

PSCI 3041
The American Congress
FALL 2018

Instructor: Stefani Langehennig

Time and Location: T, Th 2:00-3:15pm, Humanities (HUMN) 135

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Office Hours: T, Th 11:00-12:00pm, Ketchum 382

Course Overview

This course examines the United States Congress, with a focus on the historical development of the House and the Senate, as well as the impact that these developments have on public policy and national politics more broadly. In particular, we will examine the constitutional underpinnings and the historical progress that led to the modern Congress, the rules and procedures that influence the legislative process, the interbranch relations between Congress and the executive and judicial branches, and the ways in which voters hold Congressional lawmakers electorally accountable. There are three primary themes we will revisit and focus on over the course of the semester: the political behavior and preferences of members of Congress, political institutions and the “rules of the game”, and the political outcomes that ensue as a product of congressional behavior. Although we will not discuss other democratic legislatures, a number of the conclusions we come to from studying the U.S. Congress may be applicable to other legislative bodies. While difficult to cover the extensiveness and complexity of this institution in only a semester, the primary goal of the course is to give students a solid grounding in congressional politics.

Objectives

- Students will develop an understanding of Congress’s historical development and evolution from its Constitutional underpinnings to the present day.
- Students will learn how Congress is internally organized and the ways in which congressional rules and procedures influence the legislative process.
- Students will gain a deeper understanding of congressional preferences and behaviors and how this impacts legislative outcomes.
- Students will learn key concepts and theories on Congress and use them to analyze current events involving Congress.

Requirements

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. However, before taking this class some familiarity with American politics is strongly encouraged, as well as completion of PSCI 1101: The American Political System.

Textbook/Readings

The required reading for this course comes from textbooks, political science journal articles, and other various sources. The textbooks, listed below, can be found bundled together at the CU Bookstore or on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Other course readings that are not in the required textbooks will be posted online.

1. Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler. 2018. *Congress and its Members, 16th ed.* Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press. (“DOLS” in course outline)
2. Dodd, Lawrence C. and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 2017. *Congress Reconsidered, 11th ed.* Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press. (“DO” in course outline)

Evaluation

The grade you earn in this class will be based primarily on your understanding of the reading material and lectures from the course. Your final grade will consist of the following assignments and exams:

1. Two Memos - 15% each, 30% total grade
2. Midterm - 20%
3. Final Exam - 20%
4. Class Attendance and Participation - 30%

Letter Grade Distribution

≥ 94	A	73-76	C
90-93	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+	< 60	F

Memos

Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for choosing two separate weeks in which you will write a 2-page, single-spaced summary synthesizing the week's reading and how it relates to current events surrounding Congress.¹ The intended goal is to get you to engage more deeply in the readings for that week and to analyze the real world implications of the readings' major insights. For example, you may choose to write your memo on the readings covering congressional elections, as the current events will be quite ripe given it is a midterm election year. You will be required to choose the weeks for which you will write on Tuesday of the second week of class (9/4). Memos will be due at the start of class on the last day we meet that week. Failure to turn in a paper at the end of the week you chose will result in a penalization to your grade (see Late Work policy below).

Exams (Midterm and Final)

The exams contain both multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Each exam will cover only the material since the previous exam, including the final exam. The material will include all readings on the syllabus and all of the information covered in lectures. You will not be allowed to use your books, readings, or other materials on the exams (closed book and closed note). Make-up exams will only be given when a student provides proof of a university-excused absence. The make-up exam may be a different format than the regularly scheduled exam. I must be notified before an absence arises. If this is not feasible because of an emergency, you must contact me as soon as possible to reschedule an exam.

Class Attendance & Participation

In order to maximize class time, it is important that everyone comes to class prepared to discuss material from previous lectures and the week's readings. This portion of the grade reflects my evaluation of your participation in class discussion, engagement during class, and weekly attendance. Life happens, so everyone is allowed three free absences, no questions asked. If you miss more than three classes, each additional absence will result in a 10% reduction in this portion of your grade. Students who miss more than 50% of lectures will receive zero credit for attendance and participation. Attendance will be taken using clicker questions. Clickers can be purchased at the [CU Bookstore](#).

Classroom Policies

Late Work

It is expected that you come to class having the week's readings and any other due assignments completed. Assignments submitted after the deadline in the syllabus will be penalized by 5 percentage points (a 95% would become a 90%). For every additional 24 hours after this you will lose another 5% on your grade.

¹These are to be in 12 point (readable) font with 1 inch margins. You will need to turn in a hard copy the day it is due, as well as upload an electronic copy to Canvas.

Grade Appeals

If you wish to challenge a grade earned on any work for any reason apart from an obvious calculation error, I ask that you wait at least 48 hours and then email me with a request to meet to discuss your performance.

