

GOV 371I: The U.S. Congress

Spring 2021

TTH 12:30pm-2:00pm, Zoom

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Course Description

In this course we will engage in an in-depth study of the United States Congress. The first portion of the class will focus on the relationship between members and their constituents, from what it takes to get elected to Congress to how members represent their district or state in Washington, DC. The remainder of the course will be devoted to the legislative process and the behavior of legislators within Congress. To better understand the challenges of lawmaking and the role of Congress in society, students will participate in a “mock Congress” simulation to gain firsthand experience with the choices and challenges that members face.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on seven components as follows:

Exam 1 (10/10)	20%
Exam 2 (11/7)	20%
Member Profile	10%
Legislative Agenda	10%
Major Bill	10%
Class Participation	10%
Final Report	20%

Exams

There will be two online examinations that will draw from material covered in readings, lectures, and class discussions. Both will be non-cumulative, open-book exams that consist of short answer questions. Students will have 24 hours to complete each exam, which will be due at 11:59pm (Central Time) on the assigned day. **No late exams will be accepted without prior approval. Any extensions or accommodations must be requested prior to the start of the examination period.**

Simulation

Much of the course will be devoted to a simulation of the United States Senate. Students will select a state to represent in our mock Senate and will decide how to represent their constituents. The member profile, legislative agenda, and major bill assignments will each be short (2-3 page) writing assignments based on the state you have chosen to represent and the type of senator you have decided to be. The final report is a longer accounting of your legislative accomplishments and a plan for your reelection campaign. Additional details for all assignments will be posted on Canvas.

There will be multiple opportunities for extra credit for students who take on additional work in the simulation, including students elected to leadership positions.

Late Assignments

The assignments are an integral part of our simulation so it is important that work be submitted on time. Assignments are due by the start of class (12:30pm Central) on the date specified. Assignments submitted after the due date will be penalized with a 10 percentage point deduction for every day that it is late. If you are struggling to complete an assignment for any reason, please reach out to me before the due date so I can help.

Participation

Participation in simulation activities, including organizational sessions, committee meetings, and floor debates will constitute 10% of the grade. Students can earn points through a variety of activities which will be posted on Canvas. Attendance is not required, but frequent absences will negatively impact your participation grade.

Grading Scale

In allocating grades, the following scale will be used with final grades rounded up to the next percentage point:

A	≥ 93%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	63-66%
D-	60-62%
F	< 60%

If you wish to dispute your grade on an assignment, you must submit a request to Professor Craig in writing within one week of receiving the grade that details the reason(s) you think your grade should be changed.

Required Materials

- Sean M. Theriault and Mickey Edwards. *Congress: The First Branch*. Oxford University Press, 2019
- Subscription to <https://www.legsim.org/> (You must register and pay the \$16 nonrefundable fee. I will post the session code on Canvas.)
- Various news and journal articles that will be made available via Canvas

Administrative Issues

Academic Dishonesty

All violations of university academic conduct guidelines, including plagiarism, will be referred to the Dean of Students and will result in a zero on the assignment or exam in question. Plagiarism is the use of others' ideas or work without credit and/or presenting derivative work as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to, cutting and pasting from someone else's work or an internet source, failing to identify exact quotes, failing to cite a source for information that is only available from that source, failing to cite a source for an idea or argument you borrowed from that source, and turning in work that is not your own.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities (512-471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>).

Class Recordings

All class meetings will be conducted over Zoom, with recordings made available via the Zoom tab on Canvas for those unable to attend synchronously. Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Course Outline

This is an approximate schedule that is subject to change depending on how quickly we move through the material. Unless otherwise noted, students should assume that class will meet synchronously and log in to Zoom by 12:30pm. Any changes to the schedule or format of a class meeting will be announced via Canvas.

January 19: Introduction

January 21: The First Branch

- The Constitution of the United States
- James Madison. Federalist no. 10: The same subject continued: The union as a safeguard against domestic faction and insurrection. *New York Daily Advertiser*, 1787
- Alexander Hamilton or James Madison. Federalist no. 51: The structure of the government must furnish the proper checks and balances between the different departments. *New York Packet*, 1788

January 26: The Broken Branch?

