

THE CONGRESS
POLS 382
MWF 1:00 PM
MAYBANK 207

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Congress is often thought to be the most central institution of American government. The framers thought Congress to be so important they placed it prominently in Article I of the Constitution. Scholars today often place Congress at the center of their analyses of American politics. Journalists tend to find Congress to be the most accessible branch and regularly use congressional sources to get leads on what's actually going on in government. Nevertheless, the average citizen thinks of Congress as just some secluded, messy behemoth that can't get anything done because lawmakers are beholden to special interests.

The purpose of this course is to examine whether Congress is actually distant from the public or if it is the most approachable branch of government; whether it is a muddled bureaucracy or if it is a highly organized and efficient legislature; whether it is unable to make public policy or it is as productive as its members want it to be; and whether it is under the control of special interests or it is a deliberative assembly where many interests compete for the spoils of public policy and to have their voices heard. Of course, Congress—which is supposed to be a representative body that symbolizes democracy in America—operates in many *undemocratic* ways. The readings, lectures, and classroom activities will encourage you to look at Congress with a critical eye and to draw your own conclusions about how democratic our national legislature is.

In addition to the traditional course materials, you will participate in a course-long “role-playing” project where you will act as a legislative staffer to an actual member of Congress. Your assignments are designed as tasks that staffers do every day on behalf of their bosses, such as writing letters to constituents, researching pending legislation, and talking to lobbyists. This will be a great way for those of you with any interest in working on Capitol Hill to get a feel for what Congress does on a day-to-day basis. Even for people with no interest in a career in government, the project should give you some insight into what your Senators and Representatives do with their time. For all of you, it should give you some practical experience in managing the politics behind policymaking. And, most importantly, it'll be fun (well, at least it beats writing a term paper!).

Finally, you will all write a major research paper on Congress and legislative behavior. For those of you who are also currently enrolled in POLS 251-090 Politics & Political Inquiry II with Professor Stewart, you will have the option to use one of several large data sources on congressional activity to write one paper that satisfies requirements for both classes. I will provide more information on the term paper assignment in a later class.

Course Format

This class is designed as a combination lecture/seminar/classroom activity format. First, my lectures will coincide with the readings, but I will not simply regurgitate the material or summarize your reading for you. I will write my lectures with the assumption that you've completed the readings, and each day's topic will build on previous material. So don't fall behind or what I say won't make any sense! Second, we will periodically engage in in-class discussions of the readings where you will be expected to fully participate. Finally, we will use class time to work in small groups on the congressional staffer project, the term project, and other activities.

The course is organized around five broad themes about Congress: (1) History and Theory of Congress; (2) the Electoral Connection and Home Styles; (3) the Organization of Congress; (4) Legislative Procedures; and, (5) Deliberation, Decision-making, and Participation. As we begin each new topic I will hand out a set of questions to guide you as we cover the material. These questions will also serve as potential essay questions on the mid-term and final exams.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

This course is an advanced study of the theoretical foundations, empirical observations, and real-world implications of Congress and legislative behavior. The topics of our discussions will coincide with the readings, but I will *not* simply regurgitate the material or summarize the text for you. I have designed my lectures and class discussions with the assumption that you have completed the reading assignments, so I expect you to engage yourself, ask questions, and develop your own informed opinions. In addition to the critical political analysis skills that you will develop throughout the course, I expect you to be able to:

- Read for comprehension, critically analyze text, and write effectively in all assignments and examinations;
- Comprehend the political positions of others and defend your own views;
- Apply theories and concepts of democratic thought to new and varied settings;
- Apply the various methodologies and approaches to the study of politics;
- Understand the scope of political science as an academic discipline, and comprehend the relevance of the legislative behavior speciality within the field;
- Foster the communication, collaboration, and negotiation skills necessary to cooperate and compete with others in the public sphere;
- Develop the expectation of participation in public and community life;
- Cultivate an appreciation for the interaction of ideas in the public forum; and,
- Work, live, and learn comfortably in an increasingly diverse and global world.

Course Materials

The following texts are required and have been ordered through the College of Charleston Bookstore. If you choose to purchase these texts from other sources, be sure to buy the correct editions.

1. Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, and Frances E. Lee. 2008. *Congress and Its Members*. 11th Edition. Washington: CQ Press.
ISBN: 978-0-87289-357-3

Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee (DOL) is not only the best textbook on the US Congress currently in publication, but should also be an excellent guide to those of you interested in pursuing a career “inside the Beltway.” Like this course, the text discusses scholarly research on Congress, but emphasizes the daily activities of members of Congress. The authors’ main theme is that there are two Congresses—one that is a core deliberative institution that interacts with the President and the bureaucracy, the Courts, and private political interests (“*Congress*”) and one that is a diverse collection of over 500 individuals pursuing their own goals (“*Its Members*”)—will guide our discussions throughout the course.

2. Dodd, Lawrence C., and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. *Congress Reconsidered*. 9th Edition. Washington: CQ Press.

ISBN: 978-0-87289-616-1

The Dodd and Oppenheimer (DO) edited volume includes accessible yet sophisticated analyses of all aspects of Congress, from the electoral environments to party organizations and parliamentary institutions. We will read several selections throughout the course to supplement the text.

3. Canon, David T. 1999. *Race, Redistricting, and Representation: The Unintended Consequences of Black Majority Districts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ISBN: 978-0-22609-271-3

Winner of the 2000 Fenno Prize for the best book written on legislative politics, this is the most comprehensive study of gerrymandering and its consequences for representation to date. Canon finds that the advent of majority-minority districts in the South has actually resulted in the further disenfranchisement of blacks. This book will be important for understanding how electoral institutions in the states impact representation in the Capitol.

4. King, David C. *Turf Wars: How Congressional Committees Claim Jurisdiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ISBN: 978-0-22643-624-1

Description: Congressional committees are more than simply the place where lawmakers specialize on policy matters, but are venues where politics defines the very subject matters that are debated. King’s book is a sophisticated examination of the jurisdictional battles that lie beneath policy debates, and it reveals a lot about how Congress actually works behind the scenes.

5. Mucciaroni, Gary, and Paul J. Quirk. 2006. *Deliberative Choices: Debating Public Policy in Congress*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ISBN: 978-0-22654-406-9

If Congress is to be a deliberative institution, then we must be able to measure whether its actual deliberations perform to some reasonable standard. Are the arguments for and against proposed policy changes credible? Is rhetoric overly partisan or biased? Mucciaroni and Quirk examine the content of arguments during three major legislative debates and conclude Congress is not as deliberative as our ideal notions of democracy would assume.

Additionally, periodically I will direct you to additional readings that will either be available on electronic reserve (ERes) at Addlestone Library or publicly available on the Internet or WebCT, or both.

Student Responsibilities

Conduct and Honor Code. I expect you to strictly adhere to the College's conduct and honor codes. When you entered the College, you signed an agreement that you understood and would abide by these codes. I encourage you to re-acquaint yourself with the College's policies, but simply put...don't cheat. Period.

Attendance and Preparation. I require regular class attendance, on-time arrival, and careful preparation for each class. Though I have no hard definition of regular, on-time class attendance, a reasonable guide is a total of six excused or unexcused absences. Unless you have documentation from the College that you are experiencing extreme hardship, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. I count two late arrivals as one absence even though you are physically present. Though I may not always take formal attendance, I will know if you are chronically late or absent and will hold you accountable for your choices, so make them wisely.

Assignments. All reading and written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed on the schedule. I have purposely scheduled assignment due dates to coincide with assignments in other courses or sections, so late assignments interfere with my ability to evaluate other students. Because that is unfair to students who do produce assignments on time, I will reduce every assignment by one +/- unit for every business day late regardless of the reason. The details of the term project will be discussed in class on Monday, September 8.

Classroom Technology Policy. All devices other than a laptop computer should be turned off during class. Laptops may only be used for purposes immediately related to the class such as taking notes. I will ask you to leave the room if you disrupt the class by texting, receiving a phone call, browsing the Internet, or any other reason. If I ask you to leave, I will count it as an absence. Doing so is rude, and I have no qualms about embarrassing you in front of your peers.

