issue that you will work on and propose legislation about that will help your state/constituents, as well as introduce yourself to your Senate/House colleagues. You should do the following in this speech: (1) Introduce yourself; (2) Identify some of the major needs of your state/district; (3) Reveal your interest in your national issue; (4) Last 2 minutes in duration. The speech itself will be given during our next class period.

2/15 – Senate/House Introductions – Simulation Day

Professional dress required – come ready to “be” your Senator/House Representative.

Each member of the Senate/House will introduce themselves to the other members in a short speech.

Section 2: Structure

2/20 – Parties in Congress

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 6

Reading Questions:

1. What is the role of party leadership in Congress? Why is it important?

Lawless, Jennifer “Can Al Franken's Secret Santa exchange cure the Senate?”
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/16/opinions/lawless-theriault-secret-santa-al-franken/>

Wypijewski, JoAnne. "The Fall (and Rise?) of Christine O'Donnell"
<http://www.thenation.com/article/155873/fall-and-rise-christine-o%E2%80%99donnell>

2/22 – Polarization?

Krehbiel, Keith. "Where's the Party?" Available on JSTOR

Wright, Gerald C. and Brian F. Shaffner, "The Influence of Party: Evidence from State Legislatures" Available on JSTOR

Marcus, Ethan. "Polarization: Why It's Destroying Our America, Our World, and Our Lives." http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ethan-marcus/polarization-why-its-dest_b_1117456.html

Steinhauer, Jennifer. "A Simple Menu for a Bipartisan Breakfast Club"
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/18/us/politics/congressional-breakfast-club-tackles-bipartisanship.html?ref=congress>

2/27 – Committees

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 7

- 1. What is the significance of the committee system in Congress?**
- 2. How do members get committee assignments?**
- 3. Why would members wish to participate (and how do they participate) in committees?**

Krehbiel, Keith. "Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?" Available on JSTOR

Rhonde, David. "Parties and Committees in the House: Member Motivations, Issues and Institutional Arrangements" Available on JSTOR

Check out: <http://www.opensecrets.org/cmteprofiles/>

SIMULATION ASSIGNMENT 4: Due 2/27 on Blackboard by 11:59pm

In this assignment, you will draft a bill that will deal with the issue you identified in your speech to the Senate/House. You should use the Bill Template to complete this assignment. Your bills should be specific. You DO NOT lobby for your bill in the text, you do that in committee and on the floor of the Senate/House. Your bills should reflect the needs of your constituents.

3/1 – Party Caucus, Bill Introduction, and Committee Assignment Day – Simulation

Professional dress required – come ready to “be” your Senator/House Representative.

PARTY CAUCUS- the purpose of this group is mainly to organize the party before the session begins. In this meeting you will:

1. Elect the majority and minority leaders based on seniority (Senate/House). Elect the Speaker of the House. Elect the party whips.
2. Choose committee assignments on the basis of seniority.

Each of the bills that have been drafted will be read aloud by the Senator/House Member that is introducing it (one-minute speech) and the committee will be assigned by the Majority Leader/Speaker.

3/6 – Exam Review

3/8 – Midterm Exam

3/13 – Spring Break

3/15 – Spring Break

3/20 - Rules and Procedures

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 8, 9

Reading Questions:

1. What are the differences between the legislative processes in the House and the Senate?
2. How do these differences affect the ability of Congress to "get things done"?
3. What are the (dis)advantages to the different rules concerning floor debate in the House & Senate?
4. If you could change the rules, what would you change?

CRS Report for Congress: House and Senate Rules of Procedure (A Comparison):
http://www.senate.gov/CRSReports/crs-publish.cfm?pid='0E%2C*PL%3F%3F%23%40%20%20%0A

3/22 – Policymaking/Committee

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 14, 15

Lipinski, Daniel. “Navigating Congressional Policy Processes: The Inside Perspective on How Laws are Made” (Blackboard)

SIMULATION ASSIGNMENT 5: Due 3/22 on Blackboard by 11:59pm

You will turn in the text of a speech that you will be giving to the committee where your bill has been assigned. This speech will do the following: (1) summarize the issues that your bill addresses; (2) explain how your bill will work; (3) convince other senators to vote for your bill; and (4) be approximately 3-5 minutes in duration.

3/27 – Policymaking: Budgeting

Haskell, John, Marian Currinder, and Sara Grove. “Power of the Purse” Chapter 7 from Congress in Context. Available on Blackboard.

