Congressional Politics
Instructor Anna M. Mahoney
Summer 2014
790:304:H6
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description: This course will examine the United States Congress as an institution, site for citizen participation and instrument of public policy. The first third of the course will illustrate the foundations and processes of Congress. The second will include readings and discussions that highlight Congress as a site for political participation through elections, lobbying, and media critique. In this section, we will also learn about Congress as it interacts with the other two branches of U.S. government, the Courts and the Executive. Finally, in the third section we will examine several pieces of legislation and public policy using Congress and its processes as a lens.

Required Text:

Using a different edition of this textbook is okay as long as you check the topic of the lesson to ensure you are reading the proper content. Chapter subjects may have been switched around. I would not use a book before the 12th edition.

The book will be available at Barnes and Noble but can also be purchased online.

Additional readings: Readings listed below but not found in the above texts or cited with a web address can be found on the Sakai website for this course.

Course Requirements:

Quizzes: Reading quizzes will be included at the beginning of each lesson. These quizzes will measure your comprehension of the assigned reading material for that lesson.

Reactions: Each lesson will ask you to respond to a reading or presentation within the lesson. This may include pieces of popular journalism, videos, statistical data, etc. Your reaction assignment may include short writing assignments, activities, or other assessments.

Participation: Discussions will take place throughout the semester to allow you and your classmates to engage the material together. Your participation in this discussion will be evaluated beyond mere presence in the conversation to include the quality of your contributions. Specific references to course readings or lesson materials are expected. Discussions will take place for one hour at different times on designated days to offer a variety of options to accommodate different schedules. We will use the chat room feature
You should complete the lesson for that date before entering the chat room. Each of the 6 Class Discussions will have four chat rooms with different discussion prompts. You may choose which room you would like to start in, but no more than 9 students should be in a room at one time. If you enter a room and 9 students are already present, you must move to a different room/prompt. After 30 minutes of discussion in your first room, you will switch to a different room to discuss a different prompt and respond to the discussion which already occurred in this new room for another 30 minutes. Again, no more than 9 students in a room at one time.

You must participate in 3 of the 6 scheduled discussions (both rooms) to receive full participation credit.

**Exams:** Students will take both a midterm and final exam. Details about the formatting of these exams will be shared with students at least one week in advance. All exams must be completed by 11:59 pm on scheduled dates.

All statutes of the Academic Code of Conduct apply for this course. A detailed discussion of this policy can be found at [http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html](http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html).

**Grading:** Quizzes, 20%, Reactions, 30%, Participation 20%, Exams 30%.

This syllabus is subject to change.

**Course Goals:**
1. Examine the processes and people who construct Congress and recognize their impact on political outcomes.
2. Encourage students to engage actively in discussions so they may gain knowledge about the field of political science.
3. Create an environment of respect where meaningful intellectual exchange, involving critical thinking and historical and social analysis, can take place.
4. Develop students’ knowledge and understanding of American political institutions.

**Course Objectives:**
Upon successful completion of this course, students will:
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the processes and functioning of the U.S. Congress.
2. Understand basic concepts of lawmaking and the impact it has on society, particularly specialized publics.
3. Have a base of knowledge and understanding to serve as a foundation for future study in political science.

**Course Schedule**

- Complete the assigned reading before completing the lesson. Complete by dates are SUGGESTED for each lesson to help you manage your time over the
semester and to ensure you have completed enough lessons to adequately participate in the scheduled chats.

- On days you plan to participate in a discussion, be sure to complete the lesson for that day before the scheduled chat time.

7/7 – Open Chat
Students may log-on to the chat room for the course on sakai at 2 pm to ask any questions they have about the course. If you are not able to participate in this chat, please email me any questions you may have.

7/8 - Foundations
Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 1 &2

7/11 - Congress and Demographics

Class Discussion, 12-1 pm

7/14 - Process and Procedures
Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 7

7/16 - Process and Procedures
Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 8

7/18 - Policymaking
Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 14 Selections
Only read the following sections in this chapter:
Definitions of Policy
Stages of Policymaking
Types of Domestic Policies
Characteristics of Congressional Policymaking

Class Discussion, 8-9 pm

7/21 - Congress and Parties
Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 6

7/23 - Congress and Elections
Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 3&4

Class Discussion, 12-1 pm

7/25 – Midterm Exam

7/29 - Congress and Lobbying
Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch. 13

Class Discussion, 8-9 pm
8/1 - Congress and the Courts
    Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 12

8/4 - Congress and the Presidency
    Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 10

8/6 - Congress and Domestic Policymaking
    Lipinski, “Navigating Congressional Policy Processes” (on sakai, under resources)
    Class Discussion, 8-9 pm

8/8 - Congress and Foreign Policy
    Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 15

8/11 - Congress in the 21st Century
    Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee - Ch 16
    Class Discussion, 12-1 pm

8/13 - Final Exam