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:
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

**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

**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  

**Friday, October 24th**: The Committee System  

**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  

**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  
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