

**POSC 4030, U.S. Congress**  
**Course Syllabus, Fall 2013**  
Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:15 pm

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Office Hours: T&TH 3:30-4:30, or drop by my office, I'm around a lot.

**Assigned Texts**

- (1) Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler. 2013. *Congress and Its Members*, 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-45223-995-8.
- (2) Loomis, Burdett A., ed. 2012. *The U.S. Senate: From Deliberation to Dysfunction*. Washington, CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-60871-727-9.
- (3) Kaiser, Richard G. 2013. *An Act of Congress: How America's Essential Institution Works, and How it Doesn't*. New York: Knopf. ISBN: 978-0-30774-451-7.
- (4) Course Blackboard Web Site, which includes all of the readings not in your text under the course documents link.
- (5) Web-Based legislative simulation: <http://www.legsim.org/> [You must register and pay the non-refundable fee. I will provide you with a session code, etc., in order to register.]

**Course Description and Requirements**

This course examines the primary responsibilities (lawmaking and representation) and relationships (with the president, in particular) of the United States Congress. We will discuss the constitutional underpinnings of Congress, the behavior of members of Congress in their districts and in Washington, presidential-congressional relations, and the rules and procedures that make Congress a unique form of national legislature. We will only briefly cover congressional elections, as the course POSC 4420 covers that topic extensively. While we will not discuss other democratic legislatures, many of the conclusions we draw from examining Congress may apply to other legislative bodies in the various states or in other nations' legislatures. A large section of the course will focus on participation in our "LEGSIMlature," an interactive web-based legislative simulation, where students apply what they learn in class in an interactive setting.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

- (1) Students will learn key concepts and theories on the US Congress and apply those concepts and theories while engaged in an interactive simulation of the US Senate.
- (2) Students will compare and contrast theories of congressional behavior in order to explain why Congress does what it does and to better understand the role of Congress in the US political system.
- (3) Through their written work and classroom discussion, students will construct and present logical arguments supported by empirical evidence.

**Evaluation**

Grades will be determined as follows:

Exam 1 (10/1)	20%
Exam 2 (11/12)	20%
"An Act of Congress" Paper (10/29)	15%
<i>Legsim broken down as follows:</i>	
Bill Writing assignment (11/21)	15%
Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments (12/12)	20%

Class Participation and Legsim Assignments (see Note, pp 4) 10%  
Bonus Legsim Procedures Quiz\*\*

\*\*The Bonus Legsim Procedures Quiz (which is required, will add points to your 2<sup>nd</sup> exam grade based on performance).

The final grades will be determined as follows. **A: 90-100%; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 0-59%.**

The two exams will be multiple choice and short answer. Exams will focus on assessing the 3 student learning outcomes listed above. Make-up exams will only be given when students provide proof of a university-excused absence and may consist of a different format than the regular exam. I must be notified before an absence arises. If this is not feasible because of an emergency, you must contact me as soon as possible to reschedule an exam. A different set of questions from those issued during the regular exam period and a different format will comprise a make-up exam. Students must also complete the paper on *An Act of Congress*, which is an in-depth account of the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010. See the course Blackboard page assignments link for more information.

Class attendance and preparation (doing the reading) greatly influence how well you do on your exams and papers. Attendance will be taken periodically, and it is essential that you come to class and take good notes on both the lectures and the readings. *Numerous unexcused recorded absences (5+) may result in the lowering of your final grade by one letter grade.* The lectures and class discussions serve to help students understand the readings better and will also cover material not in the readings. Rather than taking attendance, I may ask students to write brief in-class responses to questions on that day's readings. These *will be unannounced*, and will be part of the participation grade. Regular attendance and participation is critical for the participation grade.

Participation and completion of the simulation requirements make up 45% of the course grade. Students must have access to a computer with web browsing capabilities in order to participate and monitor the simulation, register as a user of Legsim, as well as turn in the brief written Legsim assignments. There are also two major written assignments associated with Legsim. Students will get out of the simulation what they put into it and must take the simulation seriously in order to score well. Failure to actively participate in the simulation will have serious effects on your final grade.

The bill writing assignment and final report on your legislative accomplishments are explained extