

PLS 3370 - 01 The Legislative Process

Professor: Lee Hannah, Ph.D.

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Time: T/Th 12:30-1:50 PM

Location: Millett Hall 286

Dates: January 11 – April 30, 2021

Office: 317 Millett Hall

Office Hours: Th: 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM and
by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Legislatures are instrumental to the function of representative democracy in the United States. At a very basic level, the size of our population and the resulting transaction costs makes direct democracy untenable. Legislative bodies reduce these costs by selecting a few individuals who collectively deliberate and create laws on behalf of society. Today, Congress and legislatures are met with deep skepticism and concern. While many citizens believe their member of Congress does a good job representing their interests, they also believe the institutions themselves are broken, corrupt, inefficient, and perhaps, unnecessary. What causes people to have such disparate views? How do the institutions of Congress actually function and who has influence over legislation?

This course is about legislatures in the United States and the lawmaking process. We will explore several topics central to legislatures, including how they evolved, the rules that structure their operation, who serves, and what influences legislators' behavior once in office. We will also examine how legislatures interact with other political actors including parties, interest groups, and other branches of government. This course is designed to move beyond social commentary and take a broader look at the institutions of legislatures and the behavior of its members. This course happens to unfold at the same time as the 117th United States Congress begins its legislative session and President-elect Joe Biden is sworn into office. We will apply the course material to these events as they transpire.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the trade-offs that are made in representative government and will gain a greater appreciation for the environment in which legislators operate, the influence of outside forces and the realities of inter-branch relations.
- Explain competing theories and explanations for policy gridlock and polarization.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the institutions, rules, and procedures of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures.
- Engage in thoughtful and critical commentary concerning the U.S. Congress and state legislatures.

EXPECTATIONS

- 1) **Attendance:** You are expected to be in attendance during the class time – either in-person or online. The course is offered through flexible delivery, meaning class will be recorded in real time. See Wright State's Add/Drop Policy [Wright State's Add/Drop Policy](#) and [Wright State's Excused Absence Policy](#).
- 2) **Preparation and Participation:** I expect you to read the assigned material before class and be able to discuss what you read in class.

- 3) **Respectful Discussion:** We are living in the midst of a very polarizing political era. We will be discussing controversial current events in this course. There will inevitably be divergent opinions, some of them very strong, amongst the class. It is important that you be respectful of your peers and their opinions, lived experiences, and beliefs.
- 4) **Do Not Suffer in Silence:** Please do not suffer in silence throughout the course if you are struggling. Instead, let me know - as soon as possible - what things are not making sense and we can work it out. If you are having a problem of any kind in the course, please talk to me about it as soon as possible.
- 5) **Academic Honesty:** All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Please consult the [Code of Student Conduct](#) for academic integrity.
- 6) **Be Flexible:** I think the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us all to be patient and flexible. We are likely to have some back and forth between online and in-person instruction. I will stay in communication with you as the course schedule might be affected.

READINGS

The readings for the course are listed for each day. You should be able to click on the embedded links in the syllabus to either go to the library webpage (where you can download a PDF of the reading) or to an external website. I have also included PDFs on Pilot for articles that come from gated sources like the *Wall Street Journal* or *New York Times*.

We will also read one book during the semester. The text for the course is available in online form and integrated with Pilot. The book has been charged to your account through student fees (\$35). However, if you prefer a paper copy, you are allowed to opt out of the text. Instructions for opting out of the text are posted under the Course Information tab on Pilot. You can also purchase an older edition of the text online (I would not go beyond the 15th edition).

Required Book:

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler. (2020). *Congress and Its Members, 17th Ed.* Sage/CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1544322957

ASSIGNMENTS

- 1) **Legislator Profile Assignment** (30% of final grade) During the semester, you will track a specific legislator in order to better understand the course content. I will post a series of short assignments that require you to analyze the legislator, their congressional district, and their role in Congress.
- 2) **Midterm Exam** (25% of final grade) The midterm exam will be drawn from class discussion and course readings. The exam includes multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.
- 3) **Final Exam** (35% of final grade) The final exam will be drawn from class discussion and course readings. The exam includes multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.
- 4) **Participation and Attendance** (10% of final grade) You are expected to come to class in-person or remotely and to actively participate in class discussion and activities. We will also have a few assignments during class that will contribute to this grade. Laptops and tablets are permitted for note taking. Students will be asked to put away technology if they are distracted by it or a distraction for their peers.
- 5) **[Graduates Only] Final Paper** (35% of final grade) – In lieu of the final exam, graduate students will write a paper. Instructions are posted on Pilot.

