

COURSE SYLLABUS
POLI 462H: LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Fall 2008
Tu,Th 8:00 – 9:15
204 Welsh Humanities Classroom Bldg.
University of South Carolina

Professor Charles J. Finocchiaro
Office: 319 Gambrell Hall
Phone: 803-777-2707
E-mail: finocchi@mailbox.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 U.S. Congress. By the end of the semester, successful students will be able to apply the scientific method to observe, explain, and predict the electoral and institutional behavior of members of Congress (MCs). In the course of applying and evaluating theories about legislatures, 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 investigate 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 instructional methods based on assigned readings, lectures, class discussion, 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 through 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 articles and book excerpts posted 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.

- Mayhew, David R. ***Congress**: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd ed. ISBN: 9780300105872
- Oleszek, Walter J. 2007. ***Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process***, 7th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN: 9780872893030
- Register for the simulation at: <http://www.legsim.org/> [Session: USC Senate Fall 2008]
* The registration code will be posted on Blackboard.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Grades for the course will be based primarily on two exams/written assignments (25% each) and work done for the simulated Congress, much of which will be in the form of papers (35%). The remaining 15% of the grade will be composed of reaction papers, discussion leadership and participation, short assignments, and (possibly) occasional unannounced quizzes on the readings scheduled for that day's class. The topics covered in the readings will form the basis of class discussion. Therefore, students are expected to arrive on time having done the assigned readings for the day and ready 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. Also, students who do not contribute actively to class discussion will not be able to earn an A for the semester. Each 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 referral to the Office of Academic Integrity as well as the possibility of a failing grade for the assignment and/or more severe disciplinary measures. Violations of the University's Honor Code include, but are not limited to, improper (or omitted) citation of sources, using another person's work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation. The library maintains some helpful resources on citing sources at: <http://www.sc.edu/library/styleresources.html>. 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. See the Carolina Community Student Handbook: <http://www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity/>.

It is imperative that students plan on completing each exam and assignment as scheduled. 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 (when possible) 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:

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:00

COURSE SCHEDULE*:

DATE	TOPIC	READING (CHAPTER)
8/21	Introduction to Course	
8/26-8/28	Goals, Motivations, & Theory	Congress: all

DATE	TOPIC	READING
9/2	The Scientific Study of Congress	Blackboard: Stewart (1)
9/4-9	Constitution & Historical Development	Blackboard: Smith (2) Blackboard: Polsby Blackboard: Binder
9/11-23	Congressional Elections & Representation SIMULATION: State Profile due 9/18	Blackboard: Smith (3) Blackboard: Ansolabehere Blackboard: Ansolabehere
9/25-10/2	Parties & Leaders	Blackboard: Stewart (7) Blackboard: King & Zeck. Blackboard: Burden
10/7	EXAM # 1	
10/9	NO CLASS – University Holiday (Fall Break)	
10/14-28	Committees & the Pre-Floor Legislative Process SIMULATION: Bill & Policy Research due 10/28	CPPP: Ch. 3, 4, 6 Blackboard: Groseclose Blackboard: King
10/30	Voting & Politics on the Floor	CPPP: Ch. 5, 7 Blackboard: Riker (all) Blackboard: Lee
11/4	NO CLASS – University Holiday (Election Day)	
11/6-13	Voting & Politics on the Floor (continued)	CPPP: Ch. 5, 7 Blackboard: Riker (all) Blackboard: Lee
11/18-20	Post-Floor Politics & Conference Committees	CPPP: Ch. 8 Blackboard: Lazarus
11/25	Congress & the Budget Process	CPPP: Ch. 2 Blackboard: Carter
11/27	NO CLASS – University Holiday (Thanksgiving Break)	
12/2-4	Congress, the President, and the Courts	CPPP: Ch. 9 Blackboard: McCubbins Blackboard: Binder
12/15	FINAL EXAM (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.