

**The American Congress  
Political Science 212  
Spring 2015**

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**Classroom: McGannon Hall 121**  
**Class time: MWF. 9:00 – 9:50am**  
**Office Hours: M/W, 2 – 3pm or by appointment**

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### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to the many facets of the U.S. Congress – asking “what does Congress do, and why?” Some of the many topics we will examine include: congressional elections, issues of representation, the role of political parties, and how the organization of Congress affects lawmaking. Theories of politics and political behavior can help us interpret and explain contemporary politics, so throughout the course, we will keep a collective eye on events in Washington and elsewhere that bear on legislative politics and the U.S. Congress.

As a result of completing the course, you should be able to:

- 1) Recall and explain basic electoral and institutional features of the U.S. Congress
- 2) Accurately apply political science concepts (e.g. representation) that relate to contemporary congressional politics
- 3) Describe, explain, and apply theories of legislator behavior and legislative organization

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Exams:**

This course will have a midterm and final exam. The midterm exam is on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and you will be notified on February 20<sup>th</sup> of the Course Topics you will be responsible for on the midterm. The final exam will be cumulative and take place on the scheduled final exam date. Questions on the exams will be multiple choice, short answers, and essay. If scheduling permits, there will be an in-class review session prior to the midterm and final exams.

#### **Papers:**

There will be two main written assignments in this course. They will require you to review and critique debates in the Congressional literature. The first paper focuses on Congressional elections and the second paper focuses on Congressional behavior. The first paper will be 4 – 6 pages and due on February 20<sup>th</sup>, and the second paper will be 6 – 8 pages and due on April 24<sup>th</sup>. You will receive more specific details about the assignments at least three weeks before the papers are due.

#### **Homework Assignments and Quizzes:**

There will be homework assignments and quizzes throughout the semester. There will be at least four homework assignments that will require you to independently collect and analyze information about Congress. You will have two weeks to complete homework assignments from the day the assignment is distributed. All answers to homework assignments should be typed and emailed to Professor Rogers in MS Word (preferred) or PDF format by the 9am on the due date.

There will be quizzes throughout the semester to test your knowledge and understanding of both readings and lectures. Quizzes will be conducted both on Blackboard and in-class (sometimes in the form of Pop Quizzes). It, therefore, is important to stay updated on readings. You cannot make up an in-class quiz unless you have an excused absence. You will be notified in class when there is a Blackboard Quiz.

**Participation:**

All students are expected to complete assigned readings, regularly attend class, and participate in discussion regarding lecture and readings. On the Blackboard discussion forum, you will also be required to comment on readings for 6 Course Topics. The below course outline has 15 separate topics, and you may choose any of the 6 topics except Topics 1, 9, and 15. Comments should address readings’ main arguments, shortcomings, and questions you would like to discuss in class. Comments should not address textbook readings (e.g. Davidson). Blackboard posts should be at least 350 words, and deadlines for comments will be posted on Blackboard as the course progresses.

Students participating in the Honors program (POLS 212-01H) will be required to write six 1 – 2 page reaction papers on the happenings in Congress. These reaction papers should identify and discuss four separate news articles or blog posts from Academic blogs (e.g. The Monkey Cage or Mischiefs of Faction). Strong reaction papers will make connections from Congressional news to concepts from the course. Reaction papers should be posted to Blackboard by Saturday at 5pm, and the class will briefly discuss them in Monday’s class. Honors students should coordinate with Professor Rogers the first week of class to coordinate who writes reaction papers each week.

You are permitted two unexcused absences. For each additional unexcused absence, your final course grade will be reduced by 0.5%. If you miss a pop-quiz or assignment due to an unexcused absence, you will receive a 0% for the assignment. An absence is only excused with written consent (e.g. email) from Professor Rogers.

**Grades and Key Dates**

Your grade for this course will consist of the following components and relative weights:

Item	Overall Course Grade Weight	Due Date
Participation	15%	Throughout Semester
Homework Assignments & Quizzes	15%	Throughout Semester
Paper 1	5%	February 20 <sup>th</sup>
Midterm Exam	20%	March 4 <sup>th</sup>
Paper 2	10%	April 24 <sup>th</sup>
Final Exam	35%	TBD

There will be no make-up tests or deadline extensions given in this course. Exemptions will only be made with written prior consent (e.g. email from Professor Rogers) for planned events such as sponsored SLU activities or religious observances or under unusual circumstances such as a documented medical emergency. It is the student’s responsibility to request and obtain this consent.

