

PSCI 318: THE U.S. CONGRESS

Fall 2016

TTh, 9:40-11:10

Fox Hall, Room 206

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Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 4:00-5:00 p.m. or by appointment

Course Description:

PSCI 318 is a comprehensive look at the workings of the United States Congress. Beginning with a look at debates over the Congress's structure and concluding with a simulated "mock Congress," students in this course will explore the theories, foundations, practices, and processes of the "world's greatest deliberative body."

Student participation is demanded and expected. At the outset of the semester, each student will select a member of Congress to portray in a semester-long simulation of the House of Representatives. The course will proceed, using lectures and simulation exercises, through the foundations and practice of the legislative process. Students will be required to participate actively in all facets of the simulation. Course readings and assignments are linked to simulation activities and are designed to enhance students' experiences with the Congress, representation, and the legislative process. Each student will be expected to complete two exams – a midterm and a comprehensive final – as well as several simulation assignments: a member profile, a bill, justification, and "Dear Colleague" letter, and a constituent newsletter. As noted above, class participation is also an important, and heavily-weighted, component of this course.

Course Goals:

1. Students should come to a reasonable understanding of the history, processes, and institutionalization of the U.S. Congress by the end of the course.
2. Students should comprehend the fundamentals of representation and legislative procedure by the end of this course.
3. Students should understand the impact of money, politics, and participation on legislative outcomes.
4. Students should recognize the increasing and difficult burdens on members of Congress and should understand the notion of the "two congresses."
5. Students should think, write, and participate at a level appropriate to a junior-level class.

Course Textbooks:

Bell, Lauren C. 2002. *The U.S. Congress: A Simulation for Students*. **PDF upload available on Canvas.**

Bell, Meyer, and Gaddie. 2015. *Slingshot: The Defeat of Eric Cantor*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler. 2016. *Congress and Its Members* (15th ed.). Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Recommended:

Oleszek, Walter. 2015. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. (10th ed.) Congressional Quarterly Press.

Course Requirements:

All students will be expected to complete two exams and all simulation assignments, and to participate actively in all class activities. All writing assignments should be typed in a 12-point, readable font, be double-spaced with 1-inch margins, and should include appropriate citations. A breakdown of assignments, due dates, and the amount each is worth appears below:

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Member Profile	September 22	100
Bill/Justification Assignment	October 11	150
Exam I	October 13	100
Constituent Newsletter	December 8	100
Final Exam	December 15	150
Class Participation	Ongoing	100

Total Points Available:

700

Grading Scale:

686-700 = A+

645-685 = A

630-644 = A-

615-629 = B+

575-614 = B

560-574 = B-

545-559 = C+

505-544 = C

490-504 = C-

475-489 = D+

435-474 = D

420-434 = D-

419 and Below = F

Course Policies:

These policies are designed to facilitate the learning of each and every student enrolled in this class. They are also designed to ensure that each student is treated fairly. For every student who feels sick on a given day and decides to skip class, another feels just as bad but makes an effort to attend. Likewise, for every student who wants to postpone a test or paper due to a heavy workload, another student with an equally heavy workload has still found time to study or complete an assignment. Therefore:

Make-up Exams: Make-ups will be given only in the event of a serious illness or family emergency, verified by a doctor's note or similar communication from campus authorities. I will not consider a make-up exam in the absence of documentation from a doctor or the College Provost's Office.

Late Papers: Papers are due during class time on the due date, unless otherwise specified in the assignment. Late papers will be accepted, but will lose one full letter grade for every day that they are late. Papers that are handed in by 5:00 p.m. on the due date will lose a half of a letter grade. Exceptions to this policy may be granted for verifiable illness or family emergency (see make-up exam policy above).

Attendance: Nearly 15 percent of the final course grade is based on class participation. Because you can not participate if you are not in class, students are expected to attend all regular class meetings. Any student that misses more than two regularly-scheduled class meetings will lose all possible class participation points, unless the additional absences are excused. I will excuse absences for the following reasons *only*: 1) illness, provided that a doctor's note *for the date of the absence* is presented; 2) family emergency, provided that I receive a notice from the Provost's office concerning the absence; 3) representation of the College at a conference or another institution for an academic, leadership, or athletic purpose, provided that I receive a notice from the appropriate coach, faculty member, or organization adviser *prior to the absence*. **Please note: Any student that misses *any* simulation activity without prior permission will lose all possible class participation points. Please see the special statement on simulation participation at the end of this syllabus for more information.**

