

POLS 30005: The United States Congress (Spring 2015)

Course Information

Class Time: Mon./Wed., 2:00pm–3:15pm

Classroom: O'Shaughnessy Hall 118

Professor:

Gary E. Hollibaugh, Jr.

Email: gholliba@nd.edu

Office: Decio Hall 409

Office Hours: Mon., 3:30pm–5:30pm

Wed., 10:00am–12:00pm

By Appointment

Teaching Assistant:

Sam Glaser

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Office: LaFortune Student Center (Burger King)

Office Hours: Tues., 3:45pm–4:45pm

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the political and legislative process of the United States Congress. The course will focus on a semester-long legislative simulation in which students will play the role of United States Senators. Students will organize the legislature, form parties and caucuses, select their own leaders, draft their own bills, debate, and vote on legislation. The first part of the course will consist of traditional lectures to familiarize students with how Congress works; the rest of the semester will be primarily devoted to the legislative simulation.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an appreciation for:
 - The role of Congress in lawmaking and society.
 - The goals and constraints shaping legislative behavior.
 - The legislative process, its logic, and the potential implications of reforms.
 - The value of information and the importance of agenda setting in policymaking.
- Improve communication and listening skills.
- Improve collaborative skills.
- Improve ability to plan and execute a strategy.
- Become an effective representative and legislator.

Books and Course Materials

The following books are required:

Analyzing Congress (Second Edition) by Charles Stewart III.

Congress and Its Members (Fourteenth Edition) by Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler.

If you choose not to purchase these books, they will be available on course reserve in the library. Readings from these books will be assigned throughout the semester, and they will also serve as useful references for any other readings. Online copies of all other readings will be posted on Sakai as needed.

You will also need to register and create a profile on [LegSim](#). There is a \$16 nonrefundable registration fee. The Chamber Authorization Code will be posted on Sakai during the Midterm Break.

Policy on Plagiarism

As members of the academic community, we each have a responsibility to uphold rigorous standards of integrity. Every student is thus expected to abide by the University of Notre Dame's Academic Code of Honor. [The Code of Honor can be found here](#).

Plagiarism (using the ideas, words, or work of others without attribution) will result in serious consequences. If you have any questions about the Code of Honor, plagiarism, or academic honesty, please contact the instructor or the TA.

Policy on Disabilities

Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Disability Services should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations. Students who are not registered should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#).

Policy on Technology

This course relies heavily on access to computers and the Internet. At some point during the semester you WILL have a problem with technology: your laptop will crash, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Technology problems will not normally be accepted as excuses for unfinished work. Count on “stuff” happening and protect yourself by doing the following:

- Plan ahead — start early, particularly if scarce resources are required.
- Save work often — at least every ten minutes.
- Make regular backups of files in a different location from the originals.
- Save drafts of work at multiple stages.
- When editing an image, set aside the original and work with a copy.
- Practice safe computing when surfing the web and checking email.
- On your personal computer, install and use ² software to control viruses and malware.

When submitting any assignment electronically in this course, you are responsible for any technological problems (*e.g.*, internet connection difficulties, corrupted files, etc.). To prevent problems along with the associated lateness penalties, you should submit papers well before the deadline and take proactive steps to ensure that the file was not corrupted (*e.g.*, check it after uploading to Sakai or copy yourself on emails and check the attached file). Again, please do not trust your computer to function correctly at the last minute.

All that said, the access to computers and the Internet should be done outside of the classroom. Unless I grant an explicit exception, laptops, cell phones, tablets, and all other electronic devices are not allowed during class. Hand-written note-taking is associated with better comprehension and less distraction (of both the student and those around him/her).

Grading and Course Requirements

The structure of the course is such that the course is roughly divided into two parts. The portion of the course before the midterm break follows a more standard lecture-based structure, with homework assignments and an in-class midterm examination. The portion of the course after the midterm break will be almost entirely simulation-based.

Part I — Lecture-Based and Reading Assignments

Homework (15% of grade). There will be two homework assignments. They will be assigned on January 19 and February 11, and they will be due on February 2 and 25. Each assignment will be worth 7.5% of your total grade.

Midterm Examination (25% of grade). There will be one in-class midterm examination on March 18, and it will be worth 25% of your total grade. It will cover the material covered in lecture as well as the material in the textbooks up to that point.

Part II — Simulation Assignments

More information regarding each assignment is provided in the Simulation Assignments Handout.

Quiz on Senate Procedure (5% of grade). This online quiz must be completed before class on March 25. The goal is to encourage you to familiarize yourselves with the rules for the simulation as well as the resources available in LegSim.

Legislative Profile (5% of grade). Each member of the U.S. Senate represents a state, which can include just under half a million or just under forty million citizens. This task asks you to create your member profile on the LegSim website. Other students will be relying on your profile to learn more about you. Focus on the characteristics that would likely affect your own priorities and behavior as an elected representative.

Legislative Agenda (5% of grade). This task asks you to prepare a memo to distribute to your colleagues. In this memo you should begin with how you view your role as a representative, provide information about your personal issue priorities, and discuss how you intend to advance

your issue goals given that there are many other legislators and issues competing for attention.

