

United States Congress

Government 370L

Unique Number 39070

The University of Texas at Austin

Spring 2011

Professor Jason P. Casellas, Ph.D.

MWF 9:00-9:50 a.m.

Room: Mezes B0.306

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00-11:30 a.m. and 2:00-3:30 p.m.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Prerequisite: Six semester hours of lower-division coursework in government.

Course Description:

Congress is the branch that makes the nation's laws. How does Congress conduct its business? Who are the key leaders in Congress? What do committees in Congress do? Why is Congress divided into two branches? This course seeks to answer all of these questions and many more. The importance of Congress is demonstrated by the fact that Article I (not II or III) of the U.S. Constitution outlines the powers and restrictions placed on Congress. Congress is composed of the House and the Senate—two chambers which must agree in order to send legislation to the President. Because it is difficult for 535 people to come to agreement easily, the institution is designed so that members compromise in order to pass legislation. This course will examine all of these structural issues, as well as congressional representation, elections and redistricting, the role of political parties, congressional decision-making, and the relationship between Congress and the President, the Judiciary, and the Press.

Required Texts

Davidson, Roger H. and Walter Oleszek 12th Ed. 2009. *Congress and its Members*

Dodd, Lawrence, and Bruce Oppenheimer 9th Ed. 2008. *Congress Reconsidered*

Oleszek, Walter 8th Ed. 2010. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*

Recommended

Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay. 1961. *The Federalist Papers* ed. Clinton Rossiter. Penguin Mentor: New York.

**Other readings will be journal articles, or selected chapters from other books. These will be marked with an * below in the appropriate week. They can be found via ERes (Electronic Reserves System) at <http://reserves.lib.utexas.edu/eres/default.aspx>. The password for the course is “cloture.”

Newspapers and Online Sources

Students should read a major newspaper, such as the *Financial Times*, *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* daily in order to monitor the 112th Congress.

Course Grading

Grades will be computed as follows:

Exam I (February 11)	15%
Exam II (March 4)	20%
Exam III (April 1)	20%
Exam IV (May 6)	25%
Book Review (Due April 15)	15%
Random Attendance (throughout semester)	5%
Total	100%

The following scale will be used to calculate final grades (please note, I reserve the right to grade on a curve if the average grade at the end of the semester falls below a B-):

93-100%	A	73-76%	C
90-92%	A-	70-72%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
83-86%	B	63-66%	D
80-82%	B-	60-62%	D-
77-79%	C+	Below 60%	F

Exams

The exams will test your knowledge of the readings, lectures, and films. Exams will combine multiple-choice questions, true/false, identifications, and short essays. Make up exams will not be granted unless there is a verified illness or family emergency. Students must take all exams and complete book review in order to receive a grade for the class.

Random Attendance

Random attendance quizzes will be given throughout the semester. They may include true/false or short answer questions about the readings. The lowest quiz score will be dropped. No makeups allowed for quizzes. *Excused Absences* can be granted for an illness certified by a doctor, for family emergencies approved by the Dean, or for official university events with documentation (i.e., a letter from the coach). In the case of planned events, advance notice of at least one week must be given. DO NOT miss class and then arrive the next time with a letter documenting the reason for the absence.

Book Review

Each student will write his/her own review, which should be 5-7 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point, 1 inch margins). Possible books to review will be suggested in class and/or office hours. I must approve your choice of a book if it is not on the official pre-approved list. No more than two students will be allowed to write on any one book. The book must be related to Congress in some major way. Suggestions on how to go about writing the review, and the instructor's expectations will be discussed in class. Be prepared to provide a five minute synopsis of your book in class. It will be due on **April 15th**.

Extra Credit

There will be no "extra credit" in this course.

Attendance Policy

If you are habitually late and/or absent, your grade will suffer because 5 percent of the final grade is composed of random attendance quizzes.

Late Assignments

Papers will be due in class on the due date. Papers will not be accepted via email or in my office after class. Make up exams will not be granted unless there is a verified illness or family emergency.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to follow university procedures regarding academic honesty, and adhere to the University of Texas Honor Code. Namely, no cheating or plagiarism will be tolerated. Any instances will be reported to the Dean. For more information, please consult <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs>.

Cancelled Classes

Classes may be canceled on rare occasions. The class will be informed of these dates and will be held responsible for any readings or assignments.

Religious Holy Days

Students are expected to notify the professor if absence is necessitated due to a religious observance. Every effort will be made to accommodate your request, provided ample notice is given.

Special Needs

If you need special assistance due to a disability, please notify me before the need arises. Information is available from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259.

Communications

In this course, e-mail will be used as a means of communication. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class updates and announcements. You may e-

mail me at anytime regarding procedural issues. For substantive concerns, please come to my office hours or make an appointment to see me.

Course Changes

I reserve the right to change the contents of this syllabus as the needs of the course develop. Reasonable advance notice will be given.

Copyright notice from the Professor: I have taken steps to ensure that all course material, including this syllabus and the lectures associated with this class, are protected by copyright law as my own original expression. Students are authorized to take notes in class and thus create their own "derivative work" from my lecture, but this authorization extends only to your personal use. Reproduction, distribution, or publication (on-line or otherwise) of transcribed or taped versions of my lecture are not permitted without my express written consent.