Plagiarism & Cheating

Any form of academic plagiarism and/or cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism on any work done in the class will result in you automatically failing the course and being reported to the Honor Code Council. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following: failing to use quotation marks when directly quoting sources; failing to document distinct ideas from sources; making up sources; and copying information from sources found on the Internet. Cheating includes using materials not authorized by the instructor or receiving assistance not authorized by the instructor during an examination or other academic activity. Please see the note below on CU's policy regarding academic integrity.

Technology

Please turn off or silence all electronic devices when you enter the classroom. This includes cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc. Using technology in class distracts both the user of the technology and those around them. Exceptions will be made for technology that is necessary for medical purposes. If this is the case, please provide documentation for this requirement at the beginning of the semester. If you need to access to your cell phone because of an ongoing emergency situation, please speak to me at the start of class to let me know. [This](#) article provides a nice overview on why a technology-free classroom is most effective for learning.

Email and Web Communication

An email list has been setup to contact the class with updates, additional readings, and announcements. It is your responsibility to regularly check your University email account for updates. Students will be held accountable for assignments and syllabus changes communicated via email, and I will always give you reasonable notice for any changes. Having missed an important deadline or a change in the schedule because you failed to check your email is not a valid excuse. I will answer all emails within 48 hours. We will also use Canvas in this course. The most updated syllabus, readings, and other course announcements can be found here. It is highly recommended that you regularly check this website.

Classroom Environment

In this course we will occasionally discuss contentious topics about which you or others may have strong feelings. For this class to be successful there must always be civil and open discourse on the topics at hand. This requires that each student share their opinion, but in a respectful and informed way. Everyone should feel that their opinion is welcome in this class. Any personal attack against a student will not be tolerated.

University Policies

Disability Issues

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides protection from illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting instructional accommodations due to disabilities must provide documentation of disabilities to arrange for such accommodations. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to me in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Religious Observances

The University of Colorado acknowledges a legal and a moral obligation to accommodate all students who must be absent from classes or scheduled exams in order to observe religious holidays. If you have a religiously-based conflict with classes or exams you must, by the end of the third week of class, notify me and arrange to make up missed work. Please see [this website](#) for campus religiously-based conflict policies.

Sexual Misconduct, Harassment, & Discrimination

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Honor Code, Classroom Behavior, & Academic Integrity

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found

responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Students and faculty each have a responsibility to maintain an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to appropriate standards of behavior may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are always important, but especially so with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and nationality. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with each student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make changes to my records. Please visit the websites for [classroom behavior](#) and [student affairs](#) policies for more information.

Finally, cheating is not acceptable in this course; make sure to do your own work. Students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution, which can be found [here](#). For the purposes of this course, I will not tolerate plagiarism or cheating of any kind. All work MUST be your own and that work must be correctly cited.

Course Outline

Week 1: Foundations and the Evolution of Congress (8/28, 8/30)

- Tuesday, 8/28 - Class introduction
 - DOLS, Ch.1, pp.3-9 & Ch.2 (all)
- Thursday, 8/30 - The Roots of Congress (No class - APSA Conference)
 - Skim Jeffrey Toobin, [“Our Broken Constitution.”](#) *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2013.
 - James Madison, *Federalist 51* and *Federalist 10*

Week 2: Congress and its Constituencies (9/4, 9/6)

- Tuesday, 9/4 - “Hillstyles”
 - DOLS, Ch.5
- Thursday, 9/6 - “Homestyles”
 - DO, Ch. 5
 - Fenno, Richard. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *American Political Science Review* 71 (3): 883-917.

Week 3: Congressional Elections: Recruitment and Candidacy (9/11, 9/13)

- Tuesday, 9/11 - Apportionment & Districting
 - DOLS, Ch. 3, pp. 43-57
 - Skim Richard Hanson, [“The Supreme Court Case That Could Transform Politics.”](#) *Politico*, March 26, 2017.
 - For fun, visit [FiveThirtyEight’s “Atlas of Redistricting”](#)
- Thursday, 9/13 - Nominations & Candidacy
 - DOLS, Ch. 3, pp. 62-70
 - Part 1, Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Excerpt on Canvas)

Week 4: Congressional Elections: Campaigns, Voters, and Outcomes (9/18, 9/20)

- Tuesday, 9/18 - Campaigns & Voters
 - DOLS, Ch. 4
- Thursday, 9/20 - Incumbency & Electoral Outcomes
 - DO, Ch. 3
 - Jacobson, Gary. 1977. “The Marginals Never Vanished: Incumbency and Competition in Elections to the U.S. House of Representatives, 1952-82.” *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (1): 126-141.

