

Congressional Politics (790:304:1)

Spring 2017

Instructor: Ju Yeon (Julia) Park (park.juyeon85@gmail.com)

Office Hours: Tue 1:10-2:00 at RSC Atrium; Wed 12:15-1:00 at Hickman Hall 316

Class time and location: Wednesdays at 9:15-12:15, Loree Building, Room 022

Course Description

This course intends to help students understand how representative democracy works in the United States by exploring Congress as a representative as well as a legislative body. The first part of the course will focus on congressional elections in which various interests in the nation are represented. The second part will investigate how ideas become a law. The class will discuss the current state of the theoretical and empirical debates explaining the dual nature of Congress. In order to help students better grasp the legislative processes, all students will participate in a web-based legislative simulation program called LEGSIM (<http://info.legsim.org/>) throughout the semester. Some part of the homework assignments will be based on the program. There will be a group project. Students' active participation in the simulation program is highly recommended and will take up a large part of the final grade.

Course Expectations

Attendance (10%): Regular attendance during the course is expected and students are expected to participate meaningfully in class. You must show up on time and stay for the entire class to receive credit for attendance. Any legitimate excuses (e.g. family or religious affairs) will be taken into consideration only when you consult with the instructor at least two weeks ahead AND with ****officially documented proof****. If you do not have any documented proof, you do not need to discuss your absence.

Exam (30%): There will be an in-class midterm comprised of a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. (Note: Make up exams will be permitted only under the gravest of circumstances with appropriate ****documentation****. Personal travel plans, sickness without hospitalization, or schedule conflicts are not legitimate reasons for requesting to take an exam at a different time.)

Students taking this course will participate in a legislative simulation program (LEGSIM) which requires paying non-refundable registration fee of \$16 (payable with credit card). More information is available in the PDF file named 'LegSim Getting Started' which is uploaded in the course webpage in Sakai. Instructions for the registration will be announced in the class with the session code. Throughout the semester, students will participate as a member of a Congress representing a district, serving as a committee member (or as a committee chair) and even as the Speaker, and legislating a bill. During the process, the following evaluation categories must be fulfilled suggesting that the participation in the simulation will largely determine students' final grades.

Final Report (20%): Evaluate your accomplishments as a legislator, justify your decisions and participation, and develop a reelection strategy all in light of the concepts learned from the course. In addition, evaluate your assigned opponent's accomplishments and provide a strategy to defeat them in their reelection assuming that you are playing a role as a challenger to the incumbent. More detailed instructions and a sample final report will be uploaded in Sakai's course webpage.

Bill Writing Assignment (20%): This group project will require you to do outside research to demonstrate the problem the legislation is meant to solve, provide where federal authority is derived for the legislation, and estimate its budgetary impact. Start investigating various ideas that interest you early on during the semester. More detailed instructions and a sample assignment will be uploaded in Sakai's course webpage.

Homework (10%): There will be two homework assignments (5% for each). Each assignment is due at the beginning of the class and should be submitted in two formats: 1) a hardcopy and 2) a pdf file submitted to the Sakai's class website. (Do not email your homework to the instructor.) Any set handed in later than 5 minutes into class time shall be deemed late. Students will lose 50% of the total points of the given assignment for submitting it late on the due date. Any late submissions will not be accepted.

Quiz (5%): An online quiz on legislative procedures

Participation in the Simulation Activities (5%): The success of the simulation depends on the student participation. Not participating in the simulation is the quickest way to ruin your grade in this class. Each student should try to participate during in-class debate on at least one piece of legislation. Don't let one person do all of the speaking for your party! Additionally, DO NOT volunteer for a leadership post if, for some reason, you cannot participate at a high rate.

Extra Credit: Get elected to a leadership position

- 3 pts for Speaker of the House
- 3 pts for Committee chair

Misconduct: In addition, any disruptive behavior (e.g. sleeping, talking outside of regular discussion, using cell phones, web surfing and insulting other people in the class, etc.) during the class will cost you ****a full letter grade down**** for each time detected. You can use laptops but they should be used only for course-related activities (e.g. taking notes) but not for internet surfing. It is very important for you to be polite and respectful when you are communicating with your instructor in any means including emails.

Letter Grades: The thresholds for the letter grades at the end of the semester will be determined based on the distribution and the satisfactory performance of the class.

Other issues

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Students must do all their work within the boundaries of acceptable academic norms. See the Academic Integrity page of the Rutgers website regarding college policy on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty -

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources-for-students/>

Students found guilty of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include reduction of grade, a failure in the course, suspension or expulsion. This includes homework assignments – if they are copied from another student, severe penalties may be applied.

Textbooks: The following books are required for your course work:

- 1) Congress and Its Members. 5th Ed. By Davidson, Oleszek, Lee and Schickler
- 2) Ideology and Congress. By Poole and Rosenthal

Other Readings: Additional readings from other sources will be uploaded to the class website in a PDF format.

Changes: There may be adjustments in the scheduling of homework or reading assignments. Any changes will be announced in class and/or through email in advance.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 18) – Introduction

- Congress and Its Members Ch1 & 2
- U.S. Constitution, Article 1
- Gilens and Page (2014), “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens”

Week 2 (Jan 25) – Going for It: Recruitment and Candidacy

- Congress and Its Members Ch3
- McCarty et al. (2009), “Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?”
- Thomsen (2014), “Ideological moderates won't run: How party fit matters for partisan polarization in Congress”
- Friedman and Holden (2009), “The Rising Incumbent Reelection Rate: What's Gerrymandering Got to Do with It?”

Week 3 (Feb 1) – Making It: The Electoral Game

- Congress and Its Members Ch4
- **Students log on to LegSim for the first time, identify their party, and make requests for states to represent by class time**

Week 4 (Feb 8) – Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles

- Congress and Its Members Ch5
- Fenno (1977). “U.S. House Members and Their Constituencies”
- **Assigned states for Legsim will be announced**
- ****1st Legsim Assignment announced****

Week 5 (Feb 15) – Leaders and Parties in Congress

- Congress and Its Members Ch6
- Binder (2014), “Polarized We Govern?”
- **Students complete Member/State Profile (online entry, due by 2/15, 11:59 PM)

- ****Parties hold Caucus for the first time during the class time, have separate meetings, select leaders, and discuss strategy. Instructor assigns and introduces the Majority Leader to the Leader's Desk.****

Week 6 (Feb 22) – Polarization 1

- Poole and Rosenthal (2007), “Ideology and Congress” Ch1-4
- ****1st Legsim Assignment due (submission both online and in-class)****

Week 7 (Mar 1) – Polarization 2

- Fiorina and Abrams (2008), “Political Polarization in the American Public”
- Barber and McCarty (2015), “Causes and Consequences of Polarization,” in Solutions to Political Polarization in America, Ed. By Nathaniel Persil, Ch2.
- Bafumi et al. (2010), “Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American voters and their Members in Congress”

Week 8 (Mar 8) – **Midterm**

Week 9 (Mar 15) – Spring Recess

Week 10 (Mar 22) – Committees, Congressional Rules and Procedures

- Congress and Its Members Ch7 & 8
- ****Students request Committee Assignments from leadership by class time****
- ****2nd Legsim Assignment announced****

Week 11 (Mar 29) – Decision Making in Congress

- Congress and Its Members Ch9
- Sinclair (2012), “Unorthodox Lawmaking” Ch1 & 6
- ****Party leaders assign Committee Positions by 3/28, 11:59 PM****
- ****Committees meet for the first time, elect committee chairs and discuss agendas during class time****
- ****Party Leaders assign Committee Chairs on Legsim****
- ****Students complete Legsim Procedures Quiz by 3/29, 11:59 PM****

Week 12 (April 5) – Congress and the President and the Court

- Congress and Its Members Ch10 & 12
- ****2nd Legsim Assignment due (submission both online and in class)****
- ****Instructor assigns opponents****
- ****Committees meet to discuss the committee agenda during class time. Committees may need to meet outside of class-time, as well as online through the Legsim website.****

Week 13 (April 12) – Congress and Organized Interests

- Congress and Its Members Ch13
- Leech (2011), “Lobbying and Interest Group Advocacy”
- Esterling (2007), “Buying Expertise”
- ****Committees meet to discuss the committee agenda during class time. Committees may**

need to meet outside of class-time, as well as online through the Legsim website.**

Week 14 (April 19) – Congress, Budgets, and Domestic Policy Materials

- Congress and Its Members Ch14
- Volden, Wiseman, Wittmer (2013), “Are Women More Effective Lawmakers?”
- Monkey Cage article (4/7/16): “Clinton was a more effective lawmaker than Sanders”
- ****Students submit the first bill (online on Legsim by 4/18, 11:59PM)****
- ****Simulation day:** Includes in-class committee meetings, debates on legislation, floor voting, etc.
- **** Legislation will be debated and voted on the Legsim web site, in addition to in class. Participation in online voting / debate is tracked, so be sure to participate there as well.**

Week 15 (April 26) – Conclusion and Final Review

- Congress and Its Members Ch16
- Fiorina (2011), “Reflections on the Study of Congress, 1969-2009”
- ****Simulation day:** Includes in-class committee meetings, debates on legislation, floor voting, etc.
- ****Legsim debriefing**

**** Until May 3rd, online meeting/debating/voting continues. Be sure to check the Legsim web site & email. On the May 3rd, legislature adjourns.**

**** All the last-minute bills and re-writes must be turned in by May 3rd for grade.**

**** Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments due May 10th.**

NOTE: The simulation is ongoing during the final weeks of the course (including during exam week). Votes and debate will occur both in class and online at the Legsim web site. The forums for debate/voting depend upon the Motion to Consider or Unanimous Consent Agreement written for each bill—a process controlled by the leadership. Some bills will be handled entirely in class, whereas others will be handled entirely online; still, others may utilize both approaches. Students are responsible for participating in class and online. Make sure you monitor the web site and pay attention to calls to vote online (which will come via e-mail). Additionally, students should closely monitor their e-mail and look carefully at messages from your Committee Chairs and the Leadership, as they will notify you regarding opportunities to participate. Your participation online is closely monitored by the Legsim program and your opponents will have access to your votes, voting rates, and online debate statements. Be aware of that the Legsim system sends all emails to me.