Committee Research Project (5% of grade). This assignment asks you and your colleagues to research your committee's primary issue responsibilities.

Major Bill (5% of grade). This assignment asks you to research and draft an original and significant bill of your choosing. It should have accompanying text explaining the problem that the bill addresses, how the bill will address the problem, and the rationale for the provisions of the bill and any cost estimates.

Reelection Tasks (10% of grade). You can earn Reelection Points in a variety of ways. If you earn more than ten reelection points, every point you earn beyond ten is worth an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ of a percentage point of your final grade (with a limit of five full percentage points).

Reelection Strategy Memo (15% of grade). This assignment is based on a rather fantastic hypothetical event—the Constitution has been amended reducing the number of Senators in each state to one. In order to win reelection, you will have to face the other Senator from your own state, regardless of what party they are in. For this assignment, write a memo to your campaign manager outlining your reelection strategy against your fellow Senator.

Debate (5% of grade). There will be no final exam. Instead, on the day of class set aside for final exams (**May 5**), we will hold debates. Each pair of Senators from each state will face off and have two minutes each to summarize the most important aspects of their cases for reelection. Your goal will be to make the strongest case possible for your reelection in the allotted time.

Participation (5% of grade). Regular attendance and participation are absolutely essential to make a simulation-based course work. Your contributions to in-class activities not only provide opportunities for learning and evaluation, they also help other students learn. Accordingly, students will be evaluated based on frequency and quality of in-class participation. Students are expected to attend all classes. Failure to attend class will negatively affect your participation grade unless the absence is excused. If you cannot attend class due to an important family or medical reason, please notify the instructor or the TA in advance. You will be responsible for getting notes from a classmate.

Extra Credit Opportunities

In addition to the extra credit opportunities provided to you by the reelection tasks, there are two additional opportunities to gain extra credit, both of which are geared towards overcoming potential collective action problems. These will be the only other opportunities for extra credit.

Senate Majority (Up to an extra 3% of the grade). After the debates we will have an election, with the prize being a share of a 3% pot of extra credit points. The party that receives a majority of the seats will receive a majority of the prize proportional to their majority, with the minority party receiving the remainder. So, for example, if a party received $\frac{2}{3}$ of seats after the election, then everyone in the winning party would receive 2 additional percentage points on the final grade, and everyone in the losing party would receive 1 additional percentage point. Your

likelihood of winning your own election—and thereby contributing to your party's majority—will be dependent on your ability to earn General Reelection Points.

Course Evaluations (Up to an extra 2% of the grade). If at least 90% of the class completes a course evaluation, everyone in the class will receive one extra percentage point on his or her final grade. For each additional percentage point of the class that completes an evaluation, everyone in the class will receive $\frac{1}{10}$ of an additional bonus point (for example, if 95% of the class completes the course evaluation, then everyone in the class will receive 1.5 additional percentage points on the final grade). The total amount of extra credit students may receive from course evaluations is two bonus percentage points. **Note that I am unable to see who fills out evaluations. I am also unable to see the contents of the evaluations until after the semester ends. I am, however, able to see what percentage of the class fills them out.**

Grading Scale

Below is how your final percentage grade will be mapped into a letter grade. Because of the substantial opportunities for extra credit, there will be no rounding. So if you get an 89.999999% when the semester is over (for example), your final grade will be a B+. **No exceptions.**

Percentage point range	Letter grade
93+	A
90–92.999...	A-
87–89.999...	B+
83–86.999...	B
80–82.999...	B-
77–79.999...	C+
73–76.999...	C
70–72.999...	C-
60–69.999...	D
0–59.999...	F

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at 2pm on the dates indicated on the syllabus. **All papers must be submitted via Sakai (for Part I assignments) or the LegSim website (for Part II assignments); written material must not be submitted in hard copy.** Written material submitted within 24 hours of the deadline will be accepted with a 25% grade reduction. Written material will not be accepted more than 24 hours after the deadline. **Because of the substantial opportunities for extra credit, there will be no exceptions.**

Makeup Examinations

Any missed examination will be given a score of 0 unless the student's absence is excused according to university guidelines. If the student has an excused absence, they must notify the instructor so that a makeup examination may be scheduled. Makeup examinations are only granted in the case of true emergencies. Except for the case of illness or emergency, all such requests must be made to the instructor in writing at least one week before the examination.

Medical excuses require written documentation. Only the instructor (and not the TA) can grant exceptions.

Grade Appeals

All appeals to the instructor/TA must be made in writing. No grade appeals will be considered within the first 24 hours of a grade being posted on Sakai; those that come in within the first 24 hours will be discarded. All grade appeals must be received within ten days of the grade being posted on Sakai to be considered; those that arrive after this deadline will be discarded. All appeals must contain the following information:

- The name of the assignment in question.
- The reason why you believe your grade should be higher. Be specific and discuss this in the context of the requirements of the assignment.
- Determine whether you believe it is an error of calculation (that is, the instructor/TA incorrectly tabulated points), judgment (the grade received does not reflect the quality of the assignment), or both.

