

PSC 304
Legislative Process
Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Location: WRI C235
Time: MW 2:30 – 3:45

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Office Hours: M 4:00 – 5:30; W 10:30 – 12:00

Scope and Purpose:

This course provides an examination of the legislative process, with particular attention given to the United States Congress. The course is divided into four parts. Part one examines congressional elections and how election outcomes affect congressional organization and procedures and how members of Congress represent their constituents. Part two assesses the formal power allocated to Congress by the Constitution, the institutionalization and development of Congress over time, and differences between the House and Senate. Part three addresses the nuts and bolt of congressional operations (e.g., the role of parties and leaders, committees, and other formal procedures, as well as individual and collective decision making). Part four examines the relationship between Congress and other actors in the political environment (e.g., the president, the federal courts, the bureaucracy, interest groups, the media, and the public).

Readings:

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, and Frances Lee. 2007. *Congress & Its Members*, 12th ed. Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly.

Jacobson, Gary C. 2009. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 7th ed. New York: Longman.

Mann, Thomas E. and Norman J. Ornstein. 2006. *The Broken Branch*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Polsby, Nelson W. 2004. *How Congress Evolves*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Students also are expected to ready a daily national newspaper such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* (online additions will suffice).

Requirements:

1. Exams (70%): Two in class essay exams. Higher exam score counts for 40% of course total and lower exam counts for 30% of course total.
2. Quizzes (4 x 5% each = 20%): Four in class quizzes.
3. Classroom Contribution (10%): Determined by students' attendance, attentiveness, and contribution to class discussions.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Increase substantive understanding of the legislative process.
2. Motivate increased participation in the political process.
3. Increase newspaper readership.
4. Sharpen critical thinking and information gathering skills.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism: Using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the "Student Academic Misconduct Policy" located at: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred for investigation.

2. UNLV requires all members of the university community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit the UNLV copyright web page (<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>).

3. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The DRC is the official office to review and house disability documentation for students, and to provide them with an official Academic Accommodation Plan to present to the faculty if an accommodation is warranted. Faculty should not provide students accommodations without being in receipt of this plan. UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: Voice (702) 895-0866, TDD (702) 895-0652, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.

4. Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up

missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the last day at late registration of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university which could not be avoided. Beyond observance of religious holidays, make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well) only.

5. The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex. Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>

6. Lecture begins at 2:30 and ends at 3:45. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for its duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Repeated interruptions, including ringing cell phones and pagers and text messaging, will adversely affect your final grade. It is your choice to take this course; if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unable to meet its expectations, do not enroll.

7. It is expected that assigned reading will be completed prior to lecture.

8. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of material presented in lecture and readings. Rather, students are expected to synthesize course material in a coherent and succinct manner that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their understanding (e.g., you will need to think and apply yourself to do well in this course).

9. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93.0	B = 86.9–83.0	C = 76.9–73.0	D = 66.9-63.0
A- = 92.9–90.0	B- = 82.9–80.0	C- = 72.9–70.0	D- = 62.9-60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9– 67.0	F = 59.9-0

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
August 24	Course Overview	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: Preface
Part I: Congressional Elections and Representation		
August 26, 31	The Context of Congressional Elections	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 3 Jacobson: chs 1 and 2
September 2	Micro and Macro Level Explanations of Congressional Elections	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 4 Jacobson: chs 4, 5, and 6
September 7	Labor Day Recess	
September 9	The Incumbency Effect	Jacobson: ch 3
Quiz 1		
September 14	The Impact of Elections on Congress	Jacobson: ch 7
September 16	Representation in Washington and at Home	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: chs 1 and 5
Part II: The Institution of Congress		
September 21	Congress in Historical Perspective	Mann and Ornstein: ch 1 Polsby: ch 1
September 23	The Formal Powers of Congress	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 2
September 28	House and Senate Differences	Polsby: ch 2
Quiz 2		
September 30	Institutionalization of Congress	Mann and Ornstein: ch 2 Polsby: ch 3
October 5	Congressional Organization and Institutions	Mann and Ornstein: ch 3 Polsby: chs 4 and 5
October 7	Exam 1	

Part III: Internal Dynamics and Decision Making

October 12, 14	Rules and Procedures	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 8
October 19, 21	Parties and Leaders	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 6 Mann and Ornstein: ch 4
October 26, 28	Committees and Subcommittees	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 7
November 2	Decision Making	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 9

Quiz 3

Drop Deadline

November 4	Policy Making	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: skim chs14 and 15 Mann and Ornstein: chs 5 and 6
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Part IV: Congress and the Political Environment

November 9, 16	Congress and the President	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 10 Mann and Ornstein: ch 7
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November 11 **Veterans Day Recess**

November 18, 23	Congress and Organized Interests	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 13
November 25	Congress and the Bureaucracy	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 11

Quiz 4

November 30	Congress and the Federal Courts	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 12
December 2	Congress, the Media, and Public Opinion	Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 16 Mann and Ornstein: ch 8

December 9 **Exam 2, 3:10 – 5:10**

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.