

Course Syllabus

Course Information

PSC 3143: U.S. Congress

Spring 2019: Monday & Wednesday 3:00pm - 4:15pm

Kaufman Hall, 0138

Contact Information

Instructor: Matthew Geras

Office: 106 Monnet Hall

Email: mgeras@ou.edu

Office Hours: Monday 9am-11am and by appointment

If possible, contact me through email opposed to Canvas. My policy is to respond to emails within 24 hours Monday through Friday and within 48 hours on the weekends. Normally you will get a response from me much quicker, but if you have not heard back from me within this timeframe, assume that I did not get your original email and please try contacting me again.

Course Description

This course explores the history and development of both the place of Congress in the constitutional order and the internal structures and behaviors of the legislative process. Topics include elections, representation, committees, parties and leadership, collective action and coalition building, and Congress' lawmaking process.

In addition to conventional methods such as assigned readings, lectures, class discussion and interaction, and written assignments, students will explore the motivations, constraints, and opportunities that face members of Congress through a semester-long simulation in which each person will assume the role of a member of Congress at the various stages of the legislative process from crafting a reelection strategy and seeking committee assignments to introducing and debating legislation.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Required Textbooks

R. Davidson, W. Oleszek, F. Lee and Erick Schickler, *Congress and Its Members*, 16th ed.

D. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd ed.

Links to additional readings, in the form of news and scholarly articles, are provided on Canvas and within the course schedule below. Please note that you may need to use the OU WIFI or log into the OU library to successfully download these readings. Dates for all readings are detailed below. The readings for each class should be completed prior to the class where it will be discussed. Students who expect to read all of the material the night before an exam will most likely receive a poor grade.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following breakdown:

35% = Two Exams

10% = Reading Quizzes

50% = Mock Congress Simulation (cumulative of 9 assignments)

5% = Attendance

Exams (35%)

There will be two in-class cumulative exams. Exam 1 is worth 15% of your grade and will take place on **March 4th in class**. Exam 2 is worth 20% of your grade and will take place on **May 6th from 4:30pm to 6:30pm**, which is the course's designated final examination period. Makeup exams will only be given with proper documentation. If you are missing class for an excused absence, or if you have a final exam for another class scheduled during this course's final examination period, you must let me know in advance. All students missing class for excused OU related activities must turn in the appropriate documentation from your organization with the excused dates. If you miss an exam due to illness, you must provide proper documentation and let me know within 24 hours of the missed exam.

Quizzes (10%)

Throughout the semester, there will be 7 unannounced quizzes based upon the assigned readings for that day. The average of your 5 highest quiz scores will determine 10% of your grade. These short multiple-choice quizzes will take place during the first 5 minutes of class on the 7 chosen days and are designed to encourage you to keep up with the assigned readings and help you prepare for class exams. Since your grade is based upon your 5 best quiz scores, makeup quizzes will not be given. The only exception to this rule is if a student misses more than 2 quizzes due entirely to university excused absences, in which case an alternative assignment will be given for each missed quiz beyond the two free misses.

Mock Congress Simulation (50% cumulative of 9 assignments)

Throughout the semester, you will complete 9 assignments related to our mock Congress simulation. Specific instructions for each of these assignments can be found on Canvas and will also be discussed in class. These assignments range from 3 short worksheets on which you will express your preferences concerning matters pertaining to the simulation to 1 longer writing assignment which will ask you to describe the district you represent in the simulation. Your simulation grade will be calculated as follows:

1% - Assignment 1: District Preference

15% - Assignment 2: District Profile

10% - Assignment 3: Writing a Bill

5% - Assignment 4: Dear Colleague Letter

1% - Assignment 5: Committee Preference

1% - Assignment 6: Co-Sponsorship Form

5% - Assignment 7: Bill Testimony/Amendment

5% - Assignment 8: Reelection Campaign

7% - Assignment 9: Self-Assessment & Participation

Attendance (5%)

Since one goal of this class is for it to be driven largely by in-class activities including our mock Congress simulation, attending class is necessary. Students are allowed **three** no questions asked

absences. After that, excuses will be dealt with on a case by case basis in accordance with the university's attendance policies.

Grading Policy

The grading scale for this class is as follows: A = 100-90; B = 89-80; C = 79-70; D = 69-60; F = anything less than 60. Grades will only be rounded up if they are within 0.5 of the next higher letter grade. There will be no deviation from this policy. Requests to "boost" grades will be ignored and I will not discuss grades via email. If you have questions about your grade, please meet with me during office hours or schedule an appointment that works for your schedule.

