

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 517**  
**LEGISLATIVE POLITICS**  
**SPRING QUARTER 2002**

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Instructor: Scott Meinke

Office: 2001 Derby Hall

Office Hours: MW 1:00-2:30 or by appointment

Course website: <http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/grads/smeinke/517sp02.htm>

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*“The House of Representatives is so constituted as to support in the members an habitual recollection of their dependence on the people.” --Federalist 57*

*“The necessity of a senate is . . . indicated by the propensity of all single and numerous assemblies, to yield to the impulse of sudden and violent passions. . . . a body which is to correct this infirmity . . . ought to be less numerous. It ought, moreover, to possess great firmness, and consequently ought to hold its authority by a tenure of considerable duration.” --Federalist 62*

#### **COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES**

This course is a survey of politics and policy making in the United States Congress; it has two primary objectives. The first is to acquaint you with the basic operation of Congress and its connections with the citizens it represents. The second is to introduce you to theoretical explanations for why Congress and its members operate in the way that they do. In pursuing these objectives, we will explore how Congress makes public policy, but we will also explore the types of non-policy activity that helps members relate to their districts and secure reelection. We will also examine how Congress interacts with the larger political environment, especially in a media-centered age.

Among the specific topics the course will cover are congressional elections, organization of the House and Senate, the role of parties and interest groups in Congress, members' goals, lawmaking processes, district activity, and the interaction between the Congress and the executive branch. In addition to this series of set topics, class sessions will also involve discussions of current events and issues related to the current Congress.

#### **EXPECTATIONS**

Your responsibilities for the course include regular attendance and participation, preparation with the assigned readings, and timely completion of assignments and exams.

Each class session will involve some lecture and discussion. A small portion of your final grade will reflect the quantity and quality of your class **participation**. Participation includes your individual comments and questions in class, but it also includes your active participation in occasional group discussions and activities in class. In order to participate fully in each class session, you should be prepared with all of the assigned reading in advance of the class meeting. If you are a person who prefers not to speak out individually in class, you may also earn full participation credit by discussing class topics either via email or during my office hours.

In addition to reading the assigned material, I expect you to keep up to date on current events related to Congress by reading articles on current congressional politics in the weekday *New York Times*. This reading will facilitate both our classroom discussions of current congressional politics and your general understanding of the class topics. To provide you with an incentive to think about current congressional politics, I will ask you to write one-paragraph analyses of six major Congress articles from the Times

during the quarter—three before the midterm, three after. More information on this assignment will be provided on a separate handout.

With regard to **attendance**, I expect you to attend class regularly—*lectures will contain new information in addition to reinforcing the readings*. Though attendance is not a formal part of your course grade, at my discretion, I may reward students with excellent attendance records (usually no more than one unexcused absence) by boosting their final grade by 1/2 of a letter grade: for example, a B+ would become an A-. (One exception: a grade of “E” will not be raised to a passing grade on the basis of attendance.)

Major **assignments** include an analytical essay as well as two exams. The analytical essay, due on May 29<sup>th</sup>, will require you to explore the representational relationship between a member and his/her district in considerable detail on the basis of independent research. Information on this will be provided in a separate handout.

The largest portion of your course grade will come from two short-answer and essay format exams (midterm and final). I will distribute essay study questions one week in advance of each exam—I will choose the actual essay questions from the list of study questions. The final exam will not be directly comprehensive, though the material from the first section of the course should be useful to you in constructing thoughtful answers to the final exam questions.

I expect that all students will take exams at the time they are scheduled. If you cannot avoid missing an exam for a significant and unavoidable reason, you must tell me in advance, and I may allow you to take a make-up exam without penalty. Others who miss exams will most often not be allowed to retake the exam; however, in exceptional situations, you will be allowed to take a make-up exam with a grade penalty of one letter for the number of days after the exam that you notified me, including the day of the exam. For the paper, a grade penalty of ten percent of the maximum possible points for *each* day late applies (papers turned in late on the due date will lose ten percent).

#### **GRADING**

First exam:	60
Second exam:	60
Analytical paper:	50
NYT summaries:	15
Participation:	<u>15</u>
Total	200

The final grade scale will be determined after all of the points for the course are added. The scale will never be any more strict, though, than 180 points=lowest A-, 160 points=lowest B-, etc. (I will assign +/- grades.)

#### **ASSISTANCE**

I want to help you to do well in this course, and I hope that you will feel free to talk with me about readings and assignments, concerns about the course, or for suggestions about studying and understanding the material. (Feel free to stop by just to chat about politics, too!) My scheduled office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus; these are the best times to find me, but I am always happy to

arrange alternative times to meet if these are inconvenient. I also check my email and phone messages frequently.

Students with disabilities should talk to me *during the first week of the quarter* about their needs and any assistance or arrangements that may be necessary. Course materials are available in alternative formats upon request. For such materials please contact Mr. Wayne DeYoung, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, 292-2880.