INTEGRATED WRITING COURSE:

PLS 3370 is designated as an “Integrated Writing” (IW) course, designed to meet WSU guidelines for developing effective writing skills. Students will be expected to produce writing that:

- 1) Demonstrates their understanding of course content,
- 2) Is appropriate for the audience and purpose of a particular writing task,
- 3) Demonstrates degree of mastery of disciplinary writing conventions appropriate to the course (including documentation conventions), and
- 4) Shows competency in standard American English.

Effective writing counts toward the final course grade. Students will meet IW requirements through the essays in the midterm and final exams, and the legislator profile project. Students should pay careful attention to grammar, mechanics, and clarity of prose in completing the course assignments and take advantage of resources like the Writing Center.¹

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES:

Wright State University is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety and stress, substance abuse problems, and depression, directly impacts students’ academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact the Counseling and Wellness Services at Wright State located in Student Union 053: <https://www.wright.edu/student-affairs/health-and-wellness/counseling-and-wellness>

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Please consult the Code of Student Conduct for questions about academic integrity.

DISABILITY:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office of Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated. It is your responsibility to notify me during the first week of the semester if such accommodations are needed. If you have questions about this, contact the Office of Disability Services at 937-775-5680 or disability_services@wright.edu.

CALENDAR AND DUE DATES:

Date	Assignment	Percent of Grade
January 21	Legislator Profile #1 – Biography	5
January 28	Legislator Profile #2 – District	5
February 4	Legislator Profile #3 – Electoral	5
February 18	Legislator Profile #4 – Committee	5
February 23	Midterm Exam	25
March 2-6	Spring Break	--
March 11	Legislator Profile #5 – Ideology	5
March 30	Legislator Profile #6 – Lobbying	5
April 15	Class canceled	--
April 27	Final	35

¹ <http://www.wright.edu/academic-affairs/programs/writing-across-the-curriculum/requirements>

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following pages include information about each week of class.² Readings from the course text are from *Congress and Its Members: 17th Edition*.³

Unit I: The Two Congresses

Week 1

January 12: Introduction to the class.

- 1) Green, Matthew. (2021 January 7). "A Dark Day." *Mischiefs of Faction*. [[LINK](#)]

January 14 – Congress and Representation

Reading:

- 1) Burke, Edmund. (1774 November 3). "Speech to Electors at Bristol." from *The Founders' Constitution* at The University of Chicago. [[LINK](#)]
- 2) Text Chapter 1
 - a. Suggested: Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review*, 57(1): 45-56. [[LINK](#)]

Week 2

January 19 – The Institutional Evolution of Congress

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 2
- 2) Madison, James. (1788). "Federalist No. 51" [[LINK](#)]

January 21 – Evolution of a Legislator's Job

***Legislator Profile #1 Biographical Assignment due at start of class.**

Reading:

- 1) Jenkins, Jeffery A., Charles Stewart III. (2018). "The Deinstitutionalization (?) of the House of Representatives: Reflections on Nelson Polsby's "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives" at Fifty." *Studies in American Political Development* 32: 166-187. [PDF on Pilot]
 - a. Suggested: Polsby, Nelson W. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review*, 62(1): 144-168.

Week 3

January 26 – Congressional Elections Pt. 1

Reading:

- 1) **Skim** Text Chapter 3

January 28 – Congressional Elections Pt. 2

***Legislator Profile #2 District Assignment due at start of class.**

Reading:

- 1) **Skim** Text Chapter 4
- 2) Rodden, Jonathan A. (2019). *Why Cities Lose: The Deep Roots of the Urban-Rural Political Divide*, Basic Books. Chapters 1 and 2. [PDF on Pilot]

² Students are responsible for knowing both university and course schedules. The academic calendar is available [here](#).

³ NOTE: Readings are expected to be completed on the date they are posted.

Week 4

February 2 – Elections and Representation: Hill Styles

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 5
- 2) Congressional Research Service. (2019). “Congressional Salaries and Allowances: In Brief.” [\[LINK\]](#)

February 4 - Elections and Representation: Home Styles

***Legislator Profile #3 Electoral Assignment due at start of class.**

Reading:

- 1) Lowande, Kenneth, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterbach. (2019). “Descriptive and Substantive Representation: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(3): 644-659. [\[LINK\]](#)
 - a. Suggested: Butler, Daniel M. and David E. Broockman. 2011. “Do Politicians Racially Discriminate against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(3):463-77. [\[LINK\]](#)
 - b. Suggested: Lee, Frances E. (1998). “Representation and Public Policy: The Consequences of Senate Apportionment for the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(1): 34-62. [\[LINK\]](#)

