



Congress and the Legislative Process

Political Science 221

Spring Quarter 2020

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Course Description

“I’ve had the good fortune and blessing to run for offices for which I really wanted to do the work.”

– Kamala Harris

This course provides an analysis of congressional elections, the structure and operation of the United States Congress, the behavior of its members, and the relationship of the Congress to interest groups, the public, the President and the bureaucracy.

Course Learning Outcomes:

This course will introduce you to the study of the United States Congress and the legislative process. The course will focus on the balance of power between Congress and the other branches of government and the dynamic nature of the relationship among all of the branches, as well as the ways that power has shifted from one to the other throughout history. We will utilize some of the basic tools political scientists use to understand political behavior, but with the added perspective of the understanding the behavior of members of Congress. By the end of the term, students will have developed a basic understanding of the functions of Congress, and how the functions of the legislative process impact the effectiveness of this political body. Students will also be able to articulate the ways that Congress influences processes such as judicial appointments, setting the national budget, and foreign policy. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand both the unique, and overlapping, powers and functions of Congress and other branches of government.
2. Articulate the impact of Congress on domestic policy, foreign policy and judicial appointments.
3. Identify the changing power dynamics between Congress and the other two branches of government over time and under what circumstances.
4. Understand the ways that interest groups play a significant role in influencing Congressional actions and decisions.
5. Situate current Congressional decision-making using a historical lens to assess these processes.

Political Science Program Learning outcomes:

- Define and discuss core concepts within the field of political science, including but not limited to: power, democracy, representation, authoritarianism, freedom and equality.
 - Describe the key features of the American political system.
 - Compare American institutions to other forms of government found in different countries and regions of the world.
- Analyze a given political issue from a multiplicity of perspectives.
 - Identify, analyze, evaluate, and draw upon a variety of theoretical perspectives to explain particular political phenomenon.
 - Collect, organize, and apply various forms of information to assess statements or hypotheses about political questions.
- Compose clear and well-organized explanations of political phenomenon and support these explanations with evidence.
- Explain and evaluate a sophisticated conception of justice.
 - Identify and describe situations in which justice concerns arise, and take an informed position about the meaning or demands of justice.
- Recognize and describe the importance of values to political attitudes and behavior, and be able to identify and explain their own values.
 - Articulate one's own normative assumptions about politics, society, and other peoples.
- Identify and explain:
 - The key elements of the inter-state system.
 - The nature of globalization.
 - The dynamics of a particular country or region of the world.

DePaul University College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Mission Statement:

As a university, DePaul pursues the preservation, enrichment, and transmission of knowledge and culture across a broad scope of academic disciplines. It treasures its deep roots in the wisdom nourished in Catholic universities from medieval times. The principal distinguishing marks of the university are its Catholic, Vincentian, and urban character.

Required Texts:

- Adler, E. S., Jenkins, J. A., Shipan, C. R. (2019). *The United States Congress*. W. W. Norton & Company: New York.
- Thurber, J. A. (Ed.). (2018). *Rivals for power: presidential-congressional relations*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Recommended Texts:

- Tate, K. (2002). *Black Faces in the Mirror: African Americans and Their Representatives in the U.S. Congress*. Princeton University Press.

Teaching/Learning Methods:

The majority of the class will be discussion based, in addition to some writing and a group project. You cannot be an active participant in class discussions without having read the material. You must be prepared to be an active participant in our discussions so that we may all come to further our knowledge of the American presidency. You need to read the material assigned for each class before coming to class so that you are sufficiently prepared to discuss the material. Additionally, since much of what we discuss will involve current events, you should be paying attention to the news. If you find news sources of interest to you that we have not discussed in class (podcasts, blogs, video series, TV shows, etc.), please send them to me and we can post them on D2L for everyone to access.

We will do some writing as part of the class assignments. There will be one paper (4-5 pages) for this class. Class discussions and the paper are the two ways we actively engage with the material we study, and thus are the two major ways we learn. It is important that you understand the material and are able to communicate that understanding.

