"But it is not possible to give to each department an equal power of self defence. In republican government the legislative authority, necessarily, predominates. The remedy for this inconveniency is, to divide the legislature into different branches; and to render them by different modes of election, and different principles of action, as little connected with each other, as the nature of their common functions, and their common dependence on the society, will admit. It may even be necessary to guard against dangerous encroachments by still further precautions. As the weight of the legislative authority requires that it should be thus divided, the weakness of the executive may require, on the other hand, that it should be fortified" (James Madison, Federalist No. 51).

POLITICAL SCIENCE 3321
Congress and the Legislative Process

Summer 2009 Ippolito

The U.S. Congress is a rarity in the modern world. It is powerful and independent – and a truly bicameral national legislature. Students in this course will be expected to master an understanding of Congress, its institutional development and policy-making processes, as well as Congress' place in the American constitutional structure; congressional procedures and organization; electoral and other influences on congressional policy-making; and congressional-executive relations. Midterm and final examinations (with essay and objective components) and a research paper will assess students' comprehension of these objectives. Written assignments are expected to be carefully prepared and well-organized, presenting a reasoned, factually correct, and coherent discussion of an approved topic.

Required Reading
Roger H. Davidson and Walter J. Oleszek, Congress and Its Members (11th ed).
(Course handouts as available.)

In addition, you are strongly encouraged to read, on a regular basis, a national newspaper, such as The New York Times or Wall Street Journal.

Course Requirements
Scheduled class meetings are Monday-Friday from 10:00 a.m. - 11:50 a.m. in 101 Dallas Hall. Since lectures and discussions are integral parts of the course, attendance is required and will be monitored. More than three (3) unexcused absences will result in a grade penalty. More than five (5) will result in dismissal from the course.

Grades will be based on a comprehensive evaluation that includes: (1) a midterm examination; (2) a comprehensive final examination; (3) a research paper, of specified length and format; and (4) familiarity with assigned readings and participation in class discussions.
Topics and Reading Assignments

I. Introduction to Course (June 3)

II. Origins, Development, and Powers (June 3, 4, 5)

  Read: U.S. Constitution, Article I.
  Oleszek, Chapter 1.
  Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 1-2.

III. Congressional Procedures

  A. Overview and House vs. Senate (June 8)

      Read: Baker, Chapters 1-3.
            Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 8.

  B. Introduction and Referral (June 9)

      Read: Oleszek, Chapter 3.

  C. House Action (June 10)

      Read: Oleszek, Chapters 4-5.

  D. Senate Action (June 11)

      Read: Oleszek, Chapters 6-7.

  E. Conference and President (June 12)

      Read: Oleszek, Chapter 8.

  F. Legislative Oversight and Procedural Change (June 12)

      Read: Oleszek, Chapters 9-10.

IV. Congressional Organization

  A. Committee Systems (June 15)

      Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 7.
B. Leaders and Parties (June 16)

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 6.

C. Organizational Change (and Midterm Review Session) (June 17)

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 9.

MIDTERM EXAMINATION: June 18
COVERAGE: TOPICS I, II, III, IV

V. Elections

A. Candidates and Campaigns (June 19)

Read: Baker, Chapter 4.
Nelson, Chapters 5, 8.
Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 3.

B. Voters (June 22) [Paper Topic/Outline Due]

Read: Nelson, Chapter 7.
Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 4-5.

C. National Politics (June 23)

Read: Nelson, Chapters 1-4.

D. Stability and Change (June 23)

Read: Nelson, Chapter 9.

VI. Congressional Power and Policy

A. President, Bureaucracy, Courts, Interest Groups (June 24, 25)

Read: Baker, Chapter 5.
Davidson and Oleszek, Chapters 10-13.
B. Budget Policy (June 26, 29)

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 14.
     Oleszek, Chapter 2.

C. National Security and War (June 30)

Read: Davidson and Oleszek, Chapter 15.

VII. The Contemporary Congress: Summary and Review (July 1)

FINAL EXAMINATION: July 2 (Thursday) 10:00 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.

Important Dates

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Instructor Information/Office Hours:

Dennis S. Ippolito  
221 Collins Hall  
X 83198  
TTH 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.  
(and by appointment)  
ippolito@smu.edu
Research Paper

One of the objectives of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to develop research, writing, and analytical skills. Therefore, each student is responsible for preparing a formal research paper – minimum length of 10 pages, typed, double-spaced; fully documented; appropriately organized. A topic should be chosen and a preliminary outline and bibliography submitted on or before June 22. Papers are due on or before June 29. There will be a substantial grade penalty for late papers (5 points per day).

Topics:

Nomination rejections – analyze a controversial Supreme Court nomination approved or rejected by the Senate (e.g., Bork, Thomas, Alito).

Filibuster – analyze the background and current dispute over judicial filibusters; or examine the background and development of Rule XXII on legislative filibusters.