If the instructor/TA determines that an error of calculation is present, then the correct grade will be calculated and the correct grade will be posted. If it is argued by the student that an error of judgment is present, then the student has the option to have the assignment graded *de novo* by the instructor. Because this will be a regrade, there is the possibility that the grade given to the regraded assignment will be lower than that given to the initial submission. Regardless, all decisions by the instructor are final.

Policy on Email

Any requests to the instructor/TA (*e.g.*, meetings outside of office hours) *must* be made in writing via email so we both have a record of the request and decision. **For emails sent between Monday and Thursday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 48 hours to respond. For those sent between Friday and Sunday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 96 hours to respond.** [The instructor endorses the general principles for email communication \(for any professional communication via e-mail, not just those for this class\) outlined here.](#)

Course Topics

Note: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. We may not cover all of these topics. Conversely, time permitting, other topics might be covered in this course. Moreover, even if we do not cover something in class, you are still responsible for knowing what is in the readings.

January 14: Introduction and Overview

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 1: “The Two Congresses.”
- Stewart — Chapter 1: “An (Unusual) Introduction to the Study of Congress.”
- Stewart — Appendix B: The United States Constitution

January 19 and 21: Origins and Development of Congress

- Stewart — Chapter 2: “The Constitutional Origins of Congress.”
- Stewart — Chapter 3: “The History and Development of Congress.”
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 2: “Evolution of the Modern Congress.”

January 26: NO CLASS

January 28: Congressional Candidates

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 3: “Going for It: Recruitment and Candidacy.”
- Stewart — Chapter 4: “The Choices Candidates Make: Running for Congress.”

February 2: Congressional Voters

- Homework 1 due.
- Brady, David W., Hahrie Han, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2007. “[Primary Elections and Candidate Ideology: Out of Step with the Primary Electorate?](#)” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32(1): 79–105.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 4: “Making It: The Electoral Game.”
- Stewart — Chapter 5: “The Choices Voters Make.”

February 4: Regulating Elections

- Chen, Jowei, and Jonathan Rodden. 2013. “[Unintentional Gerrymandering: Political Geography and Electoral Bias in Legislatures.](#)” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 8(3): 239–269.
- Stewart — Chapter 6: “Regulating Elections.”

February 9: Role(s) of a Congressperson

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 5: “Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles.”
- Grimmer, Justin. 2013. “[Appropriators not Position Takers: The Distorting Effects of Electoral Incentives on Congressional Representation.](#)” *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3): 624–642.

February 11: Congressional Parties and Leadership

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 6: “Leaders and Parties in Congress.”
- Stewart — Chapter 7: “Parties and Leaders in Congress.”

February 16: Congressional Committees

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 7: “Committees: Workshops of Congress.”
- Stewart — Chapter 8: “Committees in Congress.”

February 18: Lawmaking in Congress

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 9: “Decision Making in Congress.”
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 14: “Congress, Budgets, and Domestic Policymaking.”

February 23: Congress and the Executive Branch

- Canes-Wrone, Brandice and Scott de Marchi. 2002. [“Presidential Approval and Legislative Success.”](#) *Journal of Politics* 64(2): 491–509.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 10: “Congress and the President.”
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 11: “Congress and the Bureaucracy.”
- McCubbins, Mathew D. and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. [“Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms.”](#) *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1): 165–179.

February 25: Congress and the Courts

- Homework 2 due.
- Clark, Tom S. 2009. [“The Separation of Powers, Court Curbing, and Judicial Legitimacy.”](#) *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4): 971–989.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 12: “Congress and the Courts.”

March 2: Congress and Interest Groups

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 13: “Congress and Organized Interests.”
- Hall, Richard L. and Frank W. Wayman. 1990. [“Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.”](#) *American Political Science Review* 84(3): 797–820.

March 4: NO CLASS

March 9: MIDTERM BREAK — NO CLASS

March 11: MIDTERM BREAK — NO CLASS

March 16: Rules

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 8: “Congressional Rules and Procedures.”
- Stewart — Chapter 9: “Doing It on the Floor: The Organization of Deliberation and What We Can Learn from It.”

March 18: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

March 23: LegSim — Introduction

March 25: LegSim — Organizational Meetings

- Legislator Profile due.
- Quiz on Senate Procedure Due Before Class.

March 30: LegSim — Caucus Meetings and Leadership Elections

- Legislative Agenda due.

April 1: LegSim — Committee Meetings I

- LEADERSHIP: Assign Senators to committees before class.

April 6: EASTER HOLIDAY — NO CLASS

April 8: LegSim — Committee Meetings II

April 13: LegSim

- Committee Research Report due.

April 15: LegSim

April 20: LegSim

- Major Bill due.

April 22: LegSim

April 27: LegSim

April 29: LegSim

May 5: LegSim — Debates and General Election (4:15pm – 6:15pm; room TBA)

- Reelection Memo due.
- No more Reelection Tasks may be performed once class begins.