

Political Science 100B: The U.S. Congress
Fall 2008
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2pm
Center Hall 101

Professor Melissa Ziegler

Office: SSB 445

Office Hours: Wednesday 3-5pm

Teaching Assistant Lydia Lundgren

Office: SSB 323

Office Hours: Wednesday 3-4pm (only during examinations periods)

Course Description: The U.S. Constitution places the Congress at the center of policymaking and governance. The founding fathers designed it to be the most important branch of government because of its close connection to the citizens it represents. Understand U.S. politics requires a thorough understanding of Congressional function.

In this course we will learn about Congress' institution design and behavioral foundations. The course lectures are driven by theoretical questions meant to challenge students' conventional understanding of politics and U.S. history.

Readings:

Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek, *Congress and Its Members*. CQ Press, 2007.

Gary Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. Longman Press, 2008.

JSTOR Articles, listed below

Expectations: Students should come to class prepared to answer questions about the readings and the course topic of the day. I will call on students if voluntary engagement in the material is not forthcoming.

Assignments: Each student will take a midterm exam, an in-class final exam, and write a 3 page paper analyzing the House or Senate campaign from their home district. The hour-long midterm exam and final exams will feature identification questions (1-2) sentences, short answers (3-4) sentences, and 1 essay. The final exam will have the same format as the midterm, with more IDs and short answers and 2 essays.

Grading:

15% Congressional District Assignment

40% Midterm Examination

45% Final Examination

Grade Disputes: Midterm grade disputes must be submitted to the Teaching Assistant within 1 week of the exam return date. Disputes must be a written account of why you consider the grade inappropriate.

Extra Credit: Election Prediction Game
Electoral College
Seats in Congress

Friday, September 26th: Introduction and Syllabus

Monday, September 29th: American Political Institutions
The Constitution, Separation of powers, The role of Congress
Reading: Federalist #10, 51; Jacobson, Chapter 2; Davidson and Oleszek p17-26

Wednesday, October 1st: Congress Overview
Analytical frames for understanding Congress: Principal-Agent Theory, Electoral Connection, Collective Action
Reading: Kiewiet and McCubbins, "Congressional Appropriations and the Electoral Connection" *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Feb., 1985), pp. 59-82

Friday, October 3rd: The Road to Washington: Recruitment and Candidacy in Congressional Elections
Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 3

Monday, October 6th: Campaign Strategy
Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 4

Wednesday, October 8th: Incumbency Advantage and Money in Congressional Elections
Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 3

Friday, October 10th: Representation and Elections
Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 4

Monday, October 13th: Home Style- Congressmen in the District
Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 5; Fenno, Richard J. "US House Members in their Constituencies: An Exploration." 1977. *American Political Science Review* (JSTOR)

Wednesday, October 15th: Elections and National Politics
Coattails, Economics and Party Popularity in Congressional Elections
Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 6

Friday, October 17th: Voters in Congressional Elections
Reading: Jacobson Chapter 5
Congressional Election Paper Due in Class

Monday, October 20th: Back to Washington- Parliamentary Procedure and Congressional Institutions

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 8

Wednesday, October 22nd: Changes in Congress- “Textbook” vs. Unorthodox Congress

Reading: Barbara Sinclair “The Emergence of Strong Leadership in the 1980s House of Representatives” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Aug., 1992), pp. 657-684

Friday, October 24th: The Committee System

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 7; Polsby “The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Mar., 1968), pp. 144-168

Monday, October 27th: Congress and Political Parties: Theory

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 6

Wednesday, October 29th: Parties in Congress

Reading: Smith, Steven “Positive Theories of Congressional Parties” ; Keith Krehbiel “Paradoxes of Parties in Congress” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Feb., 1999), pp. 31-64 JSTOR

Friday, October 31st: Midterm Exam

Monday, November 3rd: Election Preview Discussion

Reading: Election writings in NY Times or Union Tribune

Wednesday, November 5th: Election Results

Reading: None, watch election coverage on Tuesday, November 4th

Friday, November 7th: Voting and Parties in the Electorate

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 9

Monday, November 10th: Bicameralism and Divided Government

Reading: Edwards, Barrett and Peake “The Legislative Impact of Divided Government” (JSTOR)

Wednesday, November 12th: Policymaking in the US Senate

Reading: Sinclair, Barbara “Senate Styles and Senate Decisionmaking” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Nov., 1986), pp. 877-908

Friday, November 14th: Presidential Influence in Congress

Veto Bargaining, Partisan and Formal Powers

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 10

Monday, November 17th: Legislative Case Studies

Line-Item Veto; Fast-track, Impeachment

Reading: Spitzer “The Constitutionality of the Line Item Veto” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 112, No. 2 (Summer, 1997) JSTOR, pp. 261-283; Jacobson 254-259

Wednesday, November 19th: Interest Groups in Congress

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 13

Friday, November 21st: Congress and the Bureaucracy

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 11; McCubbins and Schwartz “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms” JSTOR

Monday, November 24th: Budget Policy

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 14

Wednesday, November 26th: No Class

Friday, November 28th: No Class

Monday, December 1st: Congress and the Courts

Reading: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 12

Wednesday, December 3rd: Representation, Responsibility and the Future of Congress

Reading: Jacobson, Chapter 8

Friday, December 5th: Discussion and Final Preparation

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 10th 3-6pm