2013

PSCI 255--U.S Congress

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Political Science 255: U.S. Congress
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Office Hours: M W Th 10-11:30am
Other hours by appointment

Required Books:

Referred to as "Text".

Referred to as "Reader".


All books are available at the university bookstore and on reserve at Goddard Library.

Level of Course: This is an upper level American politics course which will examine various aspects of the functions and politics of the U.S. Congress. This course assumes information learned in Intro to Amer Govt (Political Science 050).

Exams and Grading:

- Position Paper for Simulation 10%
- Committee Simulation Participation 15%
- In Class Midterm 20%
- Research Paper 25%
- 2 Hour Final Examination 30%

EXPECTATIONS of STUDENTS: In order to get their money's worth and have fun with this class, students should want to work hard and think hard. Thus I assume all students will always attend class and complete all reading and paper assignments on time. There will be a 5 points per day penalty for any late papers. Students must contact the professor before the due date concerning any late papers or problems with exams. No electronics in class without permission.

Class participation and attendance will weigh heavily in deciding borderline grades. Make-up exams or will be given quite rarely. I only respond to email during normal business hours. I often respond to voicemails more quickly than email.
Reading and Other Assignments:

Introduction and the Dual Nature of Congress – Aug 26
   Text: Chpt 1

The Legislative Process – Aug 29
   Text: Chpt 8
   Reserve Reading: Islam in Two Americas
   Reserve Reading: In Congress, Gridlock and Harsh Consequences

Organization, Structure, and Staffing of Cong – Sept 5, 9
   Text: Chpt 2 and pp. 122-129
   Reader: Chpt 18
   Reserve Reading: Congressman Pushes Staff Hard, or Out the Door
   Reserve Reading: Deal Keeps U.S. Health Care Contribution for Congress
   Reserve Reading: Higher Costs Seen for Some in Congress on Health Plans

House-Senate Differences – Sept 12, 16
   Text: Chpt 3
   Baker: ALL
   Reader: Chpts 1, 2
   Reserve Reading: At the 11th Hour, a Languid Congress
   Reserve Reading: An Unusual Feat in Congress: Student Loan Bill Breezes On
   Reserve Reading: Polar Opposites Test Senate GOP

Parties, Leadership, and Ideology – Sept 19, 23
   Text: Chpt 6
   Reader: Chpts 6, 7
   Reserve Reading: Lawmaker Finds New Realities in Return to Congress
   Reserve Reading: A Lesson for Bob Dole: Old Rules No Longer Apply
   Reserve Reading: Who Owns the GOP?

Interest Groups and Lobbying – Sept 26
   Text: Chpt 13
   Levine: All
   Reserve Reading: Many D.C. Think Tanks Now Players in Partisan Wars
   Reserve Reading: Washington’s Robust Market for Attacks, Half-Truths
   Reserve Reading: Keeping Score

Representation Theory – Sept 30
   Text: Chpt 5
   Reader: Chpt 3
Constituents, Constituencies, & Homestyles – Oct 3, 7
   Fenno: All
   Reserve Reading: Turning the Political Map into a Partisan Weapon
   Reserve Reading: Kansas District Shuns Compromise

Midterm Exam -- Tentative Date – Thurs Oct 10

Committees and Subcommittees – Oct 17, 21
   Text: Chpt 7
   Reader: Chpts 8
   Reserve Reading: For Freshmen in the House, Seats of Plenty

Floor Rules & Procedures; Congress Decision-Making – Oct 24, 28, 31
   Text: Chpts 8, 9
   Reader: Chpt 9, 10, 17
   Sinclair: ALL
   Reserve Reading: Austerity is Here to Stay

Special Talk: Sarah Binder from Brookings Institution, Monday Oct 28

Domestic Policy-Making, Taxes, and Budgets – Nov 4
   Text: Chpt 14
   Reader: Chpts 13, 14
   Reserve Reading: As Works Flood In, Nation’s Library Treads Water
   Reserve Reading: Tax Lobbyists Help Businesses Reap Windfalls
   Reserve Reading: It’s Not Process; It’s Politics

Position Papers for Simulation due Monday 11

Elections and Campaigns – Nov 7, 11, 14
   Text: Chpts 3, 4
   Reader: Chpts 4, 5
   Jacobson: ALL

Committee Simulation -- Tentative Date -- Wed Nov 13, Thurs Nov 14, or Fri Nov 15

Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy – Nov 18, 21
   Text: Chpts 10, 15
   Reader: Chpt 15
   Reserve Reading: America, Spooked

Congress and the Bureaucracy – Nov 25
   Text: Chpt 11
   Reader: Chpt 12
   Reserve Reading: GOP Presses EPA Pick with 1,000 Questions
Congress and the Courts – Dec 2, 5
  Text: Chpt 12
  Reader: Chpt 11
  Reserve Reading: Chapter 19 from Miller, Exploring Judicial Politics.
  Reserve Reading: As Obama, Senate Collide, Courts Caught Short

Research Paper on policy due Thursday Dec 5

Reform of Congress – Dec 9
  Text: Chpt 16
  Reader: Chpt 16

Final Examination – Tuesday Dec 17 from 8-10am