Week 5: Political Parties and Leadership (9/25, 9/27)

- Tuesday, 9/25 - Leaders and Coalitions
 - DOLS, Ch. 6
- Thursday, 9/27 - Party Government
 - DO, Ch. 7
 - Rohde, David and John Aldrich. 2000. “The Consequences of Party Organization in the House: The Role of the Majority and Minority Parties in Conditional Party Government.” in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, Ed. by Jon Bond and Richard Fleischer. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (Excerpt on Canvas)

Week 6: Polarization In and Around Congress (10/2, 10/4)

- Tuesday, 10/2 - Causes of Polarization
 - Theriault, Sean. 2006. “Party Polarization in the U.S. Congress: Member Replacement and Member Adaptation.” *Party Politics* 12 (4): 483-503.
 - For fun, visit [Voteview Blog website](#)
- Thursday, 10/4 - Consequences of Polarization
 - DO, Ch. 8
 - Ch. 6, Binder, Sarah. 2003. *Stalemate: Causes and Consequences of Legislative Gridlock*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (Excerpt on Canvas)

Week 7: Congressional Committees (10/9, 10/11)

- Tuesday, 10/9 - Committees as “Little Legislatures”
 - DOLS, Ch. 7
- Thursday, 10/11 - **MIDTERM**

Week 8: “Textbook” Lawmaking in Congress (10/16, 10/18)

- Tuesday, 10/16 - House Rules and Procedures
 - DOLS, Ch. 8, pp. 219-244
- Thursday, 10/18 - Senate Rules and Procedures
 - DOLS, Ch. 8, pp. 245-259

Week 9: “Unorthodox” Lawmaking in Congress (10/23, 10/25)

- Tuesday, 10/23 - Alternatives to *Schoolhouse Rock!* Lawmaking
 - Ch. 1-2, Barbara Sinclair. 2016. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (Excerpts on Canvas)
 - Adler, E. Scott, Stefani Langehennig, and Ryan Bell. 2018. “Congressional Capacity and Reauthorizations.” *Working paper*.
- Thursday, 10/25 - Drawbacks of “Unorthodox” Lawmaking
 - Ch. 8, Barbara Sinclair. 2016. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (Excerpt on Canvas)
 - Skim Yoni Appelbaum, [“America’s Fragile Constitution.”](#) *The Atlantic*, October 2015.

Week 10: Deliberating, Bargaining, and Decision-Making in Congress (10/30, 11/1)

- Tuesday, 10/30 - Determining the Agenda
 - DOLS, Ch. 9, pp. 285-289
 - Ch.5, Adler, E. Scott and John Wilkerson. 2012. *Congress and the Politics of Problem Solving*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Excerpt on Canvas)
- Thursday, 11/1 - How and Why Decisions are Made
 - DOLS, Ch. 9, pp. 261-285

Week 11: Congress and the Executive Branch (11/6, 11/8)

- Tuesday, 11/6 - Bargaining and Conflict
 - DOLS, Ch. 10
 - DO, Ch. 15
 - For fun, a thought piece on [“The Broken Check and Balance”](#) by James Fallows of *The Atlantic* (October 31, 2017).
- Thursday, 11/8 - Congress and National Security
 - DOLS, Ch. 15

Week 12: Congress and the Courts (11/13, 11/15)

- Tuesday, 11/13 -
 - DOLS, Ch. 12
- Thursday, 11/15 -
 - DO, Ch. 16
 - Skim Mickey Edwards, [We No Longer Have Three Branches of Government](#). *Politico*, February 27, 2017.

Week 13: NO CLASS (11/20, 11/22)

- Fall Break & Thanksgiving

Week 14: Congress and Organized Interests (11/27, 11/29)

- Tuesday, 11/27 - Pluralism and Group Interests
 - DOLS, Ch. 15, pp. 375-389
- Thursday, 11/29 - The Politics of Lobbying
 - DOLS, Ch. 15, pp. 390-397

- Hall, Richard and Frank Wayman. 1990. “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.” *American Political Science Review* 84 (3): 797-820.

Week 15: Congressional Budgeting in an Era of “Regular Disorder” (12/4, 12/6)

- Tuesday, 12/4 - Nuts and Bolts of Budgeting
 - DOLS, Ch. 14, pp. 411-429
- Thursday, 12/6 - “Regular Disorder” and Budgeting: Is it Really That Bad?
 - DO, Ch.12

Week 16: Class Wrap-Up and Review (12/11, 12/13)

- Tuesday, 12/11 - Present-Day Congress
 - DOLS, Ch. 16
 - DO, Ch. 18
- Thursday, 12/13 - Review (last day of class)

*****FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 17, 4:30-7:00PM. Location TBD.*****