Writing is an important part of the learning process, as well as a skill vital to your future activity both in and out of school. We will spend some time class discussing scholarly sources and expectations for the writing assignment.

There will also be one midterm exam and one final examination. They will consist of multiple choice and essay questions. The purpose of the exams is to assess how well you are learning the material, and to challenge you to synthesize ideas and discriminate among them in a sophisticated manner. They are also designed to make sure you are keeping up with the reading.

University and Class Policies

Attendance

Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. Absences will only be excused for health conditions (a doctors' note is required) and required university activities. These must be approved in advance by the instructor. You will be permitted 2 unexcused absences during the semester. The third absence, and all subsequent absences will result in 5% reduction in your final grade for each instance.

Cell Phones, Pagers, and other Electronic Media

Anything that will disturb you or your classmates while we are in session should be turned off. If your cell phone goes off once, you will get a dirty look. If it goes off twice, you will be asked to leave. If you are using your cell phone during class for any reason, you will be asked to leave and not return.

Instructional Uses of Technology

The content, delivery and assessment of this course is augmented by the use of the following academic technologies:

- Tools/Applications Used to Aid in the Delivery of Instructional Content
- Power Point
- Desire 2 Learn (or other Grading Software)
- Desire 2 Learn Tools (e.g. Assignment submissions)
- Use of Originality Software (e.g. Turn It In)

Grade Calculation

Grades are computed on the following percentage scale:

90-100	=	A	(360-400 points)
80-89.9	=	B	(320-359 points)
70-79.9	=	C	(280-319 points)
60-69.9	=	D	(240-279 points)
0-59.9	=	F	(under 240 points)

All written assignments are graded based on content, organization, grammar, style, and presentation. All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the designated date.

Evaluation Methods:

The weight for these various assignments is as follows:

1 midterm exam	@	50 pts each	=	50
1 short paper	@	50 pts each	=	100
Participation x 10 weeks	@	10 pts	=	100
Group Project: Debate	@	100 pts	=	100
Final Exam	@	50 pts	=	50

Total	400
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Group Project: Debate

In week 1, I will assign you to groups for this project. The reason I do this is so that you meet new people in class, and no one winds up without a group. The debate presentations, which will be due on the dates designated in the syllabus, will be 10 minutes in length. Each debate will incorporate the following: selection of a topic from the assigned list; a thorough understanding of both sides of the debate; at least five reasons that the topic is supported by evidence from the textbooks we are reading for class. Each presentation will involve at least one citation from each of the major textbooks in the course, and at least one mainstream media source related to the debate topic you select. Each debate presentation will provide groups with an opportunity to answer the question “so what” – why do we care about what we read and how does it apply to the real world of presidential and Congressional politics? Why is this content topical and timely to our understanding of politics today? **PLEASE note that exam questions may come from these presentations – so paying close attention to these presentations is important as an observer.**

Participation:

Each day during class, there will be ample opportunity for you to participate in the discussion. To demonstrate that you have read (and even thought about!) the material prior to coming to class, each student will receive 10 participation points per class. At the beginning of each class period, each student will be given two full minutes to discuss what they found interesting from the reading assigned for that day. I like to hear your thoughts about the reading – even the critical perspectives – and we all learn from one another when everyone is engaged. These points should be easy to achieve if you read and come to class and participate each day. Note – you will not be able to make up these points, so attendance is required in order to accumulate these.

Paper

You will be assigned one small paper – approximately five to six pages. The paper will involve a discussion of a current piece of legislation that has been introduced into either house of Congress. The paper will be framed by our discussions and understanding of institutionalism and our interpretation of unitary executive theory that has driven recent presidencies. We will discuss the details of the paper in class and a formal prompt will be uploaded to Canvas, which will include the length, citation expectations, deadline to submit the paper, and opportunities for you to have a draft reviewed by me prior to submitting a final paper. The paper will need to have at least one citation from two of the assigned textbooks, at least one mainstream media source, and at least one scholarly citation to support the argument made in your paper. We will spend time discussing what a scholarly resource is and where to find them, so please don't be intimidated by that.

