COURSE SYLLABUS
PSC 663: LEGISLATIVE POLITICS

Spring 2007
Tuesdays 9:00 - 11:50am
520 Park Hall
University at Buffalo

Prof. Charles J. Finocchiaro
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COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course is a research seminar on the U.S. Congress. As such, we will be reading
contemporary scholarly work on the electoral and institutional arenas of congressional
behavior and organization, with a few “classic” readings along the way. Some of the topics to
be covered include: representation, elections, parties, committees, rules and procedures,
House-Senate comparisons and relations, and institutional development.

COURSE MATERIALS:

The readings for the course will be drawn from the list of books below, in addition to a
number of scholarly articles. On occasion, we will also be reading unpublished papers and
chapters from edited volumes. Required books are available for purchase from the usual
sources and many are also on reserve in the library. Unless indicated otherwise, the
remaining assigned readings can be downloaded from: www.jstor.org. Readings not available
from JSTOR may be accessed through the UB Libraries course reserve system at:
ublib.buffalo.edu. Please bear in mind that readings may be added or dropped and the
syllabus and schedule may be altered at the discretion of the instructor.

Required Books:

Gary W. Cox and Jonathan Katz, Elbridge Gerry’s Salamander (Cambridge 2002)
Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in
the U.S. House of Representatives (Cambridge 2005)
Richard L. Hall, Participation in Congress (Yale 1996)
David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection (Yale 1974)
Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, Polarized America: The Dance of
Ideology and Unequal Riches (MIT 2006)
Charles Stewart III, Analyzing Congress (Norton 2001)
Gregory J. Wawro and Eric Schickler, Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S.
Senate (Princeton 2006)
Recommended Books:

* Good reference for the legislative rules and processes of the House and Senate.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION:

Course grades will be based on three components.  [1] As this is a seminar, students are expected to come to class each week prepared to discuss all of the assigned readings. The extent and quality of participation in class discussion, including leading the discussion on the days corresponding to submission of a critical review, will make up the first component of the course grade (33%). Let me emphasize that you will not earn higher than a B+ in this course unless you are a frequent, well-prepared, and thoughtful participant in class discussion.  [2] Students will on at least two occasions (possibly more, depending on final enrollment) write a critical review of the literature assigned for the week. These reviews need not be excessively long (5-7 pages is probably adequate), but they should synthesize the theory, methods, and findings of, as well as critique, the literature for that particular week. More effort and attention should be focused on analysis and criticism and comparatively less on summarization, and the best reviews will go beyond the required readings for the week. Critical reviews will compose 33% of the final course grade.  [3] The capstone for the course, which makes up the remaining 1/3 of the grade, will be a research paper to be judged based on the criteria applied to a paper presented at a professional conference or submitted to a journal. A brief abstract is due by Feb. 13, with an outline to follow by March 6. The final paper is due by noon on Tuesday, May 8. While these represent the formal deadlines relating to the research paper, students are strongly encouraged to consult informally with me throughout the semester in developing the paper.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, ACCESSIBILITY, ETC.:  

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will be sanctioned to the fullest extent possible under UB policy. Additionally, students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and civil manner. These and other expectations are discussed in more detail in the Grad. School Policies and Procedures (http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/policies/index.php) and in Student Rules and Regulations (http://www.ub-judiciary.buffalo.edu/rulereg.shtml).

Students with special needs that require accommodation should meet personally with me as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester to determine an appropriate arrangement.

OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesdays from 8:00 to 9:00 am and 1:00 to 3:00; Thursdays from 2:00 to 3:00

COURSE SCHEDULE:

* Indicates the material is available through the UB Libraries course reserve system. Most recommended material can be accessed through JSTOR or checked out under the libraries’ normal loan policy. For material not accessible in either of these ways, please see me.
January 16: Introduction to Course

January 23: Theoretical Foundations & the Contemporary Congress


Recommended:


January 30: A Primer on Congress & the New Institutionalism


February 6: Theories of Legislative Organization I


Recommended:


February 13: Theories of Legislative Organization II


Recommended:

February 20: Theories of Legislative Organization III


Recommended:


**February 27: Institutional Development & Congressional History**


Recommended:


March 6: The Committee System


Recommended:


March 13: Spring Break [NO CLASS]

March 20: Roll Call Voting


**Recommended:**


**March 27: The Senate**


**Recommended:**


**April 3: Congressional Elections: Candidates, Voters, and Party Elites**


**Recommended:**


**April 10: Congressional Elections: Districting & Money**


Recommended:


April 17: Congressional Elections: Outcomes & Representation


Recommended:


**April 24: Congress and the President**


**Recommended:**


**Research Paper due by noon Tuesday, May 8.**