Academic Misconduct: I take academic misconduct very seriously. The College's Code of Academic Integrity (which can be found in the *Student Handbook*) sets out a list of prohibited behaviors, including plagiarism, cheating, and tampering with or destroying College property (including computers in computer labs). The most common act of academic misconduct is plagiarism, which is defined by Gordon Harvey in *Writing With Sources: A Guide for Students* as: "[P]assing off a source's information, ideas, or words as your own by omitting to acknowledge that source – an act of lying, cheating, and stealing." **Any student who commits a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity will be subject to the policies and procedures outlined in *Fishtales*. It is each student's responsibility to read and be familiar with the College's Code of Academic Integrity.**

Citation Methods for Written Work: Different disciplines have different standards concerning appropriate citations. In general, I prefer the American Political Science Association's method, which includes in-text citations – i.e. "The quick, brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" (Smith 1900, 1) – and a "Works Cited" page at the end of the essay. Any

time you use information gathered from any outside source, whether or not you are quoting directly, you must provide a citation. **This includes information gathered from your class notes.** If you have any questions about citations, see me before you hand in the paper. Careless citations will nearly always cost you 10 percent of the grade on the assignment, and if I have reason to believe that you have committed plagiarism, I will follow the guidelines outlined in the Code of Academic Integrity.

Use of Internet Sources in Written Assignments: The Internet can be a valuable reference source. However, the Internet should not take the place of more traditional sources, including books, journals, newspaper articles, etc. Moreover, many websites are unregulated and their content is inappropriate for scholarly use. Therefore, no student may use any Internet or web-based source in any writing assignment that is being turned in for a grade without prior permission from me. An exception is any material located at <http://www.congress.gov>.

General Expectations for Written Work: All written work that is prepared outside of class must conform to the following guidelines: 1) It must be typewritten, double-spaced, in an appropriate font/font size (10 or 12 point), with no more than 1.25 inch margins. 2) It must be cleanly printed on white paper, in black ink. 3) It must be stapled or clipped together (folding the corner down is not sufficient) -- this is for your protection as much as it is for my convenience! 4) It must be clean of obvious spelling and grammatical errors; in other words, it must be proofread, as spelling and grammar always count. I reserve the right to refuse to grade any paper that clearly has not been proofread. 5) It must conform to all other course policies, especially those governing academic misconduct. 6) Collaboration is prohibited, unless specifically and explicitly required by the assignment. 7) A hard copy must be handed in. I will not grade e-mailed papers.

A Note on Grading: I will do my best to return all papers/exams within three days. However, I do read carefully, and papers that are full of proofreading, grammatical, or citation errors take longer to grade. In extreme cases, I reserve the right to return ungraded any paper that clearly has not been spell checked or proofread. In such cases, I will require you to return a clean copy of the paper, free from proofreading and/or spelling errors within 24 hours. In such cases, you will lose a letter grade because I had to return the paper to you and you will lose one additional letter grade for every 24-hour period beyond the 24 hours I have given you.

Final examination policy: As a reminder, the final exam must be taken at the time it is scheduled by the Registrar. Any student that has a conflict with this exam time must have approval from the Provost's Office in order to change the time of the exam. Please be aware that reasons such as travel plans, work scheduling conflicts, or events within a student's control will not be considered valid grounds for an exam change.

Students With Disabilities: Any student in this class who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as quickly as possible to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate his or her educational opportunities.

Complete Listing of Class Meetings and Reading/Writing Assignments

Date	Topic	Assignment
September 6	Course Introduction Simulation Introduction	None
September 8	The Two Congresses	Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler (DOLS): Chapters 1 and 2; Bell, Meyer, Gaddie (BMG), pp. 1-46. Bell: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-5) and pp. 21-30. Member Selection Sheet Due
September 13	Congressional Elections	DOLS: Chapters 3 and 4; BMG: pp. 47-70
September 15	The Principle of Representation	Burke: Speech to the Electors at Bristol (Posted on Canvas) BMG: 71-169 (remainder of book) Member selections announced
September 20	The Link Between Home and Hill	DOLS: Chapter 5 Fenno, "U.S. House Members in their Constituencies: An Exploration" (Posted on Canvas)
September 22	Congressional Organization: Parties, Leaders, and Committees	DOLS: Chapter 6 Member Profiles Due
September 27	An Overview of the Legislative Process	Bell: Chapter 2 (pp. 7-19) Heitshusen 2012: "The Legislative Process" (Posted on Canvas)
September 29	First Party Caucuses	Hammond, "Congressional Caucuses..." (posted to Canvas) Bell, pp. 31-32
October 4	Congressional Policymaking	DOLS: Chapters 14 and 15

