

**LEGISLATIVE PROCESS: U.S. CONGRESS**  
**Political Science 1211 (13042)**  
**University of Pittsburgh**  
**Monday/Wednesday 3:00pm - 4:15pm**  
**David Lawrence Hall 104**  
**Fall 2005**

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Nicoll Victor  
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Office: 4803 Wesley W. Posvar Hall, Department of Political Science  
Office Hours: M/W 4:30pm – 5:30pm  
Course Website: <http://courseweb.pitt.edu> (on Blackboard6, use your Pitt e-mail login)

### **I. Course Description**

This course uses the United States Congress as a model to describe basic legislative processes. Students will gain a firm understanding of the spatial model of legislative decision-making and apply the model to a variety of topics. We will explore congressional elections, voter participation in elections, lawmaking, congressional committees, the congressional budget process, and congressional parties. In addition to these institutional lessons, we will learn about types of voting, the theoretical problems associated with aggregating votes (such as voting cycles) and how Congress overcomes such problems to create policy.

### **II. Course Goals**

The primary goal for this course is to help students think critically about the role of the United States Congress in various aspects of political life. Students will learn the purposes of a legislative body through the lens of political theory. Students will be introduced to basic spatial theories of politics and learn to apply them to current issues. At the end of the course, students should have accomplished three main goals. First, students will have a firm grasp of the processes and politics in the U.S. Congress. Second, students will have significantly increased their critical thinking skills and be able to apply theoretical concepts to new problems. Third, students will have improved their writing and analytical skills through a variety of course assignments.

### **III. Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Style**

My teaching philosophy is based on three primary principles.

- First, I believe the gap between undergraduate and graduate coursework in political science is too broad. I therefore, introduce advanced theoretical concepts in undergraduate classes so that students understand the true value of studying politics as a science; moreover, should any student choose to pursue advanced or graduate work in political science, they will be well prepared.
- Second, I believe in incorporating current events into classroom lessons. Nothing in science seems concrete until one can “see it with their own eyes.” Reading a daily

newspaper and following current events, then applying theoretical concepts to political happenings helps to clarify theoretical concepts and demonstrate their utility.

- Finally, as an instructor and a leader of class discussions on everything from lawmaking to elections, I aim to remain politically neutral and non-partisan. Students should learn to collect and evaluate information on their own. I would not want students who disagree with my political views to hear all course information with a skeptical ear; nor would I want students who tend to agree with my views to accept everything I say at face value. I encourage students to express their views, be critical, and challenge information when it is appropriate.

Accordingly, my teaching style supports my philosophy. I therefore use a Socratic-style, frequently ask questions, and encourage an interactive learning experience. I do my best to learn students' names, encourage participation, and create, what I hope is, an open learning environment where students feel free to question, comment, and explain how they view course content. Such an environment helps to foster student interaction, thinking, and analytical and creative skills. Moreover, while lectures are important because they help to distribute necessary information and facts, they are not usually the most effective way to learn information. For this reason, we will do a variety of activities in the classroom. Successful performance in this course will include classroom participation and working in and out of class with your peers.

#### **IV. Student Responsibilities**

A. *Class Attendance and Participation.* Learning is an *active*, rather than *passive*, exercise. Accordingly, every student is expected to attend class as well as be prepared to ask questions about and comment on the readings. You need to complete the daily reading assignment *prior* to the class meeting. You will be much more successful in this class if you attend regularly, take notes, pay attention, and participate.

B. *Readings.* As is the case with attendance, keeping pace with the reading is essential to succeeding in this class. It is *your* responsibility to obtain copies of the readings prior to the date we will discuss them in class. I will do everything I can to make this task easier for you. You will be much more successful in this course if you complete the assigned readings and take notes on them.

C. *Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity.* Any student engaged in any academic misconduct *will receive an F on the offending exam or assignment.* Egregious violations will result in an F grade for the course and will be reported to the appropriate Dean's office. These violations include cheating on an exam, using someone else's work as your own, and plagiarizing the written word. Plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without providing credit or citation) is a serious offense. *If you have any questions at all about what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, or academic misconduct, please ask the instructor.*

D. *Students with Disabilities.* If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please let me (the instructor) know and contact the Office of Disability Resources and Service, 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355

(TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. All discussions with me regarding disabilities are confidential.

