

# Legislative Procedure

## POLI 424

### Fall 2017

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OFFICE	Hamilton 311
OFFICE HOURS	Monday 1-2, Wednesday 9-11, and by appointment
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## Course Description

This course is intended to educate students in the workings of the U.S. Congress by first introducing them to the relevant literature in the field and then allowing them to actively participate in the democratic process. In this course we will discuss rules and procedures for the U.S. Congress, the influence of party on members, how the legislative agenda is determined, and the pressing issues of the day. The culminating event of the course will be a Model Congress. In the Model Congress each student will compose a detailed bill, introduce his/her bill, markup legislation in committee, and debate and amend legislation on the floor. This course *requires* your active participation, research, and creative thinking.

## General Expectations

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. I am generally intolerant of disruptive behavior in the classroom, including talking during lectures and the ringing of cell phones. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of the opinions of others. Students are expected to take an active role in their learning by completing readings before class, coming to class ready to participate directly with peers and in the Model Congress, and reviewing routinely for exams. You will be held responsible for all material in the textbooks and in lectures, even if you miss a class. **Participation in the Model Congress is key to your grade for this course. You must not only come to class, but you must actively participate each day. Active participation means (at a minimum!) speaking each day during the Model Congress.**

## Office Hours

Do not feel intimidated if you have never been to a professor's office hours. You can come alone or with a friend. Office hours are meant to give you an easy place and opportunity to connect with faculty. Please stop by to talk about the course, study skills, your interests, your background, etc.

## Technology in the Classroom

Cell phones, laptops, and tablets should be silenced at all times during class.

In general, laptops, tablets, and other forms of electronic media are not to be used in this class. The exception to this will be during committee markup and sometimes when we are debating/amending on the floor. There is a great deal of research supporting the argument that people who take notes by hand perform much better. Here is a link to an Atlantic article, which summarizes the argument: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>.

Additionally, multitasking on an electronic device during lectures has been shown to decrease grades of the multitaskers and those seated around them: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/laptop-use-lowers-student-grades-experiment-shows-1.1401860>. If you need an exception to this rule, please see me. I am willing to make accommodations as needed.

## Required Texts

- Sinclair, Barbara. 2015. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 5th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Oleszek, Walter J. 2013/15. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. 9th or 10th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Students are responsible for staying informed of the issues before the U.S. Congress. Reading a daily, national newspaper such as *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* or *The Wall Street Journal* is highly recommended.

## Recommended Texts

- Coming into this class, I expect you all to have a general understanding of Congress. Of course, we will cover procedure in great detail, but if you need to brush up on anything else (elections, representation, etc.) I strongly suggest you get a copy of: Smith, Steven S., Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. 2015. *The American Congress*. 9th edition. Cambridge University Press.

## Course Requirements

**Midterm Exam (1) 20%** The exam will be taken in class on October 23. The exam will be worth 20% of your grade for this class. The exam will primarily consist of short answer type questions and essay questions.

**Writing Assignments (3) 50%** The first written assignment for the course is a short 2-3 page "Member Profile." This is worth 10% of your grade for the course. It is due in class on September 25. The second writing assignment for this class is to write a 7-8 page bill to introduce in the Model Congress. The writing assignment is worth 30% of your grade for this class. The quality of your written bill is what the committee will be using in determining whether or not to mark it up and move it out of committee. Therefore, bills are expected to be well-written and thoroughly researched. Additional information

on how to write a bill will be handed out in class. The bill is due in class on October 16. The final writing assignment will take place during the final exam period (December 8 from 4pm-6pm). This writing assignment is worth 10% of your grade. More details will be handed out in class.

**Model Congress 30%** Active participation in the Model Congress is a significant portion of your grade for this course. A break down of the different components is below.

## Model Congress\*

**Brief Description** The Model Congress is the culminating event of this course. At the beginning of the semester you will be assigned a member of Congress (MC) and a committee. You will also be a member of the party caucus to which your member belongs. Each MC will introduce her/his bill to the class during a legislative session, each committee will engage in markup of the bills, the Rules Committee will determine the rules under which the bill will be considered, and throughout all of this each member will meet with her/his party caucus to work out strategy. All of the rules and procedures that you learned in the earlier part of the course will apply.

**MC Writing Assignment Part I** The first writing assignment is a member profile. You will be assigned a member early in the semester. This paper assignment gives you the opportunity to get to know your member and his/her district. This is the person you will be acting as throughout the Model Congress. More specific details will be handed out in class. This writing assignment is worth 10% of your grade for this course. This paper is due on September 25 in class.

**MC Writing Assignment Part II** The primary writing assignment for this course is to write a bill to introduce to the Model Congress. This writing assignment is worth 30% of your grade for this course. The bill must be thoroughly researched, well-written, and ready to present to the class on the date specified. *All bills must be turned in in class on their due date (October 16).* A template for writing a bill will be posted on the course website. The bill should pertain directly to the committee you are on so that you are able to engage in the markup process. The size of the issue that you take on and the controversy surrounding the issue do not matter (though keep in mind the relatively short page requirement). You should not shy away from controversial positions. The object of the simulation is to learn how MCs discuss and debate difficult questions. That said, whatever you write your bill about and whether or not it is controversial, you must be able to defend your position with facts. A well-researched and a well-written bill makes for a good bill.

