

Political Science 407
Congress and American Politics
Fall Semester 2005

Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:15, Harvill 415

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1 Course Description

POL 407 is an upper-division, undergraduate-level class on the U.S. Congress. In this class, we will come to learn and understand the legislative process, the politics of legislative elections, and how our Congress “fits” into the bigger picture of American politics. There are assigned readings that you will have to complete in order to successfully complete this class. Additionally, we will engage in a simulation of the United States Congress, whereby each of you will assume the role of a member of the U.S. Senate. Active participation in this simulation is essential in order for you to procure a good grade. Furthermore, staying abreast of current events—particularly happenings in the U.S. Congress—is necessary for successful completion of this class. Therefore, students will be expected to read a national newspaper (many of which are available on the Internet; information on accessing these papers is provided on my website).

2 Course Requirements

Your grade will be a function of three components: exams, simulation participation, quizzes and problem sets. The specific grade breakdown can be found at the end of the syllabus. Each of these components are discussed below.

Examinations

There will be three exams, each of which will be in-class. Your grade will be determined not only on the content of your answers, but also on your writing ability—that is, your ability to convey your answers in a logical and persuasive manner. Two of the exams will be traditional “midterm” and “final” exams; the other exam will be a shorter in-class exam asking you about procedure in the U.S. Congress.

Quizzes and Problem Sets

I will administer 5 short quizzes covering material dealt with in the class and in the readings. Of these 5 quizzes, 4 will count toward your final grade (i.e. I will drop the lowest score of the 5). They typically will be either short answer or multiple choice and will not take longer than 15 minutes to complete. **There are no makeups on the quizzes.** Also, there will be 2 out-of-class problem sets that deal with topics discussed in lecture. These assignments will deal primarily with issues relevant to spatial models. Please note that *no late assignments will be accepted.*

Simulation

The major activity we do in this class involves a simulation of the United States Congress. Most of you will assume the role of a member of the Senate to “play.” You will be required to learn in-depth, your constituency base and the constraints you face both within the Senate and at “home.” In addition, you will initiate legislation as well as be asked to submit press releases and work on the simulation outside of the classroom. We will follow the legislative process of Congress in carrying out our simulation and so it is incumbent upon you to learn and “live” the rules of Congress. To enliven the simulation, a substantial portion of your grade will be contingent on participation in the simulation game. Your grade will be closely connected to your ability to demonstrate an awareness of the constraints faced by and the opportunities presented to elected politicians.

3 Readings

I have made available for purchase, two books on the U.S. Congress and one book on the political theory of behavior and institutions. These books are required reading:

Kenneth A. Shepsle and Mark S. Bonchek’s *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York: Norton (1997).

Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer’s *Congress Reconsidered*. (8th ed.) Washington, D.C.: CQ Press (2005).

Roger H. Davidson and Walter J. Oleszek’s *Congress and Its Members* (10th ed.). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press (2005).

4 Lecture and Readings Outline

Below is a tentative schedule of lecture and readings. It will be absolutely necessary for you to do the readings in advance of class and (of course) the exams. Additionally, you will be required to know the Senate’s standing rules. You might as well start on these now. Access them here:

<http://rules.senate.gov/senaterules/menu.htm>.

L1. Aug. 23–25: Introduction and Basic Principles of Rational Choice Theory

Read: Shepsle and Bonchek, Chapters 1–2.

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 1–2.

Read: Dodd and Oppenheimer Prologue

S1. Aug. 30: Simulation Overview

Read: Simulation Document on website.

L2. Sept. 1–6: Arrow’s Theorem and the Spatial Model

Read: Shepsle and Bonchek, Chapters 3–5.

S2. Sept. 8: Senatorial Meet and Greet and Election of Leaders

L3. Sept. 13–15: Institutions

Read: Shepsle and Bonchek, Chapters 11–12

S3. Sept. 20–22: Poster Sessions/Presentation Week

S4. Sept. 27: Committees Convene/Elect Committee Leaders

L4. Sept. 29–Oct. 4: Electoral Constraints and Opportunities

Read: Shepsle and Bonchek, Chapter 7. Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 3–4.

Read: Herrnson (Dodd and Oppenheimer, Chapter 5)

Read: Oppenheimer (Dodd and Oppenheimer, Chapter 6)

Exam 1. Oct. 6: Rational Choice Theory and Institutions

L5. Oct 11–Oct. 13: Political Parties and Leaders in the U.S. Congress

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 6

Read: Smith and Gamm (Chapter 8, Dodd and Oppenheimer)

Read: Schickler and Pearson (Chapter 9, Dodd and Oppenheimer)

Read: Evans and Lapinski (Chapter 10, Dodd and Oppenheimer)

S5. Oct. 18: Committees Convene

L6. Oct. 20–27: Procedure and Committees

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 7–9

Read: Sinclair (Chapter 1, Dodd and Oppenheimer)

Read: Dodd and Oppenheimer (Chapter 2, Dodd and Oppenheimer)

Read: Aldrich and Rohde (Chapter 11, Dodd and Oppenheimer)

Read: Gordon (Chapter 12, Dodd and Oppenheimer)

Read: Standing Rules of the U.S. Senate (this can be found at:

<http://rules.senate.gov/senaterules/menu.htm>). This is **required reading**.