Course Schedule

January 19	Introduction (s)
January 21	Constitutional Framework <i>The Constitution of the United States</i> (Article I; Article 2, Sec. 1-3) <i>The Federalist Papers</i> , 1, 21-22, 39-40, 47-48, 51, 59
January 24	Constitutional Framework <i>Congress and its Members</i> , Chapter 2
January 26	Congressional Elections <i>Congress and its Members</i> , Chapter 3
January 28	Congressional Elections <i>Congress and its Members</i> , Chapter 4 Dodd and Oppenheimer, "Perspectives on the 2004 Congressional Elections," in <i>Congress Reconsidered</i> , xxi-xxx.
January 31	Congressional Elections Erikson, Robert and Gerald Wright. (2009). "Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections." In <i>Congress Reconsidered</i> , Ch. 4
February 2	Keeping up with Campaign Finance Laws Herrnson, "The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and Congressional Elections." In <i>Congress Reconsidered</i> , pp. 107-34.
February 4	Motivations: Classic Account *Mayhew, David R. (1974) <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection</i> ,

Chapter 1

February 7

Representation

Congress and its Members, Chapter 5

*Kingdon, *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, Chapter 2

February 9

Minority Representation

*Mansbridge. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women?" *Journal of Politics*, 1999, pp. 628-657.

African American and Latino Representation

*Lublin, *The Paradox of Representation*, Chapter 4

*Casellas, J. "The Institutional and Demographic Determinants of Latino Representation." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*

February 11

Exam I (All readings and lectures until February 9)

February 14

Redistricting

Federalist Papers, 58-61 (skim)

**Voting Rights Act of 1965*

February 16

Redistricting

*Canon, (1999), *Race, Redistricting, and Representation*, p. 1-19, 243-264.

February 18

Effects of Redistricting on Elections

Oppenheimer, "Deep Red and Blue Congressional Districts: The Causes and Consequences of Declining Party Competitiveness" in *Congress Reconsidered*, p. 135-157.

February 21

How a Bill Becomes Law

Congress and its Members, Chapter 8

February 23

Committee Structure

Congress and its Members, Chapter 7

February 25

Committee Process (Book Choice Due)

Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process, Chapter 3

Aldrich and Rohde, "Congressional Committees in a Continuing Partisan Era" in *Congress Reconsidered*, Ch. 11.

February 28

United States House—Recent History

Dodd and Oppenheimer, "Upheaval in the House: Partisan Alternation and Institutional adaptation." In *Congress Reconsidered*, Ch. 2

- March 2** **United States House—Procedures**
Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Chapters 4 and 5
- March 4** **Exam II (All readings and lectures since Exam I)**
- March 7** **United States Senate—Recent History**
Sinclair, "The New World of U.S. Senators," in *Congress Reconsidered*, pp. 1-22
- March 9** **United States Senate—Procedures**
Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Chapters 6 and 7.
- March 11** **Decision Making in Congress**
Congress and its Members, Chapter 9
- March 21** **Decision Making in Congress II**
*Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, Chapters 1 and 4
- March 23** **Parties in Congress**
Congress and its Members, Chapter 6
- March 25** **Parties in Congress**
Smith, Steven and Gerald Gamm, "The Dynamics of Party Government in Congress" in *Congress Reconsidered*. Pp. 181-205.
- March 28** **Parties in Congress**
*Aldrich, John H, and Rohde, David W, (1997) "The Transition to Republican Rule in the House: Implications for Theories of Congressional Politics", *Political Science Quarterly*, 112, 4,
- March 30** Exam Review
- April 1** **Exam III (All material since Exam II)**
- April 4** **Congress and the Budget**
Congress and its Members, chapter 14
- April 6** **Congress and the Budget**
Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Chapter 2

- April 8** **Congress and the Press**
*Arnold, *Congress, the Press, and Political Accountability*,
Chapter 1
- April 11** **Congress and the Press**
*Arnold, *Congress, the Press, and Political Accountability*,
Chapter 9
- April 13** **Congress and the Courts**
Federalist Papers, 78-79
Congress and its Members, chapter 12
- April 15** **Congress and the Courts (Book Reviews Due)**
Binder and Maltzman, "Congress and the Politics of Judicial
Appointments." In *Congress Reconsidered* pp. 297-317.
- April 18** **Congress and the President**
Congress and its Members, chapter 10
- April 20** **Congressional Oversight**
Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, ch. 9
- April 22** **Film: Ken Burns' *Congress***
- April 25** **Congress and Foreign Policy**
Howell and Kriner, "Congress, the President, and the Iraq's War
Domestic Political Front" in *Congress Reconsidered*, Ch.15
Congress and its Members, chapter 15
- April 27** **Informational Theory**
*Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. Chapter 1 from *Information and
Legislative Organization*.
- April 29** **Film: Ken Burns' *Congress***
- May 2** **Positive Legislative Theories**
*Shepsle and Weingast. 1994. "Positive Theories of Congressional
Institutions." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XIX, 2.
- May 4** **Air Conditioning and Congressional Change//Exam Review**
*Polsby, Nelson. 2004. *How Congress Evolves: Social Bases of
Institutional Change*, Chapter 5
- May 6** **Exam IV (All readings and lectures since Exam III)**