Each student will introduce his or her bill to the class on one of the two dates specified. (In this way, we will be acting more like the Senate than the House, but in general our Model Congress simulates the U.S. House of Representatives.) Bills will then be sent to their appropriate committee for markup and hearings. More details about the writing assignment will be handed out in class.

**Participation** Your participation in the Model Congress is worth 30% of your grade for this course. I expect each student to participate in debate on the floor, in committee, and in party caucus meetings. Your participation will be evaluated each day.

\*Note that this section is meant just as a brief summary of the Model Congress and its accompanying assignments. More detailed writing assignments will be handed out in class.

## **Grading and Assignments**

### **Incompletes and Make-ups**

A final grade of “incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. Assignments must be turned in in class. Electronic copies will not be accepted. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one full letter grade per day late. If an assignment is not turned in at the time it is due (usually the beginning of class), but is turned in later in the day it will still be penalized one full letter grade. In addition, written assignments that do not follow the guidelines of the assignment and/or have poor grammar and spelling will be severely penalized. As a general rule, make-ups for exams will not be given. Students who must miss exams because of scheduled activities of an official University student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact the instructor IN ADVANCE of missing an exam so that alternative arrangements can be made.

### **Grading Scale**

A 94-100, A- 90-93, B+ 87-89, B 84-86, B- 80-83, C+ 77-79, C 74-76, C- 70-73, D+ 67-69

### **Assignments**

You are responsible for keeping a copy of all written assignments for the course. This ensures that we will not run into problems with lost assignments. You are also responsible for keeping copies of the assignments once they are handed back. Sometimes errors do happen, and a grade may not be recorded for you. If this happens you must be able to produce the GRADED paper to verify that the assignment was completed and that the grade is correct.

## **Miscellany**

### **Sakai Site**

You will need your onyen to log on. I will post my lecture slides here. I will also post announcements/send emails on this site. It is your responsibility to check it and your UNC email account daily for any course announcements.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty is broadly defined as submitting work that is not your own without attribution, and is not acceptable in this or any other academic course. Any academic dishonesty found on an assignment results in a failing grade for that assignment and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent permissible under University of North Carolina guidelines, which can be accessed at: <http://honor.unc.edu>.

### **Student Disabilities**

Any student with a documented disability condition (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact the instructor and the Academic Success Program (919-962-7227) at the beginning of the semester.

### **Instructor Availability**

If you would like to speak with me outside of class time, feel free to stop by my office during regularly scheduled office hours. If you are unable to meet during office hours, you can arrange an alternate time to see me by setting up an appointment. I also try to respond quickly to email inquiries.

### **Communication**

Periodically the instructor may communicate with students via email, regarding assignments, schedule changes, or other course related matters. Students are responsible for the content of *all* such communications.

## Tentative Course Outline

Readings should be done before the class for which they are listed.

Date	Description	Required Readings	Model Congress
August 23	Introduction	n/a	n/a
August 28	Lawmaking	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch. 1; <i>Sinclair</i> Ch. 1	n/a
August 30	Legislative Action	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch.3	n/a
September 4	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY	n/a	n/a
September 6	House Procedure	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch.4; <i>Sinclair</i> Ch. 2	Member/Committee Assignments Made
September 11	House Procedure	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch. 5	Party Platforms
September 13	House Procedure	n/a	n/a
September 18	Senate Procedure	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch. 6; <i>Sinclair</i> Ch. 3	n/a
September 20	Senate Procedure	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch. 7	Cmte. Jurisdiction, Rules, History
September 25	Resolving Differences	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch. 8 <i>Sinclair</i> Ch. 4	<b>Member Profile Due</b>
September 27	Budget Process	<i>Oleszek</i> Ch. 2; <i>Sinclair</i> Ch. 5	n/a
October 2	New Processes	<i>Sinclair</i> Ch. 6-8	Leaders Selected
October 4	Setting the Agenda I	<i>Cox</i> Ch. 1-3	Caucus Meetings
October 9	Setting the Agenda II	<i>Cox</i> Ch. 4-6 & 8	Present Bill Proposals to Caucus
October 11	Party vs. Preferences	Aldrich & Rohde (2000)*, Krehbiel (1993)*	n/a
October 16	Catch up & Model Congress	n/a	Bill introductions & <b>Bills Due</b>
October 18	Model Congress	n/a	Bill introductions
October 23	Review & Model Congress	n/a	Bill introductions
October 25	Exam 1	n/a	n/a
October 30	Committee Markup	Cmte. Jurisdiction, Rules, History	Committee Markup
November 1	Committee Markup & Caucus Meeting	Cmte Bills	Committee Markup & Caucus
November 6	Committee Markup	n/a	Committee Markup
November 8	Committee Markup	n/a	Final Committee Markup
November 13	Party Caucuses	Party Platforms & Party Bills	Party Caucus Strategy
November 15	Floor Debate & Amending	Bills coming to floor	Floor Debate & Amending
November 20	Floor Debate & Amending	Bills coming to floor	Floor Debate & Amending
November 22	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING	n/a	n/a
November 27	Floor Debate & Amending	Bills coming to floor	Floor Debate & Amending
November 29	Floor Debate & Amending	Bills coming to floor	Floor Debate & Amending
December 4	Floor Debate & Amending	Bills coming to floor	Floor Debate & Amending
December 6	Bicameralism & Separation of Powers	Reading TBD	n/a
December 8 - 4-6pm	FINAL EXAM PERIOD	n/a	n/a

\*These journal articles and chapters will be made available on the course website.