## V. Following Political Developments in the Media

Students are required to follow current political events. A familiarity with current happenings in politics, and Congress especially, will facilitate your ability to understand the material. Along with any local papers you may read, I recommend that you read *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Washington Post* with frequency. You can sign up to receive daily e-mail news updates from the *New York Times* on their website. Additionally, you may want to examine news-magazines for more in-depth coverage of particular issues and events. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, *Roll Call*, *National Journal*, and *The Hill* are particularly informative periodicals (the last two are available at no cost on-line for Pitt Students). Other options include *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *The Economist*.

You should also know about the following resources:

Title	URL	Description
<i>New York Times</i>	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com">http://www.nytimes.com</a>	News (registration free, daily updates available)
<i>Washington Post</i>	<a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com">http://www.washingtonpost.com</a>	News (with a Washington twist)
CNN	<a href="http://www.allpolitics.com">http://www.allpolitics.com</a>	News
<i>National Journal</i>	<a href="http://www.nationaljournal.com">http://www.nationaljournal.com</a>	News—especially good for campaign news (accessible only from Pitt)
<i>The Hill</i>	<a href="http://www.thehill.com">http://www.thehill.com</a>	Congress News (free)
<i>Roll Call</i>	<a href="http://www.rollcall.com">http://www.rollcall.com</a>	Congress News (restricted access, see me)
House of Representatives Website	<a href="http://www.house.gov">http://www.house.gov</a>	Look up <u>members</u> , <u>committees</u> , <u>leaders</u> , etc.
Senate Website	<a href="http://www.senate.gov">http://www.senate.gov</a>	Look up <u>members</u> , <u>committees</u> , <u>leaders</u> , etc.
Library of Congress	<a href="http://thomas.loc.gov">http://thomas.loc.gov</a>	Look up <u>legislation</u> and <u>Congressional Record</u> in current and previous Congresses (1989-present)
Government Printing Office	<a href="http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html">http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html</a>	Find out about anything the government prints, from laws, to Presidential orders, to speeches on the Senate floor.
Congressional Research Service	<a href="http://www.ncseonline.org/NLE/CRS/">http://www.ncseonline.org/NLE/CRS/</a>	Reports on specific policies prepared by professional researchers for Members of

		Congress.
LexisNexis (Congressional Universe)	<a href="http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp">http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp</a>	Hearings, bills, policies, committees, etc
<i>CQ Researcher</i>	<a href="http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/index.php">http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/index.php</a>	In-depth reports about policies on the congressional agenda
<i>CQ Weekly Report</i>	(electronic access unavailable—go to the 4 <sup>th</sup> floor of the library, periodicals room)	To learn everything you need to know about bills active in Congress
Biographical Directory of Congress	<a href="http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp">http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp</a>	Look up a bio of any member of Congress (throughout history)

## VI. Course Requirements and Graded Evaluation

There are four graded requirements for this course, described below. Grades will be calculated on a non-curved typical A-F scale where,

100-97 A+	79-77 C+
96-94 A	76-74 C
93-90 A-	73-70 C-
87-89 B+	69-67 D+
86-84 B	66-64 D
83-80 B-	63-60 D-
	<60 F

*Three Short Essays (30%)* Each student is responsible for writing three short essays (3-4 pages each). Each essay will provide you the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to real world events. In each essay, you will choose a news article about some legislative topic and *apply* a theory to the news event. Reading a daily newspaper and congressional news will help tremendously with this assignment. Find a news item you find worthwhile, and in your essay demonstrate how a theory of your choosing is exemplified in the article. Please turn in a copy of your article with your essay. Use proper citations for sources in your essay and provide a bibliography. The first essay is due **no later than Wednesday, October 5**. The second essay is due **no later than Monday, November 7**. The third essay is due **no later than Monday, December 5**. Students will also be responsible for presenting one of their essays to the class. Each student will sign up for a day to present an essay. Each essay will be worth 10% of your overall course grade. The essay that you present to the class will include a score for your in-class presentation (80% written essay, 20% presentation).

*Problem Sets (20%)* There are seven problem sets scattered throughout the course. All the problems are from Stewart's *Analyzing Congress*. Page and problem numbers are posted in the syllabus (below). Students are encouraged to do work in groups while thinking about the problem sets, but each student must hand in their own original work. Assignments that are obviously copied will receive a failing grade. (Students will benefit from the use of a compass.)

