

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**POLI 462: LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

Spring 2008  
M W F 11:15 – 12:05  
006 Gambrell Hall  
University of South Carolina

Professor Charles J. Finocchiaro  
Office: 319 Gambrell Hall  
Phone: 803-777-2707  
E-mail: finocchi@gwm.sc.edu

Course Webpage: <https://blackboard.sc.edu/>  
Simulation Webpage: <http://www.legsim.org/>

**COURSE OVERVIEW:**

This course examines the legislative politics of American government with a primary focus on the electoral and institutional behavior of members of Congress (MCs). Successful students will demonstrate an analytic understanding of the historical development of Congress, the interplay between candidates and voters in congressional elections and representation, the evolution and significance of rules and procedures governing deliberation, the organizational rationales underlying the committee system, and the role of political parties and their leaders. The underlying theme of the course and the theoretical lens through which students will be able to synthesize the way in which Congress works is also the basis of most contemporary research on legislative politics—the assumption that individuals act strategically in pursuing their goals. Each section of the course will emphasize this perspective and students will learn to draw out its implications for making sense of Congress, as well as politics more generally.

In addition to conventional methods such as assigned readings, lectures, class discussion and interaction, and written assignments, students will explore the motivations, constraints, and opportunities that face members of Congress through a unique, semester-long simulation in which each person will assume the role of a member of Congress at the various stages of the legislative process from crafting a reelection strategy and seeking committee assignments to introducing and debating legislation.

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

Reading assignments will be drawn primarily from two required books, along with a few articles and excerpts available on Blackboard. Students must also register on the LegSim website to obtain a username and password for the simulation. Please bear in mind that readings may be added or dropped and the syllabus/schedule may be altered at the instructor's discretion.

- Smith, Steven S., Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. 2007. *The American Congress*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-0-521-70836-4
- Oleszek, Walter J. 2007. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-0-87289-303-0
- Register for the simulation at: <http://www.legsim.org/> [Session: USC House]  
\* The registration code for this section of 462 is posted on Blackboard.

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Grades for the course will be based primarily on two exams and work done for the simulated Congress, much of which will be in the form of papers. The first exam will comprise 25% of the course grade and the final exam 35%, while the simulation will contribute 35%. Also, there will likely be occasional unannounced quizzes on the readings scheduled for that day’s class (5%). The topics covered in the assigned readings will form the basis of class discussion. Therefore, students are expected to attend class regularly, and to come to class having done the assigned readings for the day and prepared to discuss them. This includes being able to: identify the key argument and findings, discuss the implications, and identify the evidence, methods, and potential shortcomings. In accordance with university policy, absence from more than 10 percent of scheduled classes is excessive, and may result in the reduction of one letter grade for the course.

Each exam and assignment will be graded numerically, with scores and approximate letter grades posted on Blackboard so that students know where they stand throughout the semester.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, MAKE-UPS, & ACCESSIBILITY:**

Students are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum of a failing grade for the assignment, and may result in additional, more severe disciplinary measures up to and including referral to the Office of Academic Integrity. Violations of the University's Honor Code include, but are not limited to, improper citation of sources, using another person’s work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation. Also, students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and civil manner. This includes avoiding disruptive activity by arriving to class on time (tardiness is counted as an absence), turning off cell phones, etc. For more information, see the Carolina Community Student Handbook at: <http://www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity/>.

It is imperative that students plan on taking each exam at its scheduled time. Makeup exams will **not** be offered except under the most extreme circumstances, involving events of an unforeseen nature—i.e., personal illness, death of an immediate family member, and incidents of similar gravity. Written documentation and advance notice must be provided.

Any student with a documented disability should contact the Office of Student Disability Services at 777-6142, and then contact me, to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations.

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:30 to 2:00

**COURSE SCHEDULE\*:**

DATE	TOPIC	READING
1/14	Introduction to Course	
1/16-1/18	The Study of Congress	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 1

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READING</b>
1/21	<b>NO CLASS</b> – University Holiday (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Day)	
1/23-1/25	Goals and Motivations	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 4, <b>Blackboard:</b> Mayhew
1/28-2/1	Constitution & Historical Development	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 2
2/4-2/15	Congressional Elections & Representation <b>SIMULATION:</b> District Profile due 2/13	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 3 <b>Blackboard:</b> Fenno
2/18-2/22	Parties & Leaders	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 5
2/25	<b>EXAM # 1</b>	
2/27-3/7	Committees & the Pre-Floor Legislative Process	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 6 <b>CPPP:</b> Ch. 3, 4, 6
3/10-3/14	<b>NO CLASS</b> – University Holiday (Spring Break)	
3/17-3/19	Committees & the Pre-Floor Legislative Process (continued) <b>SIMULATION:</b> Bills & Policy Research due 3/19	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 6 <b>CPPP:</b> Ch. 3, 4, 6
3/21-4/4	Voting & Politics on the Floor	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 7 <b>CPPP:</b> Ch. 5, 7 <b>Blackboard:</b> King
4/7-4/11	Post-Floor Politics & Conference Committees	<b>CPPP:</b> Ch. 8
4/14-4/18	Congress & the Budget Process	<b>CPPP:</b> Ch. 2
4/21-4/25	Congress, the President, and the Courts	<b>AC:</b> Ch. 9, 10 <b>CPPP:</b> Ch. 9
4/28	Course Debrief (last day of class)	
4/30	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (9am)	

\* Any changes to the syllabus or schedule will be announced in class and on Blackboard. Additional and ongoing smaller simulation assignments will be due throughout the semester.