GOV 371I: The U.S. Congress
Fall 2021
TTH 2:00pm-3:30pm, RLP 0.128

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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 six components as follows:

Exam (11/2)	20%
Member Profile	15%
Legislative Agenda	15%
Major Bill	15%
Class Participation	15%
Final Report	20%

Exams

There will be one in-class examination on November 2 that will draw from material covered in readings, lectures, and class discussions. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions.

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 (2:00pm 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 the TAs or me before the due date so we can help.

Participation

Participation in simulation activities, including organizational sessions, committee meetings, and floor debates will constitute 15% of the grade. Students can earn points through a variety of activities, from attending simulation meetings to giving floor speeches. A full list of participation activities will be posted on Canvas.

Grading Scale

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

A	$\geq 93\%$
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.

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/).

Lectures Online

This class is using the Lectures Online recording system. This system records the audio and video material presented in class for you to review after class. Links for the recordings will appear in the Lectures Online tab on the Canvas page for this class. You will find this tab along the left side navigation in Canvas. You can find additional information about Lectures Online at: https://sites.la.utexas.edu/lecturesonline/.

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. Any changes to the schedule will be announced via Canvas.

August 26: Introduction

August 31: The First Branch
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 1
- The Constitution of the United States

September 2: Representation
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 2, pp.40-54
- Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Matto Mildenberger, and Leah C. Stokes. Legislative staff and representation in congress. *American Political Science Review*, 113(1):1–18, 2019

September 7: Representation
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 2, pp.54-69
- 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
- Heinz Eulau and Paul D. Karps. The puzzle of representation: Specifying components of responsiveness. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 2(3):233–254, 1977

September 9: Elections
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 3, pp.70-98
- Lynn Vavreck. Unable to excite the base? Moderate candidates still tend to outdo extreme ones. *New York Times,* May 8, 2018

September 14: Elections
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 3, pp.98-107
- Marlon Marshall and Lynda Tran. 2020 Post-Election Analysis. *CrossTab,* May 2021

September 16: Members' Goals
- Legsim Member Profile due
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 4, pp.108-120
- 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

September 21: 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

September 23: Modernizing Congress
- Recommendations of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress

September 28: Legislative Organization
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 8, pp.258-279
- Matthew Green. Evaluating the Pelosi Speakership. *The Monkey Cage,* August 15, 2019
- Ruth Bloch Rubin. This is why the Freedom Caucus called the shots on Trump's health-care bill. *Washington Post,* March 27, 2017

September 30: Simulation
- Legsim Legislative Agenda due
- New member reception

October 5: The Textbook Congress
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 5

October 7: Simulation
- Submit committee requests (via LegSim)
- Leadership elections

October 12: Committees
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 7, pp.210-236
- Sarah Binder. Pelosi just rejected two Republicans for the Jan. 6 investigation. Here are three takeaways. *Washington Post,* July 23, 2021

October 14: 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

October 19: Unorthodox Lawmaking
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 6, pp.168-189
- 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

October 21: Simulation
- Committee meetings

October 26: Unorthodox Lawmaking
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 6, pp.189-209
- 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

October 28: Simulation
- Floor debate

November 2: Midterm Exam

November 4: Simulation
- Committee meetings

November 9: Simulation
- Floor debate

November 11: Simulation
- Floor debate

November 16: Political Parties
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 8, pp.244-258
- 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

November 18: Simulation
- Committee meetings

November 23: Simulation
- Floor debate

November 30: Simulation
- Floor debate

December 2: The Broken Branch?
- Theriault and Edwards, Chapter 10
- 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

Legsim Final Report due by 5pm December 10