*Midterm Exam (20%).* This will be an in-class exam covering material from the first half of the course. The exam will include identifications, short answers, and essays (closed book, closed-note) based on material presented in class and in the readings. The exam will be in-class on **Wednesday, October 19**. This is the **ONLY** day to take the exam. If you do not come to class on this day or you arrive late, you will not be allowed to take the exam.

*Final Exam (30%).* This will be an in-class exam covering material from the entire course (comprehensive), though concentrating on material from the last half of the course. The exam will include identifications, short answers, and essay questions (closed book, closed-note) based on material presented in class and in the readings. The exam will be administered during the regular final exam scheduled time for our class on **Saturday, December 17 at 8:00am**. This is the **ONLY** day to take the exam. If you do not come to class on this day or you arrive late, you will not be allowed to take the exam.

## **VII. Reading Assignments**

The reading assignments are chosen to buttress and expand on the analytic foundation laid in class. **Please notify the instructor about problems obtaining the readings as soon as possible.** The following materials are required and can be found at the bookstore. All of the following required titles are on reserve at Hillman Library.

Dodd, Lawrence C. and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. 2001. *Congress Reconsidered*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQPress.

Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Stewart, Charles III. 2001. *Analyzing Congress*. London: W.W. Norton & Company.

For reference, I also recommend:

Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. 1997. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Smith, Steven S. 1999. *The American Congress*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Or: <http://congress.wustl.edu/>

## **VIII. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments**

(The syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Check the course website for updated course syllabi.)

**M, Aug. 29**      INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF CONGRESS  
*Topics:*              Syllabus, current events, science, rational choice, game/spatial theory

### **PART I: FOUNDATIONS**

**W, Aug. 31**      HOW WE THINK ABOUT CONGRESS  
*Topics:*            One-dimensional models, median voter, public perceptions of Congress  
*Readings:*        Stewart, pp. 3-14  
                      Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 3 (pp. 55-75, Hibbing and Larimer)

**M, Sept. 5**        **Labor Day Holiday, No Class**

**W, Sept. 7**        HISTORY OF CONGRESS I  
*Topics:*            Why government, Constitution, Evolution of Congress, collective action  
*Readings:*        Stewart, Ch. 2 (pp. 55 - 86)  
*Problem Set 1:* Stewart, pp. 52-53 (#11); pp. 83 (#'s 1, 2) **due M, Sept. 12**

**M, Sept. 12**      HISTORY OF CONGRESS II  
*Topics:*            Basics of spatial analysis  
*Readings:*        Stewart, Ch. 3 (pp. 87- 128)  
*Problem Set 1:* **Due Today**

**W, Sept. 14**      LEGISLATIVE DECISION MAKING I  
*Topics:*            Utility functions, median voter  
*Readings:*        Stewart, pp. 15-22  
*Problem Set 2:* Stewart, pp. 49-52 (#'s 1, 2), **due M, Sept. 19**

**M, Sept. 19**      LEGISLATIVE DECISION MAKING II  
*Topics:*            Vote cycling, sophisticated voting, Arrow's Theorem  
*Readings:*        Stewart, pp. 22-24 (plus additional reading on Arrow's Theorem, TBA)  
*Problem Set 2:* **Due Today**  
*Problem Set 3:* Stewart, pp. 49-52 (#'s 9, 10), **due W, Sept. 21**

**W, Sept. 21**      THE SPATIAL MODEL I  
*Topics:*            Two-dimensional models, preference curves, win sets, voting tree  
*Readings:*        Stewart, pp. 24-35  
*Problem Set 3:* **Due Today**

**M, Sept. 26**      THE SPATIAL MODEL II  
*Topics:*            Saliency and sophistication  
*Readings:*        Stewart, pp. 35-49  
*Problem Set 4:* Stewart, pp. 49-52 (#'s 3, 4, 5, 7) **due W, Sept. 28**

## **PART II: ELECTIONS AND CANDIDATES**

**W, Sept. 28**      RUNNING FOR CONGRESS I  
*Topics:*            Deciding to run for office, progressive ambition, expected utility  
*Readings:*        Stewart, Ch. 4 (pp. 129- 164)  
*Problem Set 4:* **Due Today**