### REQUIRED MATERIALS

The following books are required and are available at SBX. They may also be available online at a substantial discount from sites such as Amazon and Half.com.

- Davidson, Roger and Walter Oleszek. 2001. Congress and Its Members, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. (CQ Press)
- Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 2000. Congress at the Grassroots. (UNC Press)
- Mayhew, David. 1974. Congress: The Electoral Connection. (Yale University Press)

Also required is a weekday subscription to the *New York Times*, either in printed form (strongly recommended, and available through the *Lantern* office at a discount or free in the dorms) or online (free registration).

Several additional articles/chapters, as described below, will be available through online library reserve or on public websites.

### TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

All readings are required.

#### Weeks 1 & 2—History of Congress; Representational Roles

Mon 4/1: *Course Introduction*

Wed 4/3: *Congress' Historical Development*

Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 2

**Online Reading:** Federalist Papers, # 52, 53, 62, and 63, available online at <http://memory.loc.gov/const/fed/fedpapers.html>

Mon 4/8: *Theories of Representation and the Contemporary Congress*

Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 1

#### Weeks 2 & 3—Congressional Elections

Wed 4/10: *The Politics of Congressional Districting*

Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 3, pp. 41-58

**Online reserve:** Guinier, Lani. "Groups, Representation, and Race Conscious

Districting," ch. 4 in Contemplating the People's Branch: Legislative Dynamics

in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Accessible by following the “Course Reserves” link at the OSCAR main search page: <http://library.ohio-state.edu/search/>

Mon 4/15: *Ambition and the Decision to Run for Congress*  
*Money and Congressional Elections*  
Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 3, pp. 58-83

Wed 4/17: *Campaigns, Voting, and Governing*  
Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 4  
**Online reserve:** Baker, Ross. “The Electoral Environments,” ch. 4 in House and Senate. Accessible by following the “Course Reserves” link at the OSCAR main search page: <http://library.ohio-state.edu/search/>

Weeks 4 & 5—Theoretical Approaches: Goals, Choices, and Home District Politics

Mon 4/22: *Congress and the Electoral Connection*  
Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection, introduction and ch. 1 (pp. 1-77)

Wed 4/24: *Multiple Goals and “Home Style”:* *Introduction to Home District Politics*  
Fenno, Congress at the Grassroots, introduction and ch. 1

Mon 4/29: *Home Style: Personal Strategies*  
Fenno, ch. 2-3  
(Midterm essay questions distributed)

Wed 5/1: *Home Style: Policy Strategies*  
*Midterm Exam Review*  
Fenno, chs. 4-5 & conclusion  
(First NYT summaries due no later than class time today.)

Mon 5/6: **First Exam**

Weeks 6 & 7—Organizing to Govern: Parties, Leaders, and Committees

Wed 5/8: *Congressional Leadership*  
Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 6

Mon 5/13: *Party Power and Party Polarization*  
Mayhew, pp. 97-105  
**Online reserve:** Aldrich and Rohde, “The Logic of Conditional Party Government: Revisiting the Electoral Connection,” ch. 12 in Congress Reconsidered 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Accessible by following the “Course Reserves” link at the OSCAR main search page: <http://library.ohio-state.edu/search/>

Wed 5/15: *The Committee System: Congress at Work*  
Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 7

Week 8—Congressional Policymaking

Mon 5/20: *Lawmaking Procedures: The Rules of the Game*  
Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 8

Wed 5/22: “Unorthodox Lawmaking” in *House and Senate*  
*How Members Decide*  
Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 9

Mon 5/27: **NO CLASS:** Memorial Day

Weeks 9 & 10—Congress and its Political Context

Wed 5/29: *Interest Group Influence in Congress: Why, How, and How Much*  
No required reading.  
**Representation paper due in class.**

Mon 6/3: *Public Opinion, The Media, and Congress*  
**Online reserve:** Hibbing, John and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. “What the Public Dislikes about Congress.” ch. 3 in Congress Reconsidered 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Accessible by following the “Course Reserves” link at the OSCAR main search page: <http://library.ohio-state.edu/search/>

Wed 6/5: *Congress and the Executive Branch*  
*Exam review*  
Davidson & Oleszek, ch. 10 and ch. 11, pp. 335-342  
(Second NYT summaries due no later than class time today.)

**Second Exam: as scheduled by the University (Mon. 6/10, 3:30 p.m.)**  
**Graduating senior final exam: Wed. 6/5, 1:00 p.m. (location TBA)**

**COURSE CONDUCT**

A very important note on academic honesty: All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. If you have concerns about whether your written work adequately meets standards of academic honesty, do not hesitate to discuss your questions with me. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy.

And, a few much more minor pet peeves:

Please turn off audible cell phones and pagers during class.

Do not read newspapers or materials for other courses during class.