Course Description

This course is an introduction to the politics of the U.S. Congress. Even though we will sometimes deal with facts and figures, the main focus is to examine the workings of the U.S. Congress in a scientific way. The topics that we will intensively discuss include: 1) congressional elections; 2) goals and strategies of congressional members; 3) parties and leaders; 4) rules of the legislative game; 5) committees; 6) floor and voting; 7) inter-branch politics; and 8) scientific research on congressional politics.

Prerequisites

There is no official pre-requisite course except for junior standing. However, it is generally assumed that students are familiar with materials that are normally covered in POL SCI 104 (Introduction to American Government and Politics).

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to
1) describe how U.S. Congress has developed over time;
2) understand the key nature of congressional elections, including redistricting, incumbency advantage, and the relationship with presidential elections;
3) understand how goals and strategies of individual members affect congressional organizations;
4) describe why political parties and congressional committees are crucial in congressional politics in the United States;
5) compare the differences between the House and the Senate;
6) analyze how a bill becomes law; and
7) generalize congressional politics under the inter-branch environment.

This 3-credit course meets 3 hours of lecture per week during the semester. Students are expected to set aside a minimum of 6 hours each week studying the material and working on assignments to achieve the learning goals of the course.
**Required Texts**

There are one *required* textbook and one *recommended* book:


Students will also utilize scholarly articles to enhance their *deeper* understanding of each topic. These materials will be distributed via D2L (d2l.uwm.edu).

In addition, it is strongly recommended that students regularly read national as well as local newspapers. *The New York Times* and *the Washington Post* are two excellent sources of news on politics and government. If needed, *CQ Weekly*, *Roll Call*, and the *Hill* would be nice supplements.

Last, lecture notes (with blanks) will be distributed via Canvas. Note that this is *not* lecture slides. Students are responsible to print and bring them to the class.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

The final course grading will be based upon five parts:

1) **Exam I** (35%): The exam will be taken in class on October 24th (Wednesday). It will consist of multiple-choice, T/F, “definition,” and short-essay questions.

2) **Exam II** (35%): The exam will be taken in class on November 28th (Wednesday). It will be *cumulative*, and will consist of multiple-choice, T/F, “definition,” and short-essay questions.

3) **Legislation Project** (15%): Students will form a group (number of students within one group TBD) and conduct a research on the *history* and *politics* of one (or several) legislation(s). The choice of legislation(s) should come from the current Congress. Then, each group will present their analysis in front of class (30 minutes per group) *after* we finish Exam II.

4) **Class Attendance** (15%): Attendance is extremely important, and it is mandatory for students to come to class on time and stay until the end of class time. Attendance will be checked and the grading will be:

\[
\text{Grade} = \frac{\text{Min}(23, \# \text{Times Attended})}{23} \times 15
\]

This roughly means that students can “legally” miss the classes up to three (3) times throughout the semester.
5) **Class Participation** (Bonus, up to 5%): There will be a lot of opportunities where students can participate in class activities, and express their opinions and thoughts. Note that *quality* is more important than quantity in general.

Students who take this course under the Pass/Fail option must receive a grade of C or better in order to obtain a Pass on their final grade. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of Professor Park.

As a general rule, make-ups for exams will not be given. Students who miss exams because of scheduled activities of an official University student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact Professor Park *in advance* of missing an exam so that alternative arrangements can be made.

If there is a dispute regarding a grade, re-grading is possible under two conditions:
- We will have a “cooling” period of at least TWO business days. Any complaints or disputes will NOT be considered in this period.
- Then, all complaints must be *typed* and must clearly express specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbooks, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy.

**Classroom Policies and Instructor Availability**

All students are expected to behave professionally in this class. Professor Park is intolerant of disruptive behavior in the classroom, including talking during lectures, reading newspapers, and especially the ringing of cell phones or pagers. Laptops may be used to take notes in class, but not for playing games, checking emails, or surfing the internet. Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom in order to preserve the learning environment for other students. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of others’ opinions. Please do not intimidate, patronize, or ridicule anyone else during the course of classroom activities.

If students would like to speak with Professor Park outside of class time, feel free to stop by the office (Bolton 666) during regularly scheduled **office hours** (Mon & Wed 10:00–10:50AM). If students are unable to attend office hours, but would like to meet with Professor Park, make an appointment via email.

**Email** is a convenient way to continue contact between professor and student outside of class. Students should take advantage of this opportunity but should also do so in a professional manner. Please refer to the document, *Email Etiquette*, (uploaded to Canvas and distributed manually on the first meeting) to understand how to write a professional email.
Academic Integrity

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has detailed its policies on academic integrity (http://www3.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad_Aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm). Students should acquaint themselves with policies concerning cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and academic interference. Any submission of work by a student in this course constitutes a certificate that the work complies with university policies on academic integrity.

Student Disabilities

Any student with disabilities of any kind (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact Professor Park and the Student Accessibility Center (Mitchell 112, 414-229-6287, http://www4.uwm.edu/sac) at the beginning of the semester.

Tentative Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule for the semester. Professor Park reserves the rights to alter the reading assignments and test dates in a timely fashion according to the progress of the class. SRV indicates Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen (2015) textbook. And, Oleszek indicates Oleszek (2015) book.

1. Introduction – 9/5

2. Modern trends – 9/10
   • SRV 1

3. Constitutional and Historical Context – 9/12, 17
   • SRV 2
   • U.S. Constitution, Articles I, II, III, and Amendments

4. Congressional Elections – 9/19, 24
   • SRV 3

5. Members and Goals – 9/26
   • SRV 4
6. Parties and Leaders – 10/1, 3
   - SRV 5

7. Standing Committees – 10/8, 10
   - SRV 6

EXAM I – 10/24 (WEDNESDAY)

   - Oleszek 3-8

9. Voting – 11/5, 7
   - SRV 8

10. Interbranch Politics – 11/12
    - SRV 9-10

11. Congress and Interest Groups – 11/14
    - SRV 11

12. Budget Politics – 11/19, 26
    - SRV 12

EXAM II – 11/28 (WEDNESDAY)

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS – 12/3, 5, 10, 12