Evans, Diana. “Appropriations in the Republican Era” Available on Blackboard

“The Do-Some-Things Congress: The Most Impactful Laws Passed in 2015”
<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/01/congress-bills-2015-usa-freedom-act-every-student-success-act>

“US Congress Approves 2016 Budget.” <http://www.dw.com/en/us-congress-approves-2016-budget/a-18928887>

Reading Questions:

- 1. Why does Congress place such importance on control of the budget?**
- 2. What does it take to pass a budget?**

3/29 – **Committee Action – Simulation Day**

Professional dress required – come ready to “be” your Senator.

The chairperson will announce the agenda and it will be approved by the committee members. The committees may take the following action:

1. approve the bill as is

2. amend the bill- mark up the bill before sending it on to the next legislative step (rewrite the bill as it will read as law)
3. kill the bill
4. submit a committee bill
5. report the bill unfavorably

**Committees can hold hearings and allow members to "testify" either for or against the bill. This means that you might have an opportunity to give the speech you have drafted about your bill.

4/3 -- Committee Action/Party Caucus – Simulation Day

Professional dress required – come ready to “be” your Senator.

The chairperson will announce the agenda and it will be approved by the committee members. The committees may take the following action:

1. approve the bill as is
2. amend the bill- mark up the bill before sending it on to the next legislative step (rewrite the bill as it will read as law)
3. kill the bill
4. submit a committee bill
5. report the bill unfavorably

**Committees can hold hearings and allow members to "testify" either for or against the bill. This means that you might have an opportunity to give the speech you have drafted about your bill.

Rules Committee Action

At this point, there may also be time for parties to organize another caucus meeting to discuss their plans for the floor debate the following week (who will speak and when).

4/5 – No Class – Prepare for next week

4/10 – Floor Action -- Simulation

Professional dress required – come ready to “be” your Senator/U.S. House Representative.

During this portion of the Simulation, you will also take notes, with the handout that I provide. You will then use these notes to write up a report about what has transpired in the Senate/House during one of the days of the simulation.

4/12 - Floor Action - Simulation

Professional dress required – come ready to “be” your Senator/U.S. House Representative.

During this portion of the Simulation, you will also take notes, with the handout that I provide. You will then use these notes to write up a report about what has transpired in the Senate/House during one of the days of the simulation.

Section 3: Intra-Branch Relations

4/17– Congress & President

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 10

Reading Questions:

- 1. What determines the President’s success in getting congressional support for policy?**

Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Mathew D. McCubbins. “Presidential Influence on Congressional Appropriations Decisions” Available on JSTOR

Erikson, Robert S. “The Puzzle of Midterm Loss” Available on JSTOR

Batten, Taylor. “Guess Which President has Fewest Executive Orders of the Past 130 Years” <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/opinion/article53494490.html>

4/19 - Congress and Interest Groups

Davidson and Oleszek Chapter 13

Reading Questions:

- 1. Who are organized interest groups?**
- 2. What’s the role of interest groups in the congressional policy making process?**
- 3. What’s the significance of access, participation and influence of organized interests in the policy process?**

Hojnacki, Marie and David C. Kimball. "Organized Interests and the decision of whom to lobby in Congress" Available on JSTOR

Hall, Richard L. and Frank W. Wayman. "Buying Time, Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees" Available on JSTOR

Check out: www.OpenSecrets.org

4/24 – Congress and the Courts

Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 12

1. How powerful is Congress in acting as a check on the judiciary? What powers does Congress have?

Caldeira, Gregory A. and John R. Wright. "Lobbying for Justice" Available on JSTOR

Bai, Matt. "How Much has Citizens United Changed the Political Game?"
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/magazine/how-much-has-citizens-united-changed-the-political-game.html?pagewanted=all>

McCarthy, Justin. "Americans Losing Confidence in All Branches of U.S. Govt."
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/171992/americans-losing-confidence-branches-gov.aspx>

Section 4: Congressional Changes and Final Thoughts

4/26 - Term Limits? Shirking?

Rothenberg, Lawrence S. and Mitchell S. Sanders "Severing the Electoral Connection: Shirking in the Contemporary Congress." Available on JSTOR

Carey, John M. et al. "The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures: A New Survey of the 50 States." Available at:
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.3162/036298006X201742/pdf>

SIMULATION ASSIGNMENT 6: Due 4/26 by 11:59pm on Blackboard

During the simulation, you will be required to take notes on your colleagues' speeches. Using your notes, you will write a one-page news article about what transpired in the "U.S. Senate/House" during one of the days of the committee portion of the simulation. This time, you will write as a congressional reporter for one of the following newspapers:

- Ø *The Washington Post*
- Ø *The Hill*
- Ø *The Washington Times*

Your article should be formatted like a real newspaper article and include at least two senators'/representatives' quotes. You may need to interview a senator/representative for their reactions or to ensure accuracy of the quote.

5/1 – Exam Review

5/3 – Final Exam