Late homework assignments will be marked down 20% for each day, and late papers will be marked down 10% for each day. There will be no assignments designated purely as “extra credit.” At times, there will be opportunities for extra credit within a homework assignment, quiz, or test, but you cannot earn more than 100% credit on any assignment.

When determining the final grade, the following grading scale will be used. I will round final grades. Depending on the distribution of grades, I reserve the right to impose curves to assignments and final grades

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93% - 100%	B	83% - 86%	C	73% - 76%
A-	90% - 92%	B-	80% - 82%	C-	70% - 72%
B+	87% - 89%	C+	77% - 79%	D	60% - 69%
				F	below 60%

When translating letter grades into numeric grades, the midpoint of the range will be used (e.g. A = 96.5%, A- = 91%, etc.)

Due to the university calendar or Professor Rogers’ professional obligations, we will not hold class on the following days:

**January 19:** Martin Luther King Day

**March 9 – 14:** Spring Break

**April 2 – 6:** Easter Break

**April 15 – 17:** Midwest Political Science Association Meeting in Chicago

### Course Evaluations

Students are requested to fill out a course evaluation at the end of the course.

### Academic Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a

larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty: <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

### **Students with Special Needs-Disability Services**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [314-977-8885](tel:314-977-8885) or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

### **Required Texts**

The following text should be available from the University Bookstore or online retailers, such as Amazon.com. Other readings will be made available via Blackboard.

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee and Eric Schickler. 2013. *Congress and Its Members*, CQ Press: Washington, DC.

### **Suggested News Sources to Follow Congress and Political Science**

The Monkey Cage - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/>

Mischief of Faction – <http://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/>

Politico – <http://www.politico.com/congress>

The National Journal – <http://www.nationaljournal.com/>

CQ Weekly - <http://library.cqpress.com/cqweekly/>

## **Course Outline**

The following listing of topics outlines the subjects we will cover in class and the reading assignments for each of the topics. This is a tentative outline intended to give you an overview of the course. I will notify you throughout the semester of when you will be responsible for certain readings. I reserve the right to make change to the syllabus as the semester progresses. You are responsible for any of the changes to the assigned readings. All of the articles and readings on the syllabus will be available on Blackboard. If you have any trouble accessing any of the on-line pieces, **please let Professor Rogers know as soon as possible.**

### **Topic 1 – Course Introduction and Objectives**

### **Topic 2 – Origins and Development of Congress**

- Davidson, Chapters 1 & 2
- Articles of Confederation
- US Constitution
- Toobin, Jeffery. “Our Broken Constitution,” *The New Yorker*. 2013.
- Schickler, Eric. “Institutional Development of Congress.” Chapter 2 in *The Legislative Branch*. 2005.

### **Topic 3 – Congressional Electoral Institutions**

- Davidson, Chapter 3
- Draper, Robert. “The League of Dangerous Mapmakers,” *The Atlantic*. 2013.
- Abramowitz, Alan, Brad Alexander and Matthew Gunning. “Don’t Blame Redistricting for Uncompetitive Elections,” *PS Political Science and Politics*. 2006.
- McCarty, Nolan. “The Limits of Electoral and Legislative Reform in Addressing Polarization.” *California Law Review*. 2011.
- Rossum, Ralph. “Federalism, the Supreme Court, and the Seventeenth Amendment,” Chapter 6. 2001.

### **Topic 4 – Money in Congressional Politics**

- Davidson, Chapter 4: p. 65- 82
- Cillizza, “How Citizens United changed politics, in 7 Charts.” *The Washington Post*. 2015.
- Milyo, Jeffrey, David Primo, and Timothy Groseclose. “Corporate PAC Campaign Contributions in Perspective,” *Business and Politics*. 2000.
- Jacobson, Gary “The Politics of Congressional Elections: Congressional Campaigns.” p. 64 – 95. 2013.

### **Topic 5 – Voter Behavior**

- Davidson, Chapter 4: p. 82 – 100
- Aldrich, John. “Rational Choice and Turnout.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 1993.
- Green, D.P., Gerber, A.S. and Larimer, C.W. “Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment.” *American Political Science Review* (2008).

- Nyhan, Brennan, Eric McGhee, John Sides, Seth Masket, and Steven Greene. “One Vote out of Step? The Effects of Salient Roll Call Votes in the 2010 Election.” *American Politics Research*. 2012.