In-Class Assignments

These will be assignments done in groups or individually in class. The dates will not be announced, and missing class means you will also miss the points for that day's assignment.

Late Policy:

Late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day late; a paper is late 15 minutes after the start of class.

Readings and Assignments (by week):

Week 1	Topic	Required Reading
03.31.20	Course Introductions and introduction to course D2L site	Read the syllabus. Seriously.

	Representation	Chapter 3 (pp. 66-101) <i>The United States Congress</i> (Adler et al.)
Week 2	Topic	Required Reading
04.07.20	Elections	Chapter 4 (pp. 102-149) <i>The United States Congress</i> (Adler et al.)
		Chapter 6 (pp. 165-183) <i>More women can run: Gender and pathways to the state legislatures</i> (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu) – in D2L
Week 3	Topic	Required Reading
04.14.20	Policy Making	Chapter 7 (pp. 236-269) <i>The United States Congress</i> (Adler et al.)
		Chapter 10 (pp. 198-216) <i>Rivals for Power</i> (Thurber & Tama)
Week 4	Topic	Required Reading
04.21.20	Parties	Chapter 6 (pp. 196-235) <i>The United States Congress</i> (Adler et al.)
		Chapter 3 (pp. 52-74) <i>Rivals for Power</i> (Thurber & Tama)
Week 5	Topic	Required Reading
04.28.20	Committees	Chapter 5 (pp. 150-195) <i>The United States Congress</i> (Adler et al.)
MIDTERM EXAM		
Week 6	Topic	Required Reading
05.05.20	The Legislative Effectiveness of Congress and its Members	Chapter 8 (pp. 270-303) <i>The United States Congress</i> (Adler et al.)
		Chapter 2 (pp. 31-51) <i>Rivals for Power</i> (Thurber & Tama)
Week 7	Topic	Required Reading
05.12.20	Congress and the Bureaucracy	Chapter 10 (pp. 342-379) <i>The United States Congress</i> (Adler et al.)
		Chapter 5 (pp. 98-117) <i>Rivals for Power</i> (Thurber & Tama)
Week 8	Topic	Required Reading
05.19.20	PAPER DUE	No readings assigned.
Week 9	Topic	Required Reading

05.26.20	Interest Groups	Chapter 12 (pp. 416-452) <i>The United States Congress (Adler et al.)</i>
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DEBATE PRESENTATIONS DUE
Group #1 (con) vs. Group #2 (pro)
Group #3 (con) vs. Group #4 (pro)
Group #5 (con) vs. Group #6 (pro)

Debating the Presidency
Chapter 4
Chapter 10
Chapter 12

Week 10	Topic	Required Reading
06.02.20	Congress and the Courts	Chapter 11 (pp. 380-415) <i>The United States Congress (Adler et al.)</i>

Chapter 9 (pp. 181-199)
Rivals for Power (Thurber & Tama)

Week 11	Topic	Required Reading
06.09.20	FINAL EXAM	

Course Evaluations:

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable. As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted.

Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities:

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations:

- Loop Campus – Lewis Center #1420 – (312) 362-8002
- Lincoln Park Campus – Student Center #370 – (773) 325-1677

Students who are registered with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact me privately to discuss how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use in this course. This is best done early in the term. Our conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Taken from the [Center for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Honesty:

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas.

Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>) for further details.

Writing Center:

I strongly recommend you make use of the Writing Center throughout your time at DePaul. The Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Visit www.depaul.edu/writing for more information.

Sexual and Relationship Violence:

As a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. Classroom relationships are based on trust and communication. Sometimes, material raised in class may bring up issues for students related to sexual and relationship violence. In other instances, students may reach out to faculty as a source of help and support. It is important for students to know that faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students should also know that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response. Students seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu). Students seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or hpw@depaul.edu). More information is available at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/hpw/shvp.html>. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.