

# Political Science 311

## Congressional Politics

### Spring 2016

Department of Political Science  
Oregon State University

## 1 Instructor Information

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Office Hours: 10:30-12:00 M, W, Tr or by Apt  
Class Location: KIDD 278  
4 Credits

## 2 Course Description

The United States has three separate, but equal branches of government, which have distinct responsibilities. The legislative branch, Congress, was created in part to be a portrait of the people at large in miniature. As such, Congress is supposed to represent the will of the people in drafting and enacting legislation. In this course, we will examine how Congress works to accomplish this goal by exploring both electoral and institutional checks on legislative behavior. To provide a comprehensive examination of Congress, this course will explore the electoral connections between representatives and their constituents, how the legislative process works in theory and in practice, the organization of Congress, and Congress' relationship with the other branches of government.

In addition to learning more about Congress, students in this class will learn skills that transcend the course's topic and can be used in their future careers. In particular, students in this course will learn how to think critically about social science research, learn how to formulate and analyze a research question, and improve their public speaking abilities.

## 3 Course Readings

This course's readings will be primarily drawn from two main sources. The first is from the book *Congress Reconsidered 10th Edition* edited by Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. The second set of readings will come from journal articles and book chapters which will be available on the course website. Students will be required to complete all of the readings before each class.

## 4 Course Structure

Recent research has demonstrated both the strengths and limitations of a strict lecture format. While students learn a significant amount of information through hearing the analysis of professors, a combination of lecture, discussion, active learning exercises, videos and student participation generally yields better learning outcomes for students. To ensure that students get the most out of this course, we will use a multi-faceted approach to learning.

Most of our classes will involve both lecture and discussion like most traditional courses. However, for five (possibly six) course sessions the second half of the course will be used to run an simulation

of the U.S. House of Representatives. In these simulations, students will work through two different bills and will play the role of either a rank and file U.S. House Representative, a party leader in the House of Representatives, or a policy expert. Each students will be required to turn in a two page write-up of their role in the legislation.

## 5 Assessment

### Congress Participation and Write Up (10%)

Student are required to attend and participate in the mock U.S. House simulations which will occur on five-to-six days throughout this quarter (see the schedule below). Students may miss one of these simulations without a penalty. For every additional simulation that they miss, this grade will drop by 3% (for example, if a student misses 2 classes, they only get 7% of the 10% possible for this grade).

In addition to attending these simulations, students must turn in 2-two page write ups detailing how the prepared for their role (i.e. what research did they do), how this research informed the positions they took, the questions they asked, and how they voted. These papers should also discuss briefly what they learned from the experience. These assignments will be graded as pass/fail.

### Midterm (25%-30%)

The midterm will test your knowledge of the first half of the course. The test will include a combination of multiple choice questions, short answer identifications, and a short essay prompt.

### Final Research Paper (35%)

One of the primary goals of this course is to train students to think like social scientists. To assess student's progress in this area, each student will write a 7-10 page paper which will focus on one of two options. The first option will ask students to identify one or more problems with the legislative or electoral process and offer a solution to this problem. Students should draw on research from outside sources to demonstrate that their solutions will be effective.

The second option will require students to write an empirical research paper dealing with a research question pertaining to some aspect of Congress. In these papers students should create an empirical question (does X lead to Y) and present real-world data to substantiate their claims. Students will not have to do much analysis of the data beyond presenting cross-tabulations or simple graphs.

Both papers will be due on June 3rd, 2016-The Final Wednesday of the Quarter. Late papers will be accepted, but they will lose 3% for every day that they are late.

### Final (25%-30%)

The final will test your knowledge of the second half of the course, with a few questions from the first half of the course. The test will include a combination of multiple choice questions, short answer identifications, and a short essay prompt.

## 6 Course Policies

### A Note on Academic Integrity

I find it unfortunate that instructors must include this section on the syllabus, but with a rise of electronic resources, academic dishonesty is a part of the reality in which we now function. Thus, I include a very short reminder here on the importance of maintaining academic integrity. Cheating in any form is prohibited and will result in an automatic fail for the course.

### Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty, and Disability Access Services. (DAS) Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.

### Accessibility of Course Materials

All materials used in this course are accessible. If you require accommodations please contact Disability Access Services (DAS).

Additionally, Canvas, the learning management system through which this course is offered, provides a vendor statement certifying how the platform is accessible to students with disabilities.

## 7 Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

### Monday-March 28th Introduction and Syllabus

- *NO READING*

### Wednesday-March 30th Class 2 & 3 Origins of the Legislative Branch and Congress in the Constitution

#### *Required Readings*

- Federalists Papers 55, 59 & 62
- The Anti-Federalists Papers 55, 56, 57, & 58

## CONGRESS AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

### Monday-April 4th The Rules of the Game: Apportionment and The Politics of Redistricting

#### *Required Readings*

- Miller, Peter, and Bernard Grofman. "Redistricting Commissions in the Western United States." UC Irvine Law Review 3 (2013): 637. (Posted Online)

**Wednesday-April 6th NO CLASS-MPSA Conference***Required Readings*

- None

**Monday-April 11th Where Do they Come From: Congress and Candidate Emergence***Required Readings*

- Maisel, L. Sandy, and Walter J. Stone. "Determinants of candidate emergence in US House elections: An exploratory study." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (1997): 79-96. (Posted Online)

**Wednesday-April 13th How Do they Campaign: Campaign Strategies for Congress***Required Readings*

- Dodd and Oppenheimer Chapter 4

**Monday-April 18th Going Home: Hill and Home Styles  
CONGRESSIONAL SIMULATIONS #1***Required Readings*

- Fenno, Richard F. "US House members in their constituencies: An exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71.03 (1977): 883-917. (Posted Online)

**The Organization of Congress****Wednesday-April 20th Leadership in the House  
CONGRESSIONAL SIMULATIONS #2***Required Readings*

- Dodd and Oppenheimer Chapter 7

**Monday-April 25th Committees in Congress  
CONGRESSIONAL SIMULATIONS #3***Required Readings*

- Dodd and Oppenheimer Chapter 8

**Wednesday-April 27th How an Idea Becomes a Law: The Congressional Legislative Process***Required Readings*

- Sinclair, Barbara. (2000) *Unorthodox Lawmaking, Budget Bills, and Comprehensive Policy Making in the 1990's*. Papers for Congress Project Seminar.

**Monday-May 2nd Midterm***Required Readings*

- None

**Wednesday- May 4th Spatial Modeling and How Legislators Decide***Required Readings*

- Dood and Oppenheimer Chapter 10

**The Congress, The Presidency, and the Courts****Monday-May 9th Congress and the President***Required Readings*

- Dodd and Oppenheimer Chapter 12

**Wednesday-May 11th Congress and the Courts***Required Readings*

- Dodd and Oppenheimer Chapter 11

**Congress and Policy****Monday-May 16th Congress and Domestic Policy  
CONGRESSIONAL SIMULATIONS #4***Required Readings*

- Dodd and Oppenheimer Chapter 13

**Wednesday-May 18th Congress and International Policy  
CONGRESSIONAL SIMULATIONS #5***Required Readings*

- Dodd and Oppenheimer Chapter 15

**Special Topics****Monday-May 23rd Race and Congressional Representation***Required Readings*

- Griffin, John D. "When and why minority legislators matter." Annual Review of Political Science 17 (2014): 327-336. (Posted Online)

**Wednesday-May 25th Gender and Congressional Representation***Required Readings*

- Lawless, Jennifer L. "Female Candidates and Legislators." Annual Review of Political Science 18 (2015): 349-366. (Posted Online)

**Monday-May 30th Memorial Day No Class****Wednesday-June 3rd Congress and Political Polarization****\*\*\*FINAL PAPER DUE\*\*\****Required Readings*

- Lee, Frances E. "How party polarization affects governance." Annual Review of Political Science 18 (2015): 261-282.(Posted Online)

**Final Monday June 6th at 6pm**