### **Topic 6 – Incumbents and Challengers**

- Jacobson, “The Politics of Congressional Elections: Congressional Campaigns.” p. 29 - 63. 2013.
- Goldmacher, Shane. “Why Would Anyone Ever Want to Run for Congress?” *The Atlantic*. 2013.
- Jacobson, Gary. “Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections.” *The American Political Science Review*. 1989.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, and Charles Stewart. “Old Voters, New Voters, and the Personal Vote: Using Redistricting to Measure the Incumbency Advantage.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 2000.
- Cox, Gary and Jonathan Katz. “Elbridge Gerry’s Salamander” Chapters 8 - 9. 2002.

### **Topic 7 – Representation**

- Davidson, Chapter 5
- Miller, Warren E. and Donald Stokes. “Constituency Influence in Congress.” *The American Political Science Review*. 1963.
- Fenno, Richard. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *The American Political Science Review*, 1977.
- Matthews, Dylan. “One study explains why it’s tough to pass liberal laws.” *The Washington Post: Wonkblog*. 2013.

### **Topic 8 – Who Gets Represented?**

- Swers, Michele L., and Stella M. Rouse. “Descriptive Representation: Understanding the Impact of Identity on Substantive Representation of Group Interests.” *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress*. 2011.
- Tate, Kate. “The Political Representation of Blacks in Congress: Does Race Matter?” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 2001.
- Mudy, Liza. “The Secret History of Women in the Senate.” *Politico*. 2015.
- Volden, Craig, Alan Wiseman, Dana E. Whittmer. “When Are Women More Effective Lawmakers Than Men?” *American Journal of Political Science*. 2013.
- Choma, Russ. “Millionaires’ Club: For the First Time: Most Lawmakers are Worth \$1 Million-Plus.” *OpenSecrets*. 2014.
- Bartels, Larry. “Unequal Democracy: Economic Inequality and Political Representation.” Chapter 9. 2008.

### **Topic 9 – Introduction to Lineland**

- Smith, Steven. “The American Congress.” Appendix.
- Cameron, Charles. “Veto Bargaining.” p. 69 – 106. 2000.
- Binder, Sarah. “The Dysfunctional Congress.” *The Annual Review of Political Science*. 2014.
- *Suggested Reading: Stewart, Charles. “Analyzing Congress.” Chapter 1. 2001.*
- *Suggested Reading: Shepsle, Kenneth. “Analyzing Politics.” Chapter 5. 2010.*

### **Topic 10 – How a Bill Becomes a Law**

- Davidson, Chapter 8
- Krehbiel, Keith. “Pivotal Politics” Chapters 1 - 2. (1997).
- Binder, Sarah and Steven Smith. “Politics or Principle?” Chapters 1 – 2. (1997).

### **Topic 11 – Congressional Committees**

- Davidson, Chapter 7
- Fenno, Richard. *Congressmen in Committees* pp. Prologue & Ch. 1. (1973).
- Granat, Diane. “1<sup>st</sup> Freshman Test: The Right Committee Seat.” *CQ Weekly*. (1985).
- Evans, Lawrence. “Congressional Committees.” *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress*. 2011.

### **Topic 12 – Congressional Leadership and Parties**

- Davidson, Chapter 6
- Aldrich, John. “Why Parties?” Chapter 7. 2011.
- Cox & McCubbins. *Setting the Agenda* (2005). Chapters 1 – 3.
- Hooper, Molly K. “Pelosi methodically moved members.” *The Hill*. 2010.
- Binder, Sarah. “Oh 113<sup>th</sup> Congress Hastert Rule, we hardly knew ye!” *The Monkey Cage*. 2013.

### **Topic 13 – Interest Groups**

- Davidson, Chapter 13
- Lipton, Eric and Ben Protess. “Law Doesn’t End Revolving Door on Capitol Hill.” *The New York Times*. 2014.
- Kalla, Joshua and David Broockman. “Congressional Officials Grant Access to Individuals because they have Contributed to Campaigns: A Randomized Field Experiment.” 2014.
- Hall, Richard and Frank Wayman. “Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.” *The American Political Science Review*. 1990.

### **Topic 14 – Speaking and Voting**

- Davidson, Chapter 9
- Mayhew, David. “Congress: The Electoral Connection” Chapter 1. 1973.
- Barber, Michael, and Nolan McCarty “Causes and Consequences of Polarization” (2012).

### **Topic 15 – Separation of Powers**

- Davidson, Chapter 10, 11, and 12
- McCubbins, Mathew D. and Thomas Schwartz. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 1984.
- “Hello, deadlock” *The Economist*. 2014.
- Binder, Sarah and Forrest Maltzman. “Advice and Consent: The Politics of Confirming Federal Judges.” in *Congress Reconsidered*. 2013.

### **Topic 16 – Congressional Budgeting and Distributive Politics**

- Davidson, Chapter 14