

PSCI 3041: The American Congress

Fall 2020 • Tue/Thu 11:10 – 12:25

CASE E240 + Hybrid Remote

Professor: Nancy Billica

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Zoom Office Hours:

Tuesdays 3:30 – 4:30 pm | Wednesdays 11:00 am – noon | or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a broad survey of the legislative branch of American government. We will focus on the constitutional and historical context of the modern Congress, including tension between Congress' competing representation and lawmaking functions, as well as evaluation of the contemporary institution. What is working, what is not, and why? Here we will not only ask about the “nuts and bolts” of these processes, but also why the rules are designed as they are and why various members act as they do.

How are laws really made today? How do legislative rules affect policy outcomes? Why is Congress so unpopular today? What legislative reforms would help “fix” Congress? Where does money matter in Congress? The goal of this course is to help us come to a deeper understanding of the complexities of congressional politics beyond the superficial coverage they get in the media and how they apply to modern American politics today.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- gain knowledge of the constitutional powers of Congress, the evolution of those powers over time, and how the power of Congress is shaped by other actors and forces in the political system.
- learn about the dual and competing roles of representation and lawmaking, both in theory and in contemporary practice.
- conduct primary resource research on Congress, including investigation of legislation and the politics of lawmaking; individual members and their roles, responsibilities, and factors influencing legislative position; and the dynamics of congressional negotiation.
- practice critical thinking, analytical discussion, and writing skills.

READINGS

Readings are drawn from two required books and additional materials available as listed, either on the Canvas class page or the internet. Students should also plan to regularly read the news for current developments in Congress, which will be discussed in class on an ongoing basis.

- Roger Davidson *et al.*, *Congress and Its Members* (CQ Press, 17th or 16th edition). Henceforth referred to as *CAIM*.
- Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered* (CQ Press, 11th edition, 2017). Henceforth referred to as *CR 2017*. Note that earlier editions of this text do not include the specific readings assigned for this class. Thus, you should be using the 11th edition.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSESSMENT & ASSIGNMENTS

Date Due	Assignments	Grading
See weekly schedule & updates on Canvas	Class participation: This includes submissions to the class discussion board, live discussion opportunities, class surveys, etc. Flexible options for participation; take part in at least 10	15%
Fri, Sept 25 Fri, Oct 30 Fri, Nov 20	Three-part congressional analysis project Part A: legislative issue analysis Part B: individual member & district analysis Part C: congressional committee exercise to achieve compromise, individual & group report	45%
Fri, Oct 16	Midterm assignment: summary, analysis & writing; requirements posted to Canvas one week in advance	20%
Fri, Dec 11	Final assignment: summary analysis & writing; requirements posted to Canvas one week in advance	20%

HYBRID COURSE DESIGN AND EXPECTATIONS

There are many variations of hybrid instruction. This course on the American Congress replaces some of the traditional in-class time with online learning.

- **Hybrid schedule:** While plans might be altered if conditions change, the class is designed to meet in-person with one-half of the students on Tuesdays, and the other half on Thursdays. Students not scheduled to meet in-person are asked to participate via live remote instruction.
 - Tuesday in-person schedule: those with student ID numbers ending in even numbers.
 - Thursday in-person schedule: those with student ID numbers ending in odd numbers.
 - You are asked to adhere to these in-class assignment rules so that we as a class follow the university's Covid-safe room capacity rules.
 - Classroom lectures will be recorded and uploaded on Canvas so that students who are unable to attend in-person lectures and/or live remote class sessions may participate asynchronously.
 - Any schedule changes will be announced as soon as information is available.
- **Canvas, our common classroom space:** Plan to regularly check Canvas for updated information, including announcements, schedule reminders and adjustments, assignment links, readings, and other supplemental materials.
- **Class participation:** Active engagement is valuable in any learning environment. This is especially true in a course that requires critical examination of both facts and assumptions, and where the exchange of ideas is an important avenue for expanding our collective knowledge and

understanding. For this hybrid course, class participation will be encouraged and measured through a mix of options:

- Full points for class participation can be achieved by engaging in at least 10 class participation activities across the semester.
 - In most weeks, students have the opportunity to actively engage with classmates either by posting a response to the discussion board or to logging in during regularly scheduled office hours for active consideration of the discussion board questions of the week and/or anything else of interest.
 - Additional opportunities for class participation can be anticipated and will be posted on Canvas, such as: submitting event write-ups (for example, congressional election-related events and developments); preparing a summary or podcast or other means of documenting an interview with a decisionmaker or political expert; and other options for active engagement with the materials and issues of Congress.
- **Expectations for out-of-class work:** Although we will meet in-person less frequently than in a regular course, this course requires the SAME amount of work. Taking a hybrid course demands a lot of discipline, self-directions, and time management skills. You will be expected to do work outside of class that may otherwise have been previously conducted in-class.
 - **Technical requirements and support:** You will need regular access to a computer with reliable Internet access to complete assignments and tasks. If you have your own computer or are considering purchasing hardware, please refer to [OIT's supported software and hardware list](#). For help with all Office of Information Technology services, email oithelp@colorado.edu or call 303-735-4357 (5-4357 from campus phones).

CLASS POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

- **Classroom etiquette:** The basic rule is one of respect. The goal is to create a community where all feel free to participate in classroom and Zoom meeting discussion and in discussion board posts. As a class, we are all called to be open to the ideas and contributions of others and to thereby cultivate better knowledge and understanding. We should expect to disagree with each other on at least some issues of debate, but discussion and disagreement must be expressed in a manner that recognizes the dignity of all and is open to learning from other perspectives. Disrespectful language and/or behavior will not be tolerated.
- **Class communications:** Good communications are fundamental. Your professor will strive for clear and timely communications on the class schedule, materials, and assignments, and any changes to these as we proceed. This also means that students should feel free to ask questions and offer up comments on an ongoing basis. We should all plan to maintain clear and timely communications on changes in status due to illness or quarantine. Specifically, plan to email as soon as possible to alert your professor about class absence or the need for assignment extensions or accommodations.
- **Assignment submissions and due dates:**
 - Students are responsible for ensuring that assignments are successfully submitted to Canvas on time and in accessible format (.doc, .docx or .pdf). Be sure to check your document after submission to see that it is readable and that the correct document was uploaded. Back-up copies of assignments may be submitted via email if you're not sure Canvas is working.
 - Assignments are due on the due dates. Students with legitimate, documented reasons for missing an exam or assignment deadline should consult with the professor *prior to* the due date for alternative arrangements and exemption from late penalties.

- In the absence of a pre-approved exception or documented emergency, late penalties apply, with deductions, as follows:
 - Submitted within 24 hours of the due date: -10%
 - For each additional day late: add an additional -10%
 - Assignments submitted 5 or more days overdue accepted at 50% credit
- **Grading:** While most assignment grades will be posted on Canvas, the complete set of grading records will be maintained by the professor (and may not be fully reflected on Canvas). This includes any deductions related to class participation.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- **Classroom Behavior:** Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- **Requirements for COVID-19:** As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:
 - maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
 - wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
 - clean local work area,
 - practice hand hygiene,
 - follow public health orders, and
 - if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert [CU Boulder Medical Services](#).

Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policies on [COVID-19 Health and Safety](#) and [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the [COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course](#). Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a [Daily Health Form](#).

Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and complete the [Health Questionnaire and Illness Reporting Form](#) remotely. In this class, if you are

sick or quarantined plan to communicate your status as soon as possible via email to your professor so that any assignment extensions or accommodations may be adopted.

- **Accommodation for Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member 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, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.
- **Preferred Student Names and Pronouns:** CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.
- **Honor Code:** 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 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](#).
- **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:** The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or 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, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

- **Religious Holidays:** Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, plan to communicate your status as soon as possible via email to your professor so that any assignment extensions may be adopted.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

FALL 2020 CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

*** subject to change ***

Assumptions: Our class will meet as scheduled with students participating either in-person in the classroom or live remote. Given special Covid room capacity rules, one-half of the students will be scheduled to meet in the classroom on Tuesdays (those with student ID numbers ending in even numbers), and the other half on Thursdays (those with ID numbers ending in odd numbers). Students may also participate asynchronously via recorded lectures to be uploaded on Canvas.

