CONGRESSIONAL POLITICS
POL: 790:304:01
Fall 2016
Catherine Wineinger
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CLASS TIME:  
M/W 2:15–3:35 p.m.  
Art History Hall 200

OFFICE HOURS:  
W 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. or by appt.  
Hickman Hall 310

“I understand why so many Americans are fed up with government. The 112th Congress was almost universally derided as the worst ever. It was the most polarized body since the end of Reconstruction, according to one study, and I grew embarrassed by its partisan bickering, inactivity, and refusal to address the vital challenges facing America.”

-Olympia Snowe (2013)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course explores scholarly debates and theories to help address the major questions about Congress that we hear every day. Why is Congress so unpopular? How representative is Congress of the American public? How are laws actually made? What are the causes and consequences of party polarization in Congress? What institutional factors impact policy outcomes? How does money matter in Congress? The goal of this course is to take us beyond the realm of popular opinion and media commentators, and to help us develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of congressional politics. Students are encouraged to bring relevant news articles to class for the purpose of discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
By the end of this course, successful students will be able to:

- understand and explain the legislative process and other functions/roles of Congress
- construct and evaluate analytical arguments about congressional politics in the United States
- apply their knowledge of research and theories of Congress to broader current events

REQUIRED TEXT
[Abbreviated SRVW]

*All other required readings will be posted under the “Resources” tab on Sakai.

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**Earning Your Grade:**

*Midterm (30%) – October 26th*
- Consisting of short answer and application essay questions

*Critical Analysis Paper (35%) – Due December 14th*
- You are required to complete a 10-12 page (double-spaced, 12pt. font, 1-inch margins) paper that critically analyzes a topic related to congressional politics. A one paragraph description of your paper topic must be submitted to me for approval via Sakai by November 14th. You will not receive a grade higher than a B if you do not submit a topic.

*Final Exam (35%) – Date TBA*
- Cumulative; same general format as midterm

**Class Conduct:** This classroom is an environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is therefore essential 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.

**Attendance/Abseceses:** I expect you to be in class and to participate in class discussions. Exams draw heavily from lecture material, making it difficult to perform well if you are not regularly present in class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.

**Extensions/Make-up Exams:** If you become ill or have some other emergency and cannot turn in a paper or take an exam on the scheduled day, you must notify me ahead of time and provide documentation. Extensions and make-up exams apply to emergency situations only. No exceptions.

**Office Hours/Contact:** I want you to succeed, and I am here to help! If you have questions, concerns, or would like to further discuss readings/assignments, please feel free to reach out to me. You can stop by my office hours on **Wednesdays from 11:00-1:00**, or email me at c.wincinger@rutgers.edu to schedule an appointment.

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses at Rutgers. The minimum punishment is the receipt of a grade of an F in the course. For further information, you can consult the university’s policy: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours or after lecture. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Office of Disabilities Services, 77 Hamilton Street. (732) 932-7896.

**Student-Athletes:** If you are an NCAA student-athlete, please provide me with your travel and home event release form as soon as possible.
**Course Outline and Reading Assignments**

*Subject to change*

**Week 1: Course Introduction and the Study of Congress in Political Science**

W (9/7): No required readings this week, but recommended readings can be found on Sakai

- Noel (2010), “Ten Things Political Scientists Know That You Don’t”
- U.S. Constitution, Article 1

**Week 2: Modern Trends/Representation**

M (9/12): - SRVW Ch. 1: “The Troubled Congress”

W (9/14): - SRVW Ch. 2: “Representation and Lawmaking in Congress: The Constitutional and Historical Context”

-Fenno, “U.S. House Members and Their Constituencies”

**Week 3: Who Should Be Represented? Who Is Represented?**


-Pitkin (1967), *The Concept of Representation*, Introduction


**Week 4: Congressional Elections**

M (9/26): - SRVW Ch. 3: “Congressional Elections”

-Friedman and Holden (2009), “The Rising Incumbent Reelection Rate: What's Gerrymandering Got to Do with It?”


**Week 5: What Do Members Want, and How Do They Get It?**

M (10/3): - Mayhew. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Ch. 10

W (10/5): - SRVW Ch. 4: “Members, Goals, Resources, and Strategies”

**Week 6: How a Bill Becomes a Law**

M (10/10): - SRVW Ch. 7: “The Rules of the Legislative Game”

-SRVW Ch. 8: “The Floor and Voting”

W (10/12): - Sinclair (2012), *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, Ch. 8

-Sinclair (2012), *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, Ch. 1
**Week 7: Parties and Polarization in Congress**
M (10/17): -SRVW Ch. 5: “Parties and Leaders”
   -Cox and McCubbins (1993), *Legislative Leviathan*, Ch. 5

W (10/19): -Lee (2009), *Beyond Ideology*, Ch. 8
   -Binder (2014), “Polarized We Govern?”
   -WaPo article (4/27/12), “Let’s Just Say It: The Republicans Are the Problem”

**Week 8: Congressional Committees**
M (10/24): -SRVW Ch. 6: “Standing Committees”
   -Norton, “Transforming Policy from the Inside” in *Women Transforming Congress*
   *Midterm Exam Review – come with questions*

W (10/26): *MIDTERM EXAM*

**Week 9: Congress, the President, and the Courts**
M (10/31): -SRVW Ch. 9: “Congress and the President”

W (11/2): -SRVW Ch. 10: “Congress and the Courts”
   -Monkey Cage article (2/10/16), “Is it a problem that judges no longer have experience working in Congress?”

**Week 10: Creating Public Policy**
   -Monkey Cage article (4/7/16): “Clinton was a more effective lawmaker than Sanders”

W (11/9): *Post-Election Recap!*
   -Read news coverage of the election results, and **come prepared to discuss** the outcome and its implications for policy-making in the 115th Congress

**Week 11: Lobbyists and Interest Groups: Who Influences Policy?**
   -Vox article (6/23/16): “Liberals say Congress can’t pass gun control…”
   *Paper topic is due today on Sakai by midnight!*

W (11/16): -SRVW Ch. 11: “Congress, Lobbyists, and Interests Groups”
   -Hall and Deardorff (2006), “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy”

**Week 12: Should We Abolish the Filibuster?**
   -Binder, Madonna, Smith (2007), “Going Nuclear, Senate Style”
   -Monkey Cage article (12/16/13), “If the Filibuster Doesn’t Survive…”

W (11/28): *Readiness Day*
**NO CLASS – ENJOY YOUR FALL BREAK!**

**Week 13: Racial and Gender Politics in Congress**

-Monkey Cage article (6/16/16), “Are Women Actually More Bipartisan?”

**Week 14: Putting the 114th Congress into Context**
M (12/5): -SRVW Ch. 12: “Congress and Budget Politics”


**Week 15: Progress in the Study of Politics?**

W (12/14): *Final Exam Review
*CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER DUE (bring hard copy AND upload to Sakai)

**FINAL EXAM: TBA**