

Political Science 311-002: The Legislative Process

Syllabus

Instructor: Michael S. Rocca, Associate Professor
Office: SSH 2043
Office Hours: Wednesday, 10-11:30am, 1-2:30pm or by apt.
Email: msrocca@unm.edu

Spring 2014
Tues, Thurs 11-12:15pm
Course Website: learn.unm.edu

Scope and Purpose

This course is designed to meet two goals. First, I hope to increase your understanding of Congress as a legislative institution. Over the course of the quarter we will review how and why Congress is organized the way it is and how the rules of the game influence the legislative process. For instance, what is the purpose of the committee system? What role do the parties play within Congress? How do congressional leaders influence policy? We will also pay close attention to the behavior of the individual member of Congress. Specifically, we will discuss how and why members participate in the legislative process. What motivates members of Congress? And what role does institutional status play in their levels of participation?

The second purpose of this course is to introduce you to important theoretical and empirical works on Congress. Each week we will discuss some of the most influential debates in congressional literature. I hope these topics will introduce you to how scholars think about Congress and familiarize you with important concepts and ideas in the political science discipline. For instance, are members of Congress single-minded reelection seekers or do other goals also drive their behavior? And which theory best explains how committees are formed?

Political Science Student Learning Outcomes

The student learning outcomes for this course are consistent with all undergraduate courses in the UNM Department of Political Science. They are as follows: (1) the students will demonstrate an ability to think critically regarding political problems, trends, and developments. (2) The students will demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively. (3) The students will demonstrate strong analytical writing skills. (4) The students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts and theories in political science. (5) The students will be able to apply political science theories and/or concepts to real-world cases or be able to apply a case or set of cases using an appropriate theory. (6) The students will be able to evaluate theories, either in light of empirical evidence or on theoretical grounds. (7) The students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their rights and obligations as a citizen.

Required Readings

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, Frances Lee and Eric Schickler. 2013. *Congress and Its Members*, 14th ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.

Mayhew, David. 2004. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Course Requirements

Participation

Regular attendance is expected of you for this class. Learning the material and performance in the course are both greatly affected by your attendance and engagement. Discussion and dialogue among students and the instructor about course concepts, current and past events related to the American government, and course readings are strongly encouraged. Respect for others' opinions is an essential part of a university education – disagreements should be voiced in a courteous and civil manner.

Exams

There will be 3 exams. All three exams are worth 100 points. Make-up exams will be offered only for those students who cannot take the exams at the scheduled times for well substantiated reasons of health and personal emergency. Excuses must be cleared with the instructor prior to the exam. All make-up exams may be more difficult than regularly scheduled examinations.

Writing Assignment

There is one writing assignment during the semester, worth 100 points. The subject of the assignment will be part one of David Mayhew's classic book, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. It is due at the beginning of class on **February 20th**. The assignment will be announced one week prior to the due date, on February 13th.

Grading

The maximum score you can receive is 400 points (three exams each worth 100 points plus the 100-point assignment). Here is the course grade breakdown:

<u>Point Breakdown</u>	<u>Percentage Breakdown</u>
387 – 400 = A+	97% – 100% = A+
370 – 386 = A	93% – 96% = A
358 – 369 = A-	90% – 92% = A-
346 – 357 = B+	87% – 89% = B+
330 – 345 = B	83% – 86% = B
318 – 329 = B-	80% – 82% = B-
306 – 317 = C+	77% – 79% = C+
290 – 305 = C	73% – 76% = C
278 – 289 = C-	70% – 72% = C-
266 – 277 = D+	67% – 69% = D+
250 – 265 = D	63% – 66% = D
238 – 249 = D-	60% – 62% = D-
Less than 238 = F	Less than 60% = F

Class Policies

- My PowerPoint presentations are intended to facilitate your note taking and studying. During class, I will move at my own pace – if you have trouble keeping up with lecture, please see me for some helpful note-taking hints.
- Please turn your cell phones off before coming to class.
- Please do not text during class.
- Please do not use your laptop for anything other than taking notes during class.
- **The best way to talk about class issues is to drop by my office hours. Email is not a good way to contact me – please use email for informational purposes only.**
- If you have a serious problem, you should contact me IMMEDIATELY. I can do more to help you if you let me know what is happening before you miss deadlines.
- Re-grading Policy: If you have a question about a grade, you must provide me with a written explanation of your concerns. I re-grade the entire assignment/test. You will receive the new grade – higher or lower. You will have 7 days from the day the exam is returned to

submit a request for a re-grade. Note that the clock starts on the day that the exam is returned in class – *not* on the day you actually receive the exam (in the event you miss that class). I will not accept requests more than 7 days after they are returned.

- Questions are ALWAYS appropriate.
- I encourage students to challenge the ideas discussed in this class. In all discussion, everyone must provide his or her fellow students with full respect and courtesy.
- **Cheating and plagiarism will be punished to the fullest extent possible.** If I see a cell phone or any other electronic device on your desk or on your lap during an exam, you will receive a zero for the exam. The same goes for cheat sheets. If you plagiarize a paper you will not only receive an F for the class, you will be reported to the dean.
- All lectures, handouts, assignments and exams are the property of the professor and may not be published on the web or in any other manner without permission.

Course Outline and Readings

I. IN SEARCH OF TWO CONGRESSES

TOPIC ONE: THE ELECTORAL CONNECTION

Required Reading: David Mayhew's *The Electoral Connection*, Part I

TOPIC TWO: THE TWO CONGRESSES AND THEIR EVOLUTION

Required Reading: Chapters 1 & 2

****Mayhew Writing Assignment: Due at end of 5th week, February 20th.**

II. A CONGRESS OF AMBASSADORS

TOPIC THREE: RECRUITMENT AND CANDIDACY

Required Reading: Chapter 3

TOPIC FOUR: THE ELECTORAL GAME

Required Reading: Chapter 4

TOPIC FIVE: HILL SYTTLES AND HOME STYLES

Required Reading: Chapter 5

****First exam will cover chapters 1-5, tentatively week eight**

III. A DELIBERATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONE NATION

TOPIC SIX: LEADERS AND PARTIES

Required Reading: David Mayhew's *The Electoral Connection*, Part II & Chapter 6

TOPIC SEVEN: COMMITTEES

Required Reading: Chapter 7

TOPIC EIGHT: RULES AND PROCEDURES

Required Reading: Chapter 8

TOPIC NINE: DELIBERATION

Required Reading: Chapter 9

****Second exam will cover chapters 6-9, tentatively week 12**

IV. POLICY MAKING AND CHANGE IN THE TWO CONGRESSES

TOPIC TEN: CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT

Required Reading: Chapters 10 & 15

TOPIC ELEVEN: CONGRESS AND THE COURTS

Required Reading: Chapter 12

TOPIC TWELVE: CONGRESS AND ORGANIZED INTERESTS

Required Reading: Chapter 13

Time permitting, we will also cover this topic:

TOPIC THIRTEEN: CONGRESS AND THE BUREAUCRACY

Required Reading: *Chapter 11*

****Third exam will cover chapters 10, 12, 13 & 15, during finals week**