Note: Readings listed as “CAIM” refer to the text, *Congress and Its Members* (Davidson, et al, any edition); readings listed as “CR 2017” refer to the text, *Congress Reconsidered*, 11th ed., 2017 (Dodd & Oppenheimer).

Week	Dates	TOPICS & ASSIGNMENTS
1	Aug 25 & 27 Aug 27 Aug 28	<p>Introduction & overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAIM, Chap 1 ▪ Sarah Binder, “Congress’s 2019 looks startling in the rear-view mirror. Here are 4 key takeaways,” <i>Washington Post</i>, Monkey Cage, December 30, 2019; on Canvas. ▪ Brookings Institution, “Vital Statistics on Congress,” updated March 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/multi-chapter-report/vital-statistics-on-congress/ <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion board post #1 due Thursday, 11:59 pm ▪ Class opinion poll responses due Friday, 11:59 pm
Week 2	Sept 1 & 3 Sept 2 Sept 3	<p>Congress and the Constitution. Why Congress? Why <i>this</i> Congress?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAIM, Chap 2 ▪ Jeffrey Toobin, “Our Broken Constitution,” <i>The New Yorker</i>, December 1, 2013; on Canvas <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Article I, US Constitution Annotated</i>, analysis and interpretation of the US Constitution, Congress. gov, https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/article-1/ ▪ James Madison (1788), “Federalist 48: These Departments Should Not be so Far Separated as to Have No Constitutional Control Over Each Other,” explaining the rationale and mechanisms for checks and balances, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed48.asp ▪ U.S. House of Representatives, homepage with links to: members, leaders, committees, and legislative activity, https://www.house.gov/ ▪ U.S. Senate, homepage with links to: Senators, committees, legislation & records, https://www.senate.gov/ ▪ Congress.gov, a service of the Library of Congress providing the most current information on legislation and public laws and links to members & committees, https://www.congress.gov/ <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student preference poll for legislative issue assignment, due Wednesday, 11:59 pm; individual student issue assignments to be announced by end of week ▪ Discussion board post #2 due Thursday, 11:59 pm

Week 11	Nov 3 & 5 Nov 3 Nov 5	Election analysis: What next for Congress? Congress and the President <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAIM, Chap 10 ▪ Cooper, Chap 15, CR 2017, “The Balance of Power Between the Congress and the President” Assignment – options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take part in live office hours discussion on Tues 3:30 pm on issues facing Congress ▪ OR: Discussion board post #8 due Thursday, 11:59 pm
Week 12	Nov 10 & 12 Nov 11 Nov 12	Legislative rules & rules changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAIM, Chap 9 ▪ Koger, Chap 13, CR 2017, “Filibusters and Majority Rule in the Modern Senate” Optional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ragusa, Chap 10, CR 2017, “An Examination of Congressional Efforts to Repeal the Affordable Care Act” Assignment – options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take part in live office hours discussion on Wed 11:00 am on issues facing Congress ▪ OR: Discussion board post #9 due Thursday, 11:59 pm
13	Nov 17 & 19 Nov 20	Challenges to lawmaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Derek Willis & Paul Kane, “How Congress Stopped Working,” <i>ProPublica</i>, November 5, 2018, available here. ▪ Philip Wallach & James Wallner, “Congress is Broken. But Don’t Blame Polarization,” <i>Real Clear Policy</i>, June 8, 2018, available here. ▪ Kosar, et al., “Restoring Congress as the First Branch,” R Street Policy Study No. 50, January 2016; on Canvas. Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Congressional Analysis Project Part C, due Friday, 11:59 pm
14	Nov 24 Nov 24 Nov 25	Congress & policymaking in a separatio-of-powers system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAIM, Chaps 11 & 12 Assignment – options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take part in live office hours discussion on Tues 3:30 pm on issues facing Congress ▪ OR: Discussion board post #10 due Wednesday, 11:59 pm
15	Dec 1 & 3 Dec 2 Dec 3	Reassessing Congress No assigned readings Assignment – options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take part in live office hours discussion on Wed 11:00 am on issues facing Congress ▪ OR: Discussion board post #11 due Thursday, 11:59 pm
FINAL ASSIGNMENT: due to Canvas no later than 11:59 pm on Friday, Dec 11 (assignments to be posted to Canvas at least one week in advance of the due date)		