October 6	Writing legislation	Bell: 32-43 In-Class Bill Writing Workshop
October 11	Committee Procedures	DOLS: Chapter 7 CRS Report on Congressional Committees: http://www.rules.house.gov/archives/RS20465.pdf Bills/Bill Justification/Dear Colleague Letters Due Review for Midterm Exam
October 13	Midterm Exam	
October 18	No class – Fall Break	
October 20	Decision Making in Congress	DOLS: Chapter 9 Kingdon: “Models of Legislative Voting” (Posted on Canvas)
October 25-27	Committee Hearings	Bell: 45-49 HRC: Committee Hearings (Posted on Canvas) Meet in Committees for Hearings Read all bills sent to your committee prior to start of hearings. All will be posted on Moodle.
November 1	Committee Markups and Votes	Meet in Committees for Markups and Votes HRC: Committee Markups (Posted on Canvas)
November 3	Congress and the President	DOLS: Chapters 10-11
November 8	Congress and the Courts	DOLS: Chapter 12 Bill revisions due to speaker.
November 10	Interest Groups and Congress	DOLS: Chapter 13

November 15	Legislative Norms and Rules	DOLS: Chapter 8 HRC: Rules Committee (Posted on Canvas) Additional readings posted to Canvas
November 17	Floor Procedure in the Senate	CRS Report on Senate Floor Procedure: http://www.senate.gov/CRSReports/crs-publish.cfm?pid=%26%2A2D4Q%5CK3%0A Recommended: Oleszek, Chapters 6-7
November 22	Floor Procedure in the House	CRS Report on House Floor Procedure: http://www.rules.house.gov/archives/95-563.pdf Recommended: Oleszek, Chapters 4-5
November 24	No Class—Thanksgiving Break	
November 29	Second Party Caucuses/Preparation for Full House Session—Consult Oleszek	
December 1	Full House Session – I (Read Bell: 48-60)	
December 6	Full House Session -- II	
December 8	Congress in the Political System	DOLS: Chapter 16; Bell: 61-63 Recommended: Oleszek, Chapter 10 Constituency Newsletter/Simulation Analysis Due Course wrap-up
Thursday, December 15th 8:30 a.m.	Comprehensive Final Exam	

Required Assignments

I. **Member Profile Assignment – Also see assignment description in Bell (p. 28). Specific requirements are outlined below:**

By September 15, each of you will have been assigned to play the role of a member of the United States House of Representatives. In order to play the part as thoroughly and as accurately as possible, your first assignment is to draft a profile of your member of Congress. The profile should be written as if the member him/herself actually did the writing (so, it should be written in the first person: “I am a member of Congress from the second district...” etc.). Your profile should include the following information:

- ❖ The member’s personal background (age, education, occupation, legislative style, etc.)
- ❖ The location, size, and population demographics of the member’s congressional district
- ❖ The main industry or enterprise within the member’s district, if any
- ❖ The member’s primary concerns of issue positions
- ❖ The length of time the member has been in Congress
- ❖ The electoral circumstances of the last election (won with large majority, won with small majority, beat an incumbent, etc.)
- ❖ Any additional information that provides insight into your member of Congress

Your profiles should be **at least** 4 pages in length. The more detail you provide in your profile, the better able you will be to play the role you are assigned. You should utilize the major sources of information about the Congress, including: *The Almanac of American Politics* and *Politics in America*. Both of these are available in the library. You may also wish to visit the House of Representatives’ website at <http://www.house.gov>. **Be sure to document ALL sources! Your profile is due at the beginning of class on September 22.**

II. Bill/Bill Justification Assignment. Also see assignment description in Bell (p. 40-41). Specific requirements are outlined below:

This assignment has three parts:

1. Submit an original piece of legislation to the Speaker of the House. This legislation should reflect your legislative priorities. Your bill must contain the following:

- ❖ **A title**
- ❖ **A statement of the purpose of your bill**
- ❖ **An enactment clause**
- ❖ **A detailed explanation of what you propose to do**
- ❖ **If your bill explicitly requires the spending of money, a statement of where the money will come from**
- ❖ **Any appropriate “sunrise” or “sunset” provisions**

Bills can be as long or as short as is necessary. Remember, however, that ambiguity does not generally lead to success in the Congress. Thus, you will want to be certain to include as much detail and clarification as possible. Remember: While you understand your legislative priorities and your district’s needs, other members do not! **(This part of the assignment is worth up to 75 points.)**

