

POLS 317 – CONGRESS
Fall Semester 2015
T/TH 12:30 – 1:45

Instructor: Dr. Janna Deitz
Email: JL-DEITZ@WIU.EDU
Phone: 298-1741

Office Hours: Morgan 407
T/TH 2-3 PM & by appt.
Web Page: WesternOnline

Purpose and Objectives

In this course, students will develop a critical understanding of the nature of the U.S. Congress as a political institution by analyzing the legislative process, the influences on legislative behavior within Congress, as well as congressional elections. We will explore the various internal and external political influences on members of Congress—from parties, interest groups, campaign finance and electoral margins, to public opinion. We will also examine the rise of polarization in Congress and its effects on the legislative process as well as the level of civility in legislative debate and interaction. Finally, we will consider public opinion toward Congress and various suggestions to improve the institution and its processes. By the end of the course, students should be able to critically assess the role of the legislative branch in the American democracy.

Required Reading

Davidson, Roger H., Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee, and Eric Schickler. 2016. *Congress and It's Members* (15th ed.) Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Ahuja, Sunil. 2008. *Congress Behaving Badly: The Rise of Partisanship and Incivility and the Death of Public Trust*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

*Additional WesternOnline Readings; please see course website.

*Current news about Congress: *Washington Post*, *Roll Call*, *Politico*, *The Hill*, etc.

Grading

All work is graded on a 100 point scale. Grading will follow the following scale: 93–100 = A, 90-92 = A-, 87-89 = B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 = B-, (same criteria for C and D grade ranges) and below a 60 = F. Student grades will be determined as follows:

2 Midterm exams @ 20% ea.	40%
Final Exam	25%
Course Paper	25%
Attendance/Participation	10%

Exams

Each exam will be based on course lectures, videos, assignments, current event discussions, and assigned readings. It is to your advantage to attend each and every class in order to gain a more complete understanding of the course material for which you will be held responsible. Not only is attendance important in learning information on which you will be tested, but it is also important for your participation grade, which constitutes 10% of the overall grade. Be mindful that attendance is necessary but not sufficient for a good participation grade. Exams will require you to answer multiple choice, concept identification, and essay questions. Exams will only be given on the dates listed on the syllabus. Any make-up exam, if approved, will be administered after the final only.

Course Paper

Students will be required to write a paper for this course. A detailed handout on the components of this paper will be distributed in class. As with all written work, the university's plagiarism policy is in effect and will be strictly enforced. Students should also note that writing a paper for one class and turning it in for another (whether in whole or in part), without the explicit consent of both instructors, constitutes plagiarism. Emailed papers will not be accepted. In addition, late papers will be penalized an entire letter grade per day late. Please turn papers in on time.

Student Responsibilities

I have found that it may be helpful to put in writing the behavioral expectations that I have for students taking my class. In short, the following guidelines for student behavior simply require that students show respect for the instructor as well as other students in the classroom:

---Arrive to class on time.

---Pay attention in class. (No texting, ringing phones, checking Facebook, etc.)

---Demonstrate respect for diversity of opinions. This class will have a high concentration of politically astute students—students who, no doubt, will be of different political persuasions. As this course requires active student discussion and participation, it is imperative that everyone be comfortable adding to class discussions. Respect is a basic expectation for all class interactions.

Beyond these behavioral expectations, I encourage every student to contact me either during office hours or by appointment to discuss any questions or concerns they may encounter during the course of the semester. Do not wait until after an exam to seek help if you need it. I will try my best to be available to students when it is convenient for them. I can always be reached by email and will reply to questions as promptly as possible within reason.

Policy Statements

Academic Honesty Statement

Receiving unauthorized assistance on exams or other written work in this course constitutes academic dishonesty as described in the *WIU Student Handbook*. Please see the *WIU Student Handbook* for a complete statement of the Policy on Academic Dishonesty or view the online statement at http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/student_development_office/handbook/academicIntegrityPolicy.php.

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

Lecture and Readings Schedule

Students are responsible for all of the reading listed below, even if the material is not covered in class. Please note that the following schedule is tentative and subject to change. The instructor reserves the right to alter assignments and dates if necessary; adequate advance notice of any such changes will be given to students. For readings, “DOLS” = Davidson, Oleszek, Lee and Schickler.

8/25	Course Introduction
8/27	Evolution of the Legislative Branch <i>DOLS Chapter 1: The Two Congresses</i> <i>DOLS Chapter 2: Evolution of the Modern Congress</i>
9/1 – 9/3	Running for Congress: Candidacy, Strategy and Funding <i>DOLS Chapter 3: Going for It: Recruitment and Candidacy</i> <i>DOLS Chapter 4: Making It: The Electoral Game</i>
9/10	Redistricting: Rules and Consequences <i>WesternOnline Readings</i>
9/15 – 9/17	Representation and Constituency <i>DOLS Chapter 5: Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles</i> <i>Emailed readings: The House that Rahm Built & News Article-- 2010 Republican Wave</i>
9/22 – 9/24	Video and Discussion: <i>Dylan’s Run</i>
9/29	Role of Congressional Staff and Office Operations
10/1	EXAM 1
10/6 – 10/8	Legislative Behavior/Voting Influences on Members of Congress <i>DOLS Chapter 9: Deliberation in Congress</i> <i>DOLS Chapter 13: Congress and Organized Interests</i>
10/13	WIU Library Archives – Congressional Collection Activity
10/15-10/20	Congressional Leadership: Powerful Speakers and Leaders from Illinois <i>WesternOnline Readings</i>
10/22	Partisanship, Polarization and Legislative Behavior: <i>Ahuja, Chapter 1: The Problem of Incivility and Partisanship</i> <i>Ahuja Chapter 2: The Capitol Hill Junior High School</i>
10/27	Partisanship, Polarization and Legislative Behavior (continued) <i>Ahuja Chapter 3: Changing of the Guard</i> <i>Ahuja Chapter 4: What Is Behind Partisanship and Uncivil Debate in Congress?</i>
10/29	Making Policy: The Role of Political Parties and Their Leaders <i>DOLS Chapter 6: Leaders and Parties in Congress</i>

- 11/3 Committees in Congress
DOLS Chapter 7: Committees: Workshops of Congress
- 11/5 Exam 2**
- 11/10– 11/12 The Legislative Process
DOLS Chapter 8: Congressional Rules and Procedure
Ahuja Chapter 6: The Impact of Partisan Warfare on the Legislative Process
- 11/17 Legislative-Executive Relations
DOLS 10: Congress and the President
- 11/19 PAPERS DUE IN CLASS**
Legislative-Judicial Relations
DOLS 12: Congress and the Courts
- 11/24 – 11/26 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- 12/1 Legislative-Bureaucratic Relations
DOLS 11: Congress and the Bureaucracy
- 12/3 Budgets and Appropriations: The Power of the Purse
DOLS 14: Congress, Budgets, and Domestic Policy Making
- 12/8 Measuring the Effectiveness of Congress: The People’s Scorecard
DOLS Chapter 16: The Two Congresses and the American People
Ahuja Chapter 5: Wither Confidence and Respect in the Modern Congress?
WesternOnline Reading (Sinclair)
- 12/10 Course Conclusion and Review for Final
WesternOnline Reading:
(Hamilton): What I Wish Political Scientists Would Teach About Congress
Ahuja Chapter 7: Democracy Is a Conversation
- 12/18 FINAL EXAM TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15th at 1:00 PM**