Legislative history – analyze the background and passage of a major post-World War II legislative measure (e.g., 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1986 Tax Reform Act, 1990 Omnibus Reconciliation Act, 1996 Welfare Reform Act, etc.).

Constitutional amendments – analyze the background, initiation, and ratification of one of the following post-World War II amendments: XXII; XXIV; XXV; XXVI.


Budget policy – background and legislative history of the 1974 Congressional Budget Act.

Defense policy – analyze either the FY 2008 defense authorization bill or the FY 2008 defense appropriations bill in terms of: (a) presidential policy recommendations; (b) subcommittee/committee/floor action in the House and Senate; (c) House-Senate differences and conference action; (d) presidential action; (e) congressional and presidential influence over final bill.

Impeachment – compare and contrast the Nixon and Clinton impeachment cases.

Other topics can be chosen but require written approval. To the extent appropriate for a particular topic, government documents (committee hearings, committee reports, staff agency materials) should be used, along with other research materials.
Topical Outlines

I. Introduction

A. General Information and Requirements

B. Coverage

Constitutional
Procedural
Organizational
Electoral
Institutional/Policy

C. Reading Materials

D. Research Paper

E. Purpose
II. Origins, Development, and Powers

A. Pre-Constitutional Background

English and Colonial Periods
Revolutionary War and Articles of Confederation

B. Constitutional Framework (General)

Powers
Structure

C. Constitutional Principles and Checks

D. Constitutional Legislative Provisions

E. History of House

Formative Period (1789-1809)
Madison to Civil War (1810-1860)
Party Government and Reform (1861-1920)
Centralization, Party Cohesion, and Reform (1920-present)

F. History of Senate

Formative Period (1789-1809)
Rise of Senate (1810-1860)
Party Government and Democratization (1861-1920)
Centralization, Party Cohesion, and Reform (1920-present)

G. Distinctions between House and Senate

Powers
Size and Prestige
Organization (role of committees)
Procedures (floor action)
Party Control (majority party advantages)
III. Congressional Procedures

A. Internal and External Factors

House
Senate
General Concepts – Legislation/Terms and Sessions
General Structure and Organizational Factors

B. Introduction and Referral

Categories of Legislation
Jurisdiction
Committee Discretion
Chamber Leadership

C. House Action

Speaker and Majority Party
Committees
Rules Committee

D. Senate Action

Majority Leader
Committees
UCA’s
Filibuster/Closure

E. House, Senate, and President

Conference Committees
Negotiation and Vetoes

F. Legislative Oversight
IV. Congressional Organization

A. Committee Systems
   Types and Models
   Powers
   Trends and Reforms
   Leadership, Members, Staff

B. Committees and Parties
   Agendas
   Assignments
   Constraints
   Seniority and Term Limits

C. Organizational Change
   New Legislative Procedures

V. Congressional Elections

A. Candidates and Campaigns
   Basic Concepts – Terms, Incumbency, Types of Elections
   Sources of Incumbency Advantage
   Challengers and Resources

B. Voters
   Composition of Electorate
   Turnout
   Party Identification

C. National Politics
   Midterm Elections
   Presidential Influence
   Economic Factors
D. Stability and Change

Redistricting and Recruitment Strategies
Nationalizing Congressional Elections

VI. Congressional Power and Policy

A. Institutional Relations

President and Executive Branch
Courts
Interest Groups

B. Budget Policy

Power of the Purse – Appropriations
Budget Process/Reconciliation

C. National Security and War

Constitutional Powers and Precedent
War Powers Resolution
War in Iraq

VII. Contemporary Congress

Constitutional Factors
House vs. Senate
Congressional Elections
Congress vs. the President
The Honor Code

All work undertaken and submitted in this course is governed by the University's Honor Code. The relevant section of the Code, taken from the Preamble of the Honor Council's Constitution, is as follows:

*Intellectual integrity and academic honesty are fundamental to the processes of learning and of evaluating academic performance, and maintaining them is the responsibility of all members of an educational institution. The inculcation of personal standards of honesty and integrity is a goal of education in all the disciplines of the University.* . . .

*Students must share the responsibility for creating and maintaining an atmosphere of honesty and integrity. Students should be aware that personal experience in completing assigned work is essential to learning. Permitting others to prepare their work, using published or unpublished summaries as a substitute for studying required materials, or giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in the preparation of work to be submitted are directly contrary to the honest process of learning. Students who are aware that others in a course are cheating or otherwise acting dishonestly have the responsibility to inform the professor and/or bring an accusation to the Honor Council.*

The Honor Pledge is: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this work." *A signed copy of this pledge must be appended to any work tendered in this class.* A violation of the Code will result in an "F" for the course, and the student will be taken before the Honor Council. If you are unclear about this policy – either in general or in its particular application – please see the instructor immediately.

Submitted by Professor Joseph Kobylka

Disability Accommodations

If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Then you should schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.