2. Submit a 1-2 page justification for why you have chosen to sponsor this particular piece of legislation. This justification should state the title of your bill and briefly explain its purpose. You should then proceed to a discussion of why you have proposed this legislation. Some questions you should consider are: 1) Why would you propose this legislation? 2) How would the legislation affect your district? 3) Who benefits/loses should the legislation be enacted? (That is, is the legislation targeted solely at your district, or does it have a national scope?) Finally, you should address how you will go about ensuring support for your bill – media strategy, lobbying members of Congress and constituents, etc. In general, your justification should do two things: it should demonstrate that this is, in fact, a bill that your member would propose, and it should demonstrate that you have thought through a plan to see it enacted. **(This part of the assignment is worth up to 50 points.)**

3. Submit a one-page “Dear Colleague” letter. For the “Dear Colleague” letter, you should draft an actual letter that will be distributed to other members of our simulated House. In this letter, you should again state the title and purpose of your legislation, and then compose a thoughtful argument explaining to your colleagues why they ought to support it. You should be sure to emphasize the necessity and benefit of passing your legislation. Be aware that every member of the House will receive a copy of your letter. **(This part of the assignment is worth up to 25 points.)**

As with all assignments in this class, your bills, justifications, and Dear Colleague letters will be evaluated both on content and on form. Spell check your work, and be sure to provide a list of citations to any outside sources. For bills and Dear Colleague letters, all sources should be documented using footnote references only. For justifications, in-text parenthetical references and a works cited page should be used. Bills, justifications, and Dear Colleague letters will be evaluated on clarity as well. If I can’t understand your work, it’s unlikely your colleagues will. **All parts of the assignment are Due on October 11.**

III. Simulation Analysis Paper / Constituency Newsletter. Also see assignment description in Bell (p. 62). Specific requirements are outlined below:

This assignment has two parts:

- 1. Constituency Newsletter:** As the session comes to an end, it will be time to turn your attention to re-election. Although it seems like only yesterday that you were campaigning for your seat in this Congress, it's time to start planning to run again. To that end, it's time to communicate with your constituents about your activities during this session of Congress.

Your assignment is to draft a newsletter to your constituents. The newsletter should be approximately 6 pages in length. It should address the following issues:

- ❖ Your legislative activities during this session (committee assignments, activities, co-sponsorships of legislation, participation in floor debates, etc.)
- ❖ Your success/failure to achieve passage for your legislation, and an explanation of the outcome.
- ❖ What projects, revenues, etc. you procured for your district during this session of Congress.
- ❖ Information about, and justification for, the bills you supported/did not support in this Congress
- ❖ What you wish would have been/would not have been enacted.

Feel free to be creative with your newsletters – however, please note that all of the above issues must be addressed. Newsletters should be appropriately cited, if necessary. Newsletters will be worth 100 points. I will evaluate your newsletters on content and on form. **(This part of the assignment is worth up to 50 points.)**

- 2. Justifying your decisions:** I also want you to evaluate your participation in a thoughtful essay of between three and five pages. Thinking about your participation in our simulated House, analyze your legislative record. Was your legislative proposal controversial at all? Did it pass? If not, what were the arguments against it? Were they substantive or political in nature? What factors affected its passage or failure? Did you cast any controversial votes on other members' legislation? What factors influenced your decisions? In representing your constituents, did you act as a delegate or a trustee? Did any of the votes you cast conflict with your personal beliefs? If so, why did you cast them?

Respond to these questions in a coherent analysis essay. You should bring information from your textbooks, readings, and class discussions into your answers where appropriate. **(This part of the assignment is worth up to 50 points.)**

All parts of this assignment are due on December 8.

Special Statement About Class Participation Requirements for the Congress Simulation

As is mentioned in the Course Policies section of your syllabus, students are expected to attend all regular class meetings. Students who miss ***any*** regularly-scheduled simulation activity without first obtaining my permission will lose all class participation points. However, simply attending class is not enough. Students should participate in ALL simulation activities, including party caucuses, committee hearings and markups, and all full House sessions. Participation includes:

- ❖ Contributing orally to discussions in caucus, committee, or floor sessions;
- ❖ Contributing in writing through e-mail discussions with other members;

Members are encouraged to keep in touch with one another using Canvas or e-mail. At the beginning of the session, a member e-mail list will be posted on Canvas. If you do contact another member via e-mail, please carbon copy (cc:) me at lbell@rmc.edu so that I can keep track of your participation. I will not share the content of your e-mail with other members.

- ❖ Attending the activity, being attentive, and making relevant and appropriate contributions.

Also, please note that your participation grade is in no way related to the success or failure of your legislative proposal. However, even if your bill dies in committee, you still are expected to participate in discussions of other legislation. Participation in the simulation is worth 75 points, and comprises the majority of the class participation component of your course grade.