

Political Science 403-001

U.S. Congress

Fall 2009

Professor Jeff Fine

Meeting times: T, TH 3:30-4:45 pm

Location: 212 Brackett Hall

Course Blackboard Web Page: bb.clemson.edu

Office: 230E Brackett Hall

Office Phone: 656-3548

Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 2:00-3:30 pm & by appointment (drop-ins always welcome)

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Course Summary:

While the presidential election captured the attention of the national media last Fall, voters also elected the members of the 111th Congress. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives were contested, as were one-third of the seats in the U.S. Senate. In the 2008 elections, the Republican Party lost seats in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, giving the Democratic Party the largest majority of seats in Congress in 30 years. This result, accompanied with a Democratic president, produced a period of unified party control (a rare occurrence in recent decades).

So far, the 111th Congress has dealt with the economic stimulus package, war appropriations, and the confirmation proceedings of Justice Sotomayor for the vacant position on the Supreme Court. Massive amounts of debate and lobbying on health care have dominated Congress and the media for months.

Political Science 403 examines the U.S. Congress, focusing both on the institution itself as well as the actors who have inhabited it. In other words, we will study Congress from both an institutional and behavior perspective. This course will examine the following broad topics: (1) the origins and evolution of the modern Congress, (2) congressional elections, (3) representation and constituencies, (4) the rules, norms, and powers of the institution, (5) political parties and the leadership structure, (6) the legislative process, and (7) how Congress interacts with other institutions and actors in the American political system.

Required Text (available at bookstore)

1. *The American Congress*. Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. Cambridge Press. 6th Edition. (Abbreviated SRV)
2. *The American Congress Reader*. Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. Cambridge Press. (Abbreviated as Reader)

Grading

Exam #1:	20%	(Thurs., Oct. 1 st – Brackett 212)
Exam #2	20%	(Thurs., Nov. 5 th – Brackett 212)
Paper:	30%	(Due Tues., Nov. 24 th by 4pm)
Final Exam:	30%	(Fri., Dec. 11 th , 3:00-5:30 pm)

Grading Scale: Final grades in the course will fall on a standard 100-point scale where:
A = 89.5 – 100, B = 79.5 – 89.49, C = 69.5 – 79.49, D = 59.5 – 69.49, F < 59.5.

Attendance: I will not formally be taking attendance. Students are free to choose whether to attend lecture. However, given that approximately half of the questions for the exams will come directly from lecture, *students should not expect to do well without regularly attending lecture.*

Participation:

Students are encouraged to participate in the class meetings. Just attending class does not constitute participation. Note: Participation does not simply mean opening your mouth in class, but rather consists of contributing *positively* to the class discussion.

Excused Absences: Any student missing an **exam or paper due date** must provide documentation to schedule a make-up or turn in a late paper/assignment. *No late assignments will be accepted without proper documentation.*

Academic Integrity, Cheating and Plagiarism: Every student is expected to conduct him/herself with academic honesty in this course. The university has a detailed Academic Integrity policy, outlined here: http://www.cs.clemson.edu/html/academics/academic_integrity_2002.html

The university defines plagiarism as “the intentional or unintentional copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing the work to one's own efforts.” For the purpose of this class, the use of 4 or more consecutive words without quotation marks also constitutes plagiarism. You must document the source of any material that is not an original thought. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, you must talk to the instructor *before* handing in an assignment.

Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty in this course will receive an “F” in the course, and penalties may include suspension or even dismissal from the University.

Accommodations for disabilities: Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contract me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. “Qualified students” are those who present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disability Services when we meet. Student disability services is located in G-20 Redfern (656-6848). Accommodations are not retroactive. Handouts are available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

Research Paper guidelines

- **Research Paper: Policy Evaluation** – For your research paper, you will select one policy/issue on which Congress has had some involvement. Your paper must include a discussion of each of the following as they relate to your policy/issue:
 - Broad importance of this policy/issue
 - Key actors involved in this policy/issue (i.e. specific members of Congress, congressional committees with jurisdiction, interest groups, bureaucratic agencies, etc.)
 - Jurisdiction of these actors
 - Incentives of particular actors (Pressure from constituents, national forces, political parties, interest groups, etc.)
 - Previous legislation and legislative action related to this policy/issue
 - Status quo (i.e. what is the current law/rules in place on this issue)
 - Current state of this policy in Congress (pending legislation, recent votes, etc.)
 - Current debate about this issue (position of each party on the subject, White House position on the issue, media focus on issue, etc.)
 - Direction in which this may lead in the future (potential for future legislation, etc.)

Only one student will be allowed to write on a particular topic. Topics will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Students can submit rank ordered requests via email as early as 8pm on Wednesday, August 26th. No requests made before 8pm on the 26th will be honored.

Topical Outline and Readings:

Day	Date	Topic Schedule	SRV	Reader/Other
Thursday	20-Aug	Introduction to Course		1
Tuesday	25-Aug	2008 Election Recap/11th Overview/Public Opinion	1	2
Thursday	27-Aug	Background of Congressional Structure	2	4 (Focus on Article I)
Tuesday	1-Sep	Evolution of Congress	2	
Thursday	3-Sep	Elections – Recruitment and Background	3	
Tuesday	8-Sep	Elections - Apportionment and Redistricting	3	8
Thursday	10-Sep	NO CLASS		
Tuesday	15-Sep	Elections - Incumbency Advantage	3	Paper Topic Deadline
Thursday	17-Sep	Elections - Perm. Camp., Camp. Finance, Polling, Neg. Ads	3	
Tuesday	22-Sep	Representation	4	7
Thursday	24-Sep	Descriptive & Substantive Representation	4	
Tuesday	29-Sep	Catch-up/ Review Session		
Thursday	1-Oct	***Exam #1***		
Tuesday	6-Oct	Rules of the Legislative Game I: Introduction to Reporting	7&8	22
Thursday	8-Oct	Rules of the Legislative Game II: Floor Action	7&8	
Friday	9-Oct	Last Day to Drop		
Tuesday	13-Oct	NO CLASS - FALL BREAK		
Thursday	15-Oct	Parties, Ideology, and Voting	5	25
Tuesday	20-Oct	Party Theories	5	15
Thursday	22-Oct	Congressional Leadership	5	
Tuesday	27-Oct	Congressional Committees	6	18
Thursday	29-Oct	Congressional Staff		
Tuesday	3-Nov	Catch-up/ Review Session		
Thursday	5-Nov	***Exam #2***		
Tuesday	10-Nov	Congress and the Presidency	9	28, 29, 31
Thursday	12-Nov	Congress and the Courts	10	35
Tuesday	17-Nov	Congress, Bureaucracy, and Interest Groups	11	36
Thursday	19-Nov	Budgetary Process	12	39
Tuesday	24-Nov	***Research Papers Due by 4pm***		
Thursday	26-Nov	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING		
Tuesday	1-Dec	Applications		
Thursday	3-Dec	Catch-up/ Review Session		
Friday	11-Dec	Cumulative Final Exam (11:30-2:00pm, 212 Brackett)		