Course & Instructor Policies:

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. While you will be allowed to use your laptops in class to take notes or complete in-class assignments, I reserve the right to ban the use of electronic devices when their use becomes inappropriate or a distraction to you or your classmates. You will be held responsible for all material in the textbook and in lectures, even if you miss a class. It is your responsibility to remain aware of when assignments are due and to be sure they are completed on time. I recommend that you plan ahead when working on assignments or studying for an examination to avoid unnecessary problems.

Cheating:

Cheating on exams, plagiarism on term papers, forging another's name on the attendance sheet, and forging documentation that excuses an absence will result in penalties in accordance with university policies. If you have not already, I encourage each of you to peruse the Provost's website. You may be surprised to see how many things constitute academic dishonesty.

http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html

Accommodation:

The University of Oklahoma is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact the instructor personally as soon as possible to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is located in Goddard Health Center, Suite 166, phone 405-325-3852 or TDD only 405-325-4173.

Religious Holidays:

It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays. Please see the instructor immediately if you will need to miss class any time during this semester.

Adjustments for Pregnancy/Childbirth Related Issues:

Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability. Please see

www.ou.edu/content/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.html for commonly asked questions.

Title IX Resources:

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24-7, counseling services, mutual no contact orders, scheduling adjustments, and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office at 405-325-2215 (8-5, M-F) or the Sexual Assault Response Team at 405-615-0013 (24-7) to learn more or to report an incident. *Please note that as your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter of all instances of sexual assault or sexual harassment of which I am made aware*

Course Schedule

*Note: this is the plan for the semester, but I can and will make changes as necessary.

Date	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments Due
Jan 14	Introductions Syllabus Course Overview		
Jan 16	Simulation: Isles of Ted		
Jan 21	No Class -- MLK Day		
Jan 23	Collective Action Problems Congress Overview	Smock- Dirksen Koed- Dirksen	
Jan 28	The Two Congresses Historical Development of Congress	DOLS Chp.1 DOLS Chp. 2 (pg. 19-40) Bowman- Roll Call	Assignment 1
Jan 30	The Electoral Connection	Mayhew Part 1 (pg. 11-77)	
Feb 4	The Electoral Connection	Mayhew Part 2 (pg. 79-180)	
Feb 6	Parties Matter	Aldrich & Rohde 2000	
Feb 11	Who Runs for Congress?	DOLS Chp. 3	
Feb 13	Campaigns & Electoral Strategy	DOLS Chp. 4	
Feb 18	Representation in Congress	DOLS Chp. 5	
Feb 20	How is Congress Unrepresentative? Why Should We Care?	Swers 2001 Tate 2001	Assignment 2 (Feb 24 11:59pm)
Feb 25	Representation & The 2016 Election	Setzler & Yanus 2018	
Feb 27	Loose Ends Review for Exam 1		
Mar 4	Exam 1		
Mar 6	Leadership in Congress	DOLS Chp. 6	Assignment 3
Mar 11	The Legislative Process	DOLS Chp. 8 Klein- Vox	Assignment 4 Assignment 5
Mar 13	Simulation: Party Caucus- Elections		Assignment 6 (March 17 11:59pm)
Mar 18	No Class -- Spring Break		
Mar 20	No Class -- Spring Break		
Mar 25	Committees	DOLS Chp. 7	
Mar 27	Simulation: Committees		
Apr 1	Simulation: Committees		Committee Reports (end of class)
Apr 3	Decision Making in Congress	DOLS Chp. 9	Rules Committee (April 7 11:59pm)
Apr 8	Inter-branch Relations	DOLS TBD	
Apr 10	Polarization Modern Trends	Lee 2015	
Apr 15	Simulation: Party Caucus- Strategy Simulation: Vote on Rules		Assignment 7
Apr 17	Simulation: House Floor		Assignment 8 (April 19 11:59pm)
Apr 22	Simulation: Reelection Presentations		
Apr 24	Simulation: Reelection Presentations		Assignment 9 (April 26 11:59pm)
Apr 29	Staff Working on Capitol Hill Working on Campaigns	Selin & Brant- LegBranch	
May 1	Loose Ends Review for Final Exam	DOLS Chp. 16	
May 6	Exam 2 -- 4:30pm-6:30pm -- Kaufman Hall 0138		

DOLS = Congress and Its Members

All assignments are due at the start of the class unless explicitly stated otherwise.