- M, Oct. 3**      RUNNING FOR CONGRESS II  
*Topics:*        Elections as motivation  
*Readings:*     Mayhew, Part I (pp. 1 – 78)
- W, Oct. 5**      RUNNING FOR CONGRESS III  
*Topics:*        Elections as motivation  
*Readings:*     Mayhew, Part II (pp. 79 – 180)
- M, Oct. 10**     RUNNING FOR CONGRESS IV  
*Topics:*        Elections and constituents  
*Readings:*     Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 4 (pp. 77 – 106, Erikson and Wright)  
                       Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 6 (pp. 135 – 158, Oppenheimer)  
                       Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 7 (pp. 159 – 179, Fiorina)
- W, Oct. 12**     ELECTIONS I  
*Topics:*        How voters choose, voter turnout, ideology, gender/representation, primaries, campaign finance  
*Readings:*     Stewart, Ch. 5 (pp. 165-193)
- M, Oct. 17**     ELECTIONS II  
*Topics:*        Ideology, gender/representation, primaries, campaign finance  
*Readings:*     Stewart, Ch. 6 (pp. 194-234)  
                       Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 5 (pp. 107 – 134, Herrnson) (*Recommended*)
- W, Oct. 19**     **Midterm Exam**

### PART III: CONGRESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- M, Oct. 24**     LAWMAKING I  
*Topics:*        How a bill becomes a law (HABBAL)  
*Readings:*     Stewart, Ch. 9 (pp. 336-366)
- W, Oct. 26**     LAWMAKING II  
*Topics:*        Amendment trees, rolling, logrolling, rating members of Congress  
*Readings:*     Stewart, Ch. 9 (pp. 366-392)  
*Problem Set 5:* Stewart, pp. 388-389 (#'s 1, 3) **due M, Oct. 31**
- M, Oct. 31**     CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET PROCESS  
*Topics:*        How a budget is made and why we have one.  
*Readings:*     Schick, Allen. 2000. *The Federal Budget: Politics, Policy, Process*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press., Ch. 6: The Congressional Budget Process. (*Note: This reading will be distributed prior to class*)  
*Problem Set 5:* **Due Today**
- W, Nov. 2**      COMMITTEES IN CONGRESS I  
*Topics:*        History of committees, types, reform

- Readings:* Stewart, Ch. 8 (pp. 274 - 308)
- M, Nov. 7**      COMMITTEES IN CONGRESS II  
*Topics:* House versus Senate, budget, rules, agency  
*Readings:* Stewart, Ch. 8 (pp. 308 – 335)
- W, Nov. 9**      COMMITTEES IN CONGRESS III  
*Topics:* Committees and parties, the House Appropriations Committee  
*Readings:* Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 11 (pp. 249 – 270, Aldrich and Rohde)  
Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 12 (pp. 271 – 295, Gordon)  
*Problem Set 6:* Stewart, pp. 331-333 (#'s 1, 2, 3, 4) **due W, Nov. 14.**
- M, Nov. 14**      PARTIES IN CONGRESS I  
*Topics:* History of parties, Duverger's Law, types of parties, agenda control, party strength.  
*Readings:* Stewart, Ch. 7 (pp. 235-273)  
*Problem Set 6:* **Due Today**
- W, Nov. 16**      PARTIES IN CONGRESS II  
*Topics:* Historical and modern parties in Congress  
*Readings:* Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 8 (pp. 181 - 205, Smith and Gamm)  
Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 9 (pp. 207 - 225, Schickler and Pearson)
- M, Nov. 21**      FLOOR ACTION  
*Topics:* Why so few bills become law  
*Readings:* Stewart, Ch. 9 (pp. 336 – 392)  
*Problem Set 7:* Stewart, pp. 388 – 389 (#'s 1, 5), **due W, Nov. 30**
- W, Nov. 23**      **Thanksgiving holiday; no class**
- M, Nov. 28 –**      CONGRESS AND POLICY  
**W, Nov. 30**  
*Topics:* Judicial appointments, fiscal policy, terrorism  
*Readings:* Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 13 (pp. 297 – 318, Binder and Maltzman)  
Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 14 (pp. 319 – 342, Rudder)  
Dodd & Oppenheimer, Ch. 13 (pp. 343 – 362, Wolfensberger)  
*Problem Set 7:* **Due W, Nov. 30**
- M, Dec. 5**      Exam Review/Catch-up Day
- W, Dec. 7**      Exam Review/Catch-up Day
- Sat., Dec. 17**      **FINAL EXAM 8:00am – 9:50am**