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 1, pp.1-39
- Gregory Koger. How to fix Congress: Start with the basics. *Vox*, November 28, 2017
- Gregory Koger. The job of Congress: A primer. *Vox*, April 17, 2018

January 28: Representation

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 2, pp.43-54
- Heinz Eulau and Paul D. Karps. The puzzle of representation: Specifying components of responsiveness. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 2(3):233–254, 1977

February 2: Representation

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 2, pp.54-63
- David C. Barker and Christopher Jan Carman. This is why so many republicans are ready to ignore public opinion on health care. *Washington Post*, June 27, 2017

- Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Matto Mildemberger, and Leah C. Stokes. Legislative staff and representation in congress. *American Political Science Review*, 113(1):1–18, 2019

February 4: Elections

- Legsim Member Profile due
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 3, pp.77-98
- Lynn Vavreck. Unable to excite the base? Moderate candidates still tend to outdo extreme ones. *New York Times*, May 8, 2018

February 9: Elections

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 3, pp.98-107
- G. Elliott Morris. Congressional elections are more partisan, national than ever before. *CrossTab*, July 8, 2017

February 11: The Composition of Congress

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 4, pp.108-115
- Matthew Haydon and James M. Curry. Congress is old. Does it matter? *LegBranch*, March 7, 2018
- A.W. Geiger, Kristen Bialik, and John Gramlich. The changing face of Congress in 6 charts. *Pew Research Center*, February 15, 2019

February 16: Life in Congress

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 4, pp.120-139
- R. Eric Petersen. Roles and duties of a member of congress: A brief overview. Technical report, Congressional Research Service, 2012
- Tracy Sulkin and William Bernhard. Style and substance in the U.S. House of Representatives. *LegBranch*, September 20, 2018

February 18: Members' Goals

- Legsim Legislative Agenda due
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 4, pp.115-120
- Lisa Hager. Are members of Congress simply 'single-minded seekers of reelection'? An examination of legislative behavior in the 114th Congress. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 51(1):115–118, 2018

February 23: Simulation

- New member reception

February 25: Legislative Organization

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 8, pp.258-279
- Matthew Green. John Boehner is leaving one of the worst jobs in Washington. *Washington Post*, September 25, 2015
- Ruth Bloch Rubin. This is why the Freedom Caucus called the shots on Trump's health-care bill. *Washington Post*, March 27, 2017

March 2: Midterm Exam I

March 4: The Legislative Process

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 5, pp.142-167
- John Patty. What the farm bill's failure says about congressional function. *Vox*, May 21, 2018

March 9: Simulation

- Submit committee requests (via LegSim)
- Leadership elections

March 11: Committees

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 7, pp.216-236
- Tim Groseclose and David C. King. Committee theories reconsidered. In Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce Ian Oppenheimer, editors, *Congress Reconsidered*. CQ Press, 2001
- Marian Currinder. Pelosi's revenge? *LegBranch*, January 16, 2019

March 15-19: Spring Break

March 23: Simulation

- Committee meetings

March 25: Committees

- Legsim Major Bill due
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 7, pp.236-243
- Jonathan Lewallen, Sean M. Theriault, and Bryan D. Jones. The Senate's disastrous process for crafting the AHCA fits a historic pattern. *Vox*, June 21, 2017
- Maya Kornberg. Plenty of congressional hearings are not circuses. Here's how we know. *Washington Post*, August 14, 2018

March 30: Simulation

- Committee meetings

April 1: Political Parties

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 8, pp.245-258
- James M. Curry and Frances Lee. Congress is far more bipartisan than headlines suggest. *Washington Post*, December 20, 2016
- Frances E. Lee. The 115th Congress and questions of party unity in a polarized era. *Journal of Politics*, 80(4):1464–1473, 2018

April 6: Simulation

- Committee meetings

April 8: Midterm Exam II

April 13: Simulation

- Floor debate

April 15: Unorthodox Lawmaking

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 6, pp.178-197
- James M. Curry. Congressional processes and public approval of new laws. *Political Research Quarterly*, 2018
- Casey Burgat. House Democrats revealed their rules package. Here are the biggies. *LegBranch*, January 2, 2019

April 20: Simulation

- Floor debate

April 22: Unorthodox Lawmaking

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 6, pp.197-209
- Anthony J. Madonna and Kevin Kosar. Could the modern Senate manage an open-amendment process? *R Street Policy Study*, 42, 2015
- Sarah Binder. Yes, Mitch McConnell's secretive lawmaking is really unusual – in these 4 ways. *Washington Post*, June 19, 2017

April 27: Simulation

- Floor debate

April 29: External Influences

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 9, pp.281-298
- Matthew N. Beckmann. The President's playbook: White House strategies for lobbying Congress. *Journal of Politics*, 70(2):407–419, 2008
- Julian Zelizer. The power of Lyndon Johnson is a myth. *Washington Post*, January 11, 2015

May 4: Simulation

- Legislature adjourns

May 6: External Influences

- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 9, pp.298-305
- Lee Drutman and Steven Teles. Why Congress relies on lobbyists instead of thinking for itself. *The Atlantic*, March 10, 2015
- Dylan Matthews. A bipartisan group in Congress wants to make it harder for you to do your taxes. *Vox*, April 9, 2019

Legsim Final Report due by 5pm May 11