S6. Nov. 1: Committees Convene: Mark-up Day 1

S7. Nov. 3: Committees Convene: Mark-up Day 2

S8. Nov. 8: Committees Convene: Mark-up Day 3 (first 30 minutes)

Exam 2. Nov. 8: The Legislative Process (last 45 minutes)

L7. Nov. 10: Congress and the Washington Community

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 10–12.

Read: Binder and Maltzman (Dodd and Oppenheimer, Chapter 13)

S9. Nov. 15: Committees Convene and Floor Action

S10. Nov. 17: Committees Convene and Floor Action

S11. Nov. 22: Committees Convene Floor Action

S12. Nov. 29: Floor Action

S13. Dec. 1: Floor Action

S14. Dec. 6: Wrap-Up

Final Exam: Thursday, Dec. 15 [11 a.m.–1 p.m.]: Comprehensive Final

5 Simulation Outline

Below is the tentative guideline for simulation activities. Dates are subject to change depending on lecture coverage. “S” days refer to in-class simulation days.

Aug. 25: Senatorial/Journalist Assignments Made; Leadership Elections Announced for Sept. 8.

S1. Aug. 30: Simulation Overview

Read: Simulation Document on website.

Collaborative Poster Assignment Announced (for Senators).

Survey Analysis Assignment Announced (for Journalists).

Senatorial “Survey” Administered.

Committee Requests Assignment Announced.

Sept. 2: Statements for leadership candidacy need to be submitted electronically so they can be posted to web or in *The Post*.

S2. Sept. 8: Senatorial Meet and Greet and Election of Leaders

Committee Requests Due

Poster Sessions Announced

Announce Committee Leadership Elections (to be held Sept. 27)

Bill Proposal Assignment Announced

Sept. 15: “Scavenger Hunt” Questions Due; Committee Assignments Made

S3. Sept. 20–22: Poster Sessions/Presentation Week

S4. Sept. 27: Committees Convene/Elect Committee Leaders

Oct. 4: Bill Proposal Assignment is Due

Oct. 11: Bill Referrals Due

S5. Oct. 18: Committees Convene

Committee Agendas are Announced

S6. Nov. 1: Committees Convene: Mark-up Day 1

S7. Nov. 3: Committees Convene: Mark-up Day 2

S8. Nov. 8: Committees Convene: Mark-up Day 3 (first 30 minutes)

S9. Nov. 15: Committees Convene and Floor Action

S10. Nov. 17: Committees Convene and Floor Action

S11. Nov. 22: Committees Convene Floor Action

S12. Nov. 29: Floor Action

S13. Dec. 1: Floor Action

S14. Dec. 6: Wrap-Up

6 Grade Breakdown

Midterm Exam: 20 percent
Legislative Process Exam: 10 percent
Final Exam: 25 percent
Quiz 1: 2.5 percent
Quiz 2: 2.5 percent
Quiz 3: 2.5 percent
Quiz 4: 2.5 percent
Problem Set 1: 5 percent
Problem Set 2: 5 percent
Poster Assignment: 10 percent
Bill Proposal Assignment: 5 percent
Power Game: 10 percent (see simulation handout for further details on this component)

In lieu of the Bill Proposal, Poster Assignment, and Power Game, 25 percent of **Journalists'** grade will be based on two feature stories (2.5 percent each), Senatorial overview/analysis story (10 percent), and *Post* stories (minimum of 10 required; worth 1 percent each). More details on these assignments will be given in the simulation overview.

7 Class Policies

Policy on Incompletes

Students are expected to complete the course on time. Incompletes will be permitted only in extraordinary circumstances where the student is unable to complete the work for reasons beyond his/her control. If a grade of "I" is assigned, the student must complete all work prior to the completion of the Fall 2004 semester. Any work not completed by then will result in the grade of "E" and be averaged with the student's other work in computing an overall course grade.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with University rules and regulations. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty. The University of Arizona student code of conduct can be found at the following website: <http://w3.arizona.edu/studpubs/policies/studcofc.htm>. Any questions about these policies should be asked of me within the first two weeks of class. Additionally, students should be aware of the newly instituted policy on "threatening behavior." Information on this can be found at: <http://info-center.ccit.arizona.edu/policy/threaten.shtml>.

Policy on Physical or Mental Disabilities

If a student has any condition such as a physical or mental disability which will make it difficult for her or him to carry out the work in this course as outlined above, or which will require extra time on examinations, please notify me in the first two weeks of the course so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Policy on Due Dates

Dates for papers and other assignments have been noted above. Any changes to these dates will be announced in class. Assignments are to be turned in on time. *No late assignments will be accepted and missed assignments/quizzes/exams cannot be made up.*

Policy on Classroom Behavior

Students are expected to behave in a civil and professional manner and in a way consistent with the University of Arizona's Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, use of cell phones, use of digital cameras, reading outside materials (newspapers, books, etc.), or accessing the internet via wireless connections is strictly forbidden except in the rare circumstance when one or more of these activities is necessary for simulation participation. Failure to comply with these rules may result in your being asked to leave the classroom, or in the extreme case, may result in your expulsion from this class.