**Rutgers Model Congress**

**POL: 790:491:03**

**Fall 2015**

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**Class Time: Office Hours:**

Wednesday Wednesday

9:10 – 10:30 pm 8:00 – 9:00 pm

Scott Hall 101 Art Library

**Course Description and Objectives:**

This course is the product of an ongoing collaboration between IDIA and the Department of Political Science. Its basic function is to help student leaders prepare for the upcoming Rutgers Model Congress conference, although there are other valuable learning objectives to consider:

1. Learn to objectively analyze contemporary policy issues relevant to the broader study of American politics and government
2. Continue to develop your written and spoken communication skills
3. Explore an advanced topic in American domestic or foreign policy through advanced independent research
4. Practice the responsible and effective use of primary and secondary sources to achieve Objectives 1 and 3.
5. Deepen your understanding of how members of Congress negotiate competing domestic and global interests to formulate public policy.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

*Class Participation 10%*

*Two Policy Briefs (A & B) 90% (45% each)*

**Class Participation:** It is crucial that you come to class prepared and ready to engage your classmates; and informed discussion during our meeting time will help you and others learn and critically analyze the material. In order to encourage you to participate, a small portion of your grade (10%) will be determined by your attendance and level of engagement in the classroom.

**Policy Briefs:**  Throughout the semester, you will submit rough drafts of sections of your briefs. They are due before class and must be submitted via SAKAI. These rough drafts will not receive grades for credit besides a PASS/FAIL notation. If you fail a particular assignment, you will earn a 5% deduction from that policy brief grade. Both final drafts of the policy briefs (A & B) are due at the last class meeting. They will be graded on an A-F scale and will each constitute 45% of your course grade (90% total).

All assignments are due in electronic format on the Monday preceding the class in which they are assigned. You must also bring a hard-copy of the assignment for our Wednesday class. (For Example: Your hard-copy draft of the Chronology section for the first brief is assigned for our Wednesday class on September 16, but you must submit it electronically on Monday 14.) Failure to do either results in a 2.5% loss of points for the final grade of that brief. (In other words: if you fail to submit an electronic copy by Monday, you will lose 2.5 points, or if you fail to submit a hard copy on Wednesday, you will lose 2.5 points. If you fail to do both on time, you will lose 5 points.)

These electronic copies must be submitted by 5pm on Monday to the Assignments tab on Sakai. The instructor and directors will review them and provide you with feedback by our class on Wednesday. All drafts will be automatically evaluated by TurnItIn.com for plagiarism. **IF YOU PLAGIARIZE, YOU WILL FAIL THE COURSE!**

**Course Materials**

Since this course is technically an independent study, there are no required readings for purchase. I may post readings to our course via SAKAI that will either assist you with your policy briefs or may be useful in your understanding of the workings of the US Congress.

**Class Policies**

1. **Attendance:** You must attend all class meetings and arrive on time. Your full participation is necessary for your success and the success of your classmates. Because we only meet once a week, each class is critically important. You are allowed to miss one class (for a legitimate reason – i.e. sickness); beyond that you will receive a 5% deduction from your participation grade for each class missed.
2. **Deadlines:**  It is your responsibility to meet all of your deadlines. If you do not submit an assignment before class begins, then you will receive a failing grade for that assignment (5% deduction from that policy brief grade). **There are no late submissions for assignments!**
3. **Limitations on documented excuses:**  I do not, under any circumstances and regardless of authenticity and documentation, accept excuses after I have submitted course grades. If you have any difficulty during the semester, I expect you to alert me during the semester.
4. **Class Conduct:** The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the right of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Student conduct, which disrupts the learning process, will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action or removal from class per university policy.

**Sakai**

Our class Sakai website will have a variety of resources to help you throughout the semester. You will find recommended readings, assigned readings that are not in the text book, and lecture notes (found in the “Resource” section). The Sakai site also contains a discussion forum and chat room. Please use these areas to post materials you may find to be helpful to others as well as any questions you may have about the course. If you have a question, chances are that other people will as well, so please post them in the chat room so everyone can benefit from them. I check the chat room periodically and will answer any questions then. Please also scan through the chat room to see if others have already asked your question.

To access the class Sakai website, (1) sign on to sakai.rutgers.edu, (2) sign in using your RU screen name, and (3) click on the class tab at the top of the page.

### Syllabus

### (\*Subject to Change\*)

**Wednesday (9/2) Introductions, Syllabus, and Theme (Constitutional Rights)**

* Discuss requirements of the course
* Overview of Brief Sections
* Provide explanation of the Theme (Constitutional Rights)
* Short lecture on Constitutional Rights
* Short lecture on Committee system and Jurisdictions (Federalism)
* Assignment: Abstract and Committee Jurisdiction

**Wednesday (9/9) Research Skills and Policy Dilemmas**

* Research methods via library databases – everyone bring in a laptop.
* Short presentation of Policy Dilemmas and class brainstorming on improvements
* Assignment: Policy Dilemma A

**Wednesday (9/16) Chronology**

* Short lecture on Congress and Electoral Behavior/Interest Groups
* Short lecture on effective writing and peer-review process
* Peer Review Chronology Drafts
* Assignment: Chronology A

**Wednesday (9/23) Actors and Interests**

* Brief lecture on Causality and Framing Research Puzzles
* Short presentation of Actors and Interests drafts
* Assignment: Actors and Interests A

**Wednesday (9/30) Causes**

* Peer Review Actors/Interests and Causes Drafts
* Assignment: Causes A

**Wednesday (10/7) Final Components**

* Peer Review Full Draft Brief
* Assignment: Projections and Implications, Conclusion, Bibliography A

**Wednesday (10/14) Revisions**

* Meet with Directors and Instructor
* Assignment: Final Brief A

**Wednesday (10/21) Policy Dilemmas**

* Short presentation on Policy Dilemma and Class Brainstorming
* Assignment: Policy Dilemma B

**Wednesday (10/28) Chronology**

* Peer-Review Chronology Drafts
* Assignment: Chronology B

**Wednesday (11/4) Actors and Interests**

* Short presentation on Actors and Interests Draft
* Assignment: Actors and Interests B

**Wednesday (11/11) Causes**

* Peer Review Actors/Interests and Causes Draft
* Assignment: Causes B

**Wednesday (11/18) Final Components**

* Peer-Review Full Draft Brief
* Assignment: Projections and Implications, Conclusion, Bibliography B

**Wednesday (11/25) Thanksgiving Break – No Class**

**Wednesday (12/2) Revisions**

* Meet with Directors and Instructors
* Assignment: Final Brief B

**Wednesday (12/9) Teaching Skills**

* Discuss effective techniques for Model Congress Event
* Conference Simulation Services

**Wednesday (12/16) Course Evaluation and Reflection**

* Continue discussion on techniques and reflect on class experience
* Assignment: Revised Final Briefs A and B