I. Course Description

This graduate seminar on legislative behavior is designed to provide advanced graduate students an opportunity to begin to explore the literature, methodology, and theories about legislative processes. The class is organized in two sections. In the first portion of the class we will learn about the primary theories for understanding congressional institutions (spatial models, roll call voting, parties, committees, etc.) In the second portion of the course, we will examine the electoral connections of members of congress (elections, campaigning, campaign finance, decision making, careerism, etc.) For the most part, we will use the United States Congress as a lens through which to learn about general legislative issues. We begin with the national U.S. case because most of the advanced theory and methodology in this sub-discipline originates there. Students are of course encouraged to think about and apply the general U.S. case to other national legislatures, parliaments, or state-level analysis. The literature in this area is vast and we cannot hope to cover it all in one semester. We will touch on the most important topics and diverge when it seems appropriate. This course is designed to help students prepare for advanced research in legislative process and graduate-level exams in this field.

II. Course Goals

There are two primary goals for this course. First, students should gain a working familiarity with the literature on legislative process, and the U.S. Congress. Students planning to research and teach in this field should gain a fundamental grasp of substance of research in this vast field. Second, students will practice and improve their critical thinking, writing, and research skills in this class. Students will have a heavy reading load, which is necessary to begin to dissect the voluminous literature in this field. Students will also actively engage with one another in research, presentations, and writing assignments.

III. Course Components

There are three graded components to this course.
Class Presentation (10%) Each week, one student will be responsible for presenting the required readings. The student presenter should circulate discussion questions to the rest of the class prior to the start of class (no later than Sundays at 4:00pm). The presenter should provide a brief oral summary of the readings and help to start discussion about the day’s topics. The presenter should note points of interest, confusion, or controversy in the readings and provide a thoughtful criticism.

Weekly Reaction Papers (40%) Each week each student must write a one page memo that provides a reaction to the week’s readings. Students may choose to write about one, some, or all of the week’s readings. The memos should not be thought of as summaries or book reports; rather, in addition to providing some summary, students should feel free to pose questions, raise criticisms, or explain how a piece fits into the broader literature. There are 14 class meetings, and each student must write 10 reaction memos (meaning you get 4 optional bye-weeks, to be selected at your choosing).

Research paper (50%) Each student is responsible for writing one journal or conference quality research paper. Use the literature to guide a creative thought process and to help you develop a reasonable research question. These papers will be completed in three stages. First, you will complete a 1-page introduction that states a thesis, or research question, and provides a basic outline of your paper (due March 3). Second, you will write a literature review and research design (due April 14). Third, you will hand in your completed project during our assigned final examination period on Monday, May 12 at 7:10pm. Late assignments will result in a reduced score.

IV. Logistics

Incompletes. I am not inclined to offer incomplete grades. I strongly advise you to organize yourself to complete the coursework in a timely fashion. I am open to helping you with your assignments, of course, and will do my best to help you develop projects of a reasonable scale. Students rarely start the semester planning to take an incomplete, but it is easy to get behind. Know that I will not be comfortable offering incomplete grades.

Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity. Students in this course will be expected to comply with the George Mason University Honor Code (see http://honorcode.gmu.edu/). There are three simple guidelines to follow with respect to academic integrity: (1) all work you submit must be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the expectations for any assignment, ask for clarification. 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.
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 Services (ODS) at (703) 993-2474 or http://ods.gmu.edu. All discussions with me regarding disabilities are confidential.

Grading. In this course, I will use a grading scale that is typical of Ph.D.-level courses that includes a four-part scale. You can think of the scale as being: high-pass, pass, low-pass, or fail. The grade scale and its interpretation is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent work; high pass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Good work; pass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Work needs some improvement; low-pass. If you plan to take Ph.D.-level exams in American politics, you need to do some additional review of the material presented in this course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B or lower</td>
<td>Your work has not demonstrated mastery of the material that would be appropriate for a career in academia as a professor. Alternative career paths may be a better option for you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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V. Required Texts

The following texts are available at the campus bookstore and are required reading for this course.


Dodd, Lawrence C. and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 2013. Congress Reconsidered, 10th ed. CQ Press.


Koger, Gregory. 2010. Filibustering. Chicago UP.


This syllabus has hyperlinks to articles that are available via the Internet, but many of the links are behind paywalls or subscription services, to which George Mason belongs. You’ll need to access articles from an on-campus connection or using the SSL VPN from off-campus. Most
articles can be found on JSTOR. I also recommend the library’s subject guide for your research: http://infoguides.gmu.edu/polisci.

Book chapters or other assigned required readings listed below that are not electronic will be available on the course Blackboard website.

VI. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments
* Indicates readings that will be emphasized in class discussions

Monday, January 27
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF CONGRESS
Required Readings:

PART I: CONGRESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Monday, February 3
LEGISLATIVE PROCESS
Required Readings:
*Koger, Gregory. 2010. Filibustering. Chicago UP.

Recommended Readings:


Monday, February 10

INTRODUCTION TO SPATIAL MODELING

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings


**Monday, February 17**

**ROLL CALL VOTING**

**Required Readings**


Poole, Keith. Website: [http://voteview.com](http://voteview.com)


**Recommended Readings:**


**Monday, February 24**

**STRATEGIES IN LEGISLATIVE VOTING**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings**


Research Paper Introduction DUE Today

Congressional Committees

Required Readings


Recommended Readings:


Monday March 10       Spring Break

Monday, March 17
PARTIES IN CONGRESS: PART I

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

PARTIES IN CONGRESS: PART II

Monday, March 24

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


PART II: ELECTIONS AND CANDIDATES

Monday, March 31

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:


Monday, April 7

**ELECTORAL MOTIVATIONS AND CONGRESSIONAL DECISION MAKING**

*Required Readings*


*Recommended Readings:*


Monday, April 14  

**POLARIZATION IN CONGRESS**

*Research paper literature review and research design DUE today*

*Required Readings:*


Recommended Readings:


PART III: REPRESENTATION AND CONSTITUENTS

Monday, April 21
REPRESENTATION ISSUES: RACE, GENDER, AND…

Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


Monday, April 28

**LOBBYING AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Monday, May 5

SOCIAL NETWORKS IN CONGRESS


Recommended Readings:


Monday, May 12 In-class presentations of research projects. Final paper DUE today.

VII. The 20 most important books about Congress

Cannon, David. Race and Representation in Congress.

VIII. Important Online Resources

CONGRESS