

# **POLS 317 – CONGRESS**

**Fall Semester 2017**

**T/TH 12:30 – 1:45**

**Instructor: Dr. Janna Deitz**  
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**Phone: 298-1055**

**Office Hours: Morgan 412**  
**T/TH 2:00-3:00 PM, Wed 9-11 AM &**  
**by appointment**

## **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 internal and external political influences on members of Congress—from parties, interest groups and campaign finance to electoral margins and 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 people's branch in the American democracy.

*\*A foundational understanding of American Politics is necessary for success in this course. Students must complete POLS 122 – Introduction to American Government prior to taking this course or obtain permission from the instructor to waive this requirement.*

## **Required Reading**

Davidson, Roger H., Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee, and Eric Schickler. 2017. *Congress and Its Members* (16<sup>th</sup> 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.

LaHood, Ray and Frank Mackaman. 2015. *Seeking Bipartisanship: My Life in Politics*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.

\*Additional WesternOnline Readings; please see course website.

\*Current news about Congress.

## **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% each	40%
Final Exam	25%
Course Paper	25%
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 exam.

## 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: <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>. 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

Students are expected to demonstrate respect to one another and to the instructor of this course at all times. Student class responsibilities include

- Arriving to class on time, prepared for the day's topic
- Paying attention in class: no texting, no social media, etc.
- Keeping cell phone ringers off inside the classroom
- Respecting 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 any disagreement with others is expressed in ways that are always civil and respectful.

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. Reaching out for clarification or additional help is an important student responsibility. 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*, will be taken seriously and reported appropriately: <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.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](mailto: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.

### *Title IX*

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at:

[http://www.wiu.edu/equal\\_opportunity\\_and\\_access/request\\_form/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php). If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>

### *Helpful Resource– The Writing Center*

The University Writing Center is available to assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The one-on-one assistance available at the University Writing Center is valuable for generating ideas, talking about global-level issues such as organization, and even working through grammatical problems. The University Writing Center is located in Malpass Library (3<sup>rd</sup> floor, west side) and in satellite centers in Simpkins, Bayliss, and Tanner. Call for an appointment ([309-298-2815](tel:309-298-2815)) and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment.

## **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.

8/22	Course Introduction
8/24	Evolution of the Legislative Branch <i>DOLS Chapter 1: The Two Congresses</i> <i>DOLS Chapter 2: Evolution of the Modern Congress</i>
8/29 – 8/31	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>
9/5 – 9/7	Redistricting: Rules and Consequences <i>WesternOnline Readings</i> <i>Seeking Bipartisanship Chapters 1 and 2</i>
9/12 – 9/14	Representation and Constituency <i>DOLS Chapter 5: Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles</i> <i>Emailed readings: The House that Rahm Built &amp; News Article-- 2010 Republican Wave</i> <i>Seeking Bipartisanship Chapters 3 and 4</i>

- 9/19 – 9/21 Video and Discussion: *Immigration Battle*  
*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapter 5*
- 9/26 Illinois Congressional Delegation, past and present  
*Western Online Readings*  
*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapter 6*
- 9/28 EXAM 1**
- 10/3 Role of Congressional Staff and Office Operations and  
WIU in DC Semester Internship Guest Presenters
- 10/5 Partisanship, Polarization and Legislative Behavior:  
*Ahuja, Chapter 1: The Problem of Incivility and Partisanship*  
*Ahuja Chapter 2: The Capitol Hill Junior High School*  
*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapter 7*
- 10/10 Partisanship, Polarization and Legislative Behavior (continued)  
*Ahuja Chapter 3: Changing of the Guard*  
*Ahuja Chapter 4: What Is Behind Partisanship and Uncivil Debate in Congress?*
- 10/12 – 10/17 Legislative Behavior/Voting Influences on Members of Congress  
*DOLS Chapter 9: Deliberation in Congress*  
*DOLS Chapter 13: Congress and Organized Interests*
- 10/19 “Taking The Hill: Inside Congress” discussion
- 10/24 Making Policy: The Role of Political Parties and Their Leaders  
*DOLS Chapter 6: Leaders and Parties in Congress*  
*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapters 8 and 9*
- 10/26 & 10/31 Committees in Congress  
*DOLS Chapter 7: Committees: Workshops of Congress*  
*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapter 10*
- 11/2 Exam 2**
- 11/7 The Legislative Process part I  
*DOLS Chapter 8: Congressional Rules and Procedure*  
*Ahuja Chapter 6: The Impact of Partisan Warfare on the Legislative Process*
- 11/9 *Seeking Bipartisanship Chapters 11 and 12*
- 11/14 The Legislative Process part II  
*DOLS Chapter 8: Congressional Rules and Procedure*  
*Ahuja Chapter 6: The Impact of Partisan Warfare on the Legislative Process*
- 11/16 Legislative Relations with other Branches of Government  
*DOLS 10: Congress and the President*  
*DOLS 12: Congress and the Courts*

**11/21 – 11/23 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**11/28 PAPERS DUE IN CLASS**

Legislative-Bureaucratic Relations

*DOLS 11: Congress and the Bureaucracy*

*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapters 11 and 14*

11/30

Budgets and Appropriations: The Power of the Purse

*DOLS 14: Congress, Budgets, and Domestic Policy Making*

*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapters 12 and 13*

12/5

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)*

12/7

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*

*Seeking Bipartisanship Chapter 15*

**12/12**

**FINAL EXAM TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM**