

PS 1211: Legislative Process
University of Pittsburgh
Fall 2017
Thursdays, 6:00pm – 8:30pm
142 Cathedral of Learning

Course Syllabus

Instructor Information:

Instructor: Shane Redman

Email: smr105@pitt.edu

Office Hours: I will be in my office on Thursdays before class, from 3:00pm to 5:00pm. My office number is 4435, located in the Political Science Department in Posvar Hall. If you cannot make these office hours and would like to meet, please email me and we can schedule a meeting for a different day/time.

Course Description:

The United States Congress is arguably the most visible institution within the federal government, with almost all national policy originating in, or passing through, the institution. But members of Congress must do more than simply make federal policy. This course will focus on two broad roles of the U.S. Congress and its members: representation and policymaking. In doing so, we will examine the political behavior and preferences of both members of Congress and their constituents, the “rules of the game” that structure the system in which members of Congress operate, the political outcomes that Congress produces, and how relationships between Congress and external actors affect the behaviors and outcomes of Congress.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate their understanding of the historical development of Congress as an institution.
- Identify the rules by which Congress operates and the ways in which Congress interacts with external actors to accomplish its goals.
- Explain the processes, both formal and informal, that members of Congress use to be successful in each of their roles.
- Apply political science concepts and theories to the real-world workings of Congress.

Required Readings:

1. Title: *Congress and its Members, 15th Edition*
It is important that you get the 15th edition
Authors: Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler
ISBN: 1483388883

2. Title: *Analyzing Congress, 2nd Edition*
 Authors: Charles Stewart III
 ISBN: 039393506X
3. Other required readings will be posted on CourseWeb.

Evaluation

Your grade will be based on the components below and weighted as indicated:

1. Exams (40%) – There will be 3 exams given throughout the term. Exams will consist of any combination of the following: multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, true/false, and short answer questions. Only your best 2 exam scores will count toward your overall grade. This means that I will drop your lowest exam score so that your top 2 scores will be worth 20% each of your overall course grade. If you are absent (excused or unexcused) during a session in which an exam is given, this will count as your lowest score and be dropped. As such, ***no make-up exams will be given under any circumstances.***
2. Homework (15%) – You will receive three problems sets, each worth 5%, based on material in the Stewart book. You are permitted to work with one or two other students from class on these assignments. However, if you choose to do so, every student still needs to submit his or her own copy of the homework and you should indicate the names of the others with whom you worked.
3. Simulation (45%) – Each student will participate in a simulation and take on the role of an actual member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Throughout the semester, you will produce three written assignments related to your role in the simulation, including writing a profile of your district, your legislative agenda, and a bill to be presented to the rest of the House. The simulation will culminate with a session of Congress spread out over several courses where each member will present his or her bill to the rest of the chamber and a vote will be held on each bill. The 45% of your overall course grade based on the simulation is divided as follows:

District Profile	10%
Agenda	10%
Bill	15%
Participation	10%

More information about each component will be provided in separate documents on Courseweb.

Grading Scale – Letter grades will be determined as follow:

- A = 93 points or higher
- A- = 90-92 points
- B+ = 87-89 points
- B = 83-86 points
- B- = 80-82 points
- C+ = 77-79 points
- C = 73-76 points
- C- = 70-72 points
- D+ = 67-69 points
- D = 63-66 points
- D- = 60-62 points
- F = 59 points or lower

Expectations

Daily Attendance & Participation – Students are expected to arrive to class on time and to actively engage in classroom discussions. This requires you to complete the readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. Additionally, students are expected to not engage in disruptive behavior, including texting, surfing the web, or any other practice that could disrupt the learning process of any other student. The instructor reserves the right to ban electronic devices from the classroom if he feels they are a distraction. I will not be taking attendance regularly, and if you cannot meet all of these expectations in every class, feel free not to attend, but know that the material presented in class will absolutely be on the exams and will absolutely be beneficial for the quality of your other assignments.

Classroom Conduct: I must emphasize that this is a political science course, not a current events course. While we will be discussing current politics frequently, we must do so as social scientists rather than partisans. Moreover, an environment of mutual respect will be maintained during every class session. We all come to the class with different political ideologies and different life experiences, and we can respectfully disagree about many political issues. In fact, this often makes for an effective and healthy classroom discussion. However, I will not tolerate any language that shows disrespect toward another individual in the classroom based on race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, political affiliation, class, or any other personal characteristics or preferences.

Email Policy

The best way to communicate with the instructor is through email (smr105@pitt.edu). In most cases, I will respond within 24 hours. If, however, you do not hear from me after 36 hours, please send a follow-up email as it is possible that your message went to my spam folder.

Grade Changes

If you believe you received a grade that does not reflect the quality of your work, I will allow you the opportunity to request a grade review on any assignment, including on exams, written assignments, and problem sets. However, all requests must be made in writing (via email) within 1 week of receiving your grade on any given assignment. After this point, I will not review your grade and no alterations will be made. Since every assignment grade that makes up the final course grade can be reviewed throughout the semester (within the 1-week timeframe), this means that only under very exceptional circumstances will the final course grade be reviewed.

Incompletes

It is my policy not to give incompletes. I will only consider doing so in the most rare and direst of circumstances, such as a documented serious illness.

Academic Integrity

I take any suspicion of cheating or plagiarism very seriously. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the assignment (essay/paper, quiz/exam, etc.) will be imposed. View the complete policy at: www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html.

Disability Resources

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-624-3346 (Fax), as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit: www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drsabout.

Course Schedule

Below is a schedule of topics for the semester. The required readings and assignments for each class session will be posted in a separate document in Courseweb, titled "Schedule of Readings."

August 31: Course introduction; Syllabus

September 7: Introduction to Congressional Behavior; The Unidimensional Spatial Model

September 14: Constitutional Origins; The Evolution and Development of Congress

September 21: The Multi-Dimensional Spatial Model

September 28: Candidacy Decisions

October 5: EXAM 1 (in-class); Representation

October 12: Representation cont'd; Constituency Connections

October 19: Parties and Leaders; Elections

October 26: EXAM 2 (in-class); Elections cont'd

November 2: Committees in Congress

November 9: Legislative Process

November 16: Simulation

November 23: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

November 30: Simulation

December 7: Simulation

December 14: FINAL EXAM (online)