Special Circumstances. Please inform me immediately of any of special circumstances such as a diagnosed (or undiagnosed) disability, learning challenges, or team and club membership that requires travel during the semester. I am happy to accommodate you if we can agree on how to best meet your needs in the first week of class. If you are a SNAP student eligible for accommodations, you must provide me with a copy of the notification letter you have been given by the SNAP office well before the need for any accommodation arises.

Grading Policy

Research Paper #1	30%
Research Paper #2	20%
Congressional Staffer Project	20%
Mid-term Exam #1	10%
Mid-term Exam #2	10%
Final Exam	10%

Schedule

Week	Day	Date	Part	Reading	Due
1	Monday	12-Jan	Introduction & Syllabus		
	Wednesday	14-Jan	Theories of Representation	DOL 1	
	Friday	16-Jan	Theories of Representation	DOL 2	
2	Monday	19-Jan	NO CLASS - MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY		
	Wednesday	21-Jan	The 111th Congress' Agenda		
	Friday	23-Jan	The 111th Congress' Agenda		
3	Monday	26-Jan	The Evolution of Congress	DO 1	
	Wednesday	28-Jan	The Evolution of Congress	DO 2	
	Friday	30-Jan	The Evolution of Congress	DO 3	CSP #1
4	Monday	2-Feb	The Electoral Connection	DOL 3 & 4	
	Wednesday	4-Feb	The Electoral Connection	DO 4 & 5	
	Friday	6-Feb	The Electoral Connection		Research Paper Topic
5	Monday	9-Feb	Home Style & Representation	DOL 5	
	Wednesday	11-Feb	Home Style & Representation	DO 6	
	Friday	13-Feb	Home Style & Representation	Canon Intro	CSP #2
6	Monday	16-Feb	Gerrymandering	Canon 1-3	
	Wednesday	18-Feb	Gerrymandering	Canon 4-6	
	Friday	20-Feb	MID-TERM EXAM #1		
7	Monday	23-Feb	Political Parties in Congress	DOL 6	
	Wednesday	25-Feb	Political Parties in Congress	DO 7	
	Friday	27-Feb	Political Parties in Congress		CSP #3
8	Monday	2-Mar	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
	Wednesday	4-Mar	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
	Friday	6-Mar	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
9	Monday	9-Mar	Political Parties in Congress	DO 8 & 9	
	Wednesday	11-Mar	Political Parties in Congress		

	Friday	13-Mar	Congressional Committees	DOL 7 & DO 10	
10	Monday	16-Mar	Congressional Committees	King Intro & 1	Research Paper #1
	Wednesday	18-Mar	Congressional Committees	King 2-4	
	Friday	20-Mar	Congressional Committees	King 5-7	CSP #4
11	Monday	23-Mar	The House & Majority Rule	DOL 8	
	Wednesday	25-Mar	The House & Majority Rule	DO 15	
	Friday	27-Mar	The House & Majority Rule	DO 9	
12	Monday	30-Mar	The Senate & Minority Rights	DO 10	
	Wednesday	1-Apr	The Senate & Minority Rights	DO 17	
	Friday	3-Apr	The Senate & Minority Rights		CSP #5
13	Monday	6-Apr	Congress & the President	DOL 10	
	Wednesday	8-Apr	Congress & the President	DO 14 & 16	
	Friday	10-Apr	MID-TERM EXAM #2		
14	Monday	13-Apr	Deliberation in Congress	MQ Intro, 1 & 2	
	Wednesday	15-Apr	Deliberation in Congress	MQ 3-5	
	Friday	17-Apr	Deliberation in Congress	MQ 6-8	
15	Monday	20-Apr	Interest Group Influence in Congress	DOL 13	Research Paper #2
	Wednesday	22-Apr	Interest Group Influence in Congress	DO 12	
	Friday	24-Apr	Interest Group Influence in Congress		CSP # 6
16	Monday	27-Apr	Interest Group Influence in Congress		
	Saturday	2-May	FINAL EXAM 12:00-3:00am		

DOL = Davidson, Oleszek & Lee *Congress and Its Members*

DO = Dodd & Oppenheimer *Congress Reconsidered*

MQ = Mucciaroni & Quirk *Deliberative Choices*

CSP = Congressional Staffer Project