Unit II: Congress as a Deliberative Body

Week 5

February 9 – Leaders and Parties in Congress

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 6
- 2) A member of Congress. (2015 July 12). “Confessions of a Congressman” *Vox*. [\[LINK\]](#)
- 3) Green, Matthew. (2020 December 31). “The Politics of Governing with a Tiny Majority.” *Mischiefs of Faction*. [\[LINK\]](#)

February 11 – Party Conflict in Congress

Reading:

- 1) Lee, Frances. (2015). “How Party Polarization Affects Governance.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18: 261-282. [PDF on Pilot]
- 2) Messing, Solomon and Rachel Weisel. (2017 February). “Partisan Conflict and Congressional Outreach.” *Pew Research Report*. [\[LINK\]](#)

Week 6

February 16 – Committees: The Workshops of Congress

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 7

February 18 – Policymaking in Committee

***Legislator Profile #4 Committee Assignment due at start of class.**

Reading:

- 1) Aldrich, John H., Brittany N. Perry, and David W. Rohde. (2013). “Richard Fenno’s Theory of Congressional Committees and the Partisan Polarization of the House.” in Dodd, Lawrence C. and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered 10th Edition*, Sage/CQ Press. [PDF on Pilot]
- 2) Schmidt, Mark. (2017 July 28). “This is Why Americans Hate Congress.” *New York Times*. [[LINK](#)]

Week 7

February 23 – Midterm Exam

February 25 - Congressional Rules and Procedures

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 8
- 2) Heitshusen, Valerie. (2019). “The Legislative Process on the Senate Floor: An Introduction.” *Congressional Research Services* [[LINK](#)]
- 3) Congressional Research Service. (2019). “Resolving Legislative Differences in Congress: Conference Committees and Amendments Between the Houses.” [[LINK](#)]

March 2 – March 6 – Spring Break

Week 8

March 9 – Decision Making in Congress

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 9
- 2) Pascrell Jr., Bill. (2019 January 11). “Why is Congress so Dumb?” *Washington Post*. [[LINK](#)]

March 11 – Understanding and Measuring Legislator’s Ideology

***Legislator Profile #5 Ideology Assignment due at start of class.**

Reading:

- 1) Bump, Philip. (2020 August 13). “What Measures of Ideology Tell Us About Members of Congress – and What they Don’t.” *Washington Post*. [[LINK](#)]

Unit III: Policy Making in Congress

Week 9

March 16 – Congress and the President

Reading:

- 1) Orren, Karen and Stephen Skowronek. (2017). *The Policy State*. Harvard University Press. Chapter 2. [PDF on Pilot]

March 18 – Congress and the President

Reading:

- 2) Text Chapter 10
- 3) Saturno, James V., Bill Heniff Jr., and Megan S. Lynch. (2016). “The Congressional Appropriations Process: An Introduction.” *Congressional Research Services* [[LINK](#)]

Week 10

March 23 – Congress and the Bureaucracy

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 11

March 25 – Congress and the Courts

Reading:

- 1) **Skim** Text Chapter 12
- 2) Wawro, Gregory J., & Schickler, Eric. (2018). Reid's Rules: Filibusters, the Nuclear Option, and Path Dependence in the US Senate. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 43(4), 619-647. [[LINK](#)]
 - a. Suggested: Owens, Mark E. (2018). Changing Senate Norms: Judicial Confirmations in a Nuclear Age. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(1), 119-123. [[PDF on Pilot](#)]

Week 11

March 30 – Congress and Organized Interests

***Legislator Profile #6 Lobbying Assignment due at start of class.**

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 13

April 1 – Legislators and Lobbyist

Reading:

- 1) Ritchie, Melanie N., and Hye Young You. (2019). “Legislators as lobbyists.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 44(1): 65-95. [[LINK](#)]

Week 12

April 6 – Congress, Budgets, and Domestic Policymaking

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 14

April 8 –

Reading:

- 1) Oberlander, Jonathan. 2015. “The Political History of Medicare.” *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging*, 39(2): 119-125. [[LINK](#)]

Week 13

April 13 – Policymaking at the Federal- and State-Level

Reading:

- 1) Mallinson, Daniel J., A. Lee Hannah, and Gideon Cunningham. (2021). “The Consequences of Fickle Federal Policy: Administrative Hurdles for State Cannabis Policies.” *State and Local Government Review*. [[PDF on Pilot](#)]

April 15 – **No class.**⁴

⁴ I'm attending the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting - <https://www.mpsanet.org/events/conference/>

Week 14

April 20 - National Security Policy

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 15

April 22 - Course Conclusion

Reading:

- 1) Text Chapter 16

April 27 - Final Exam⁵

Class meets from 12:30 to 2:30 PM in 286 Millett.

⁵ Exam Schedule: <http://www.wright.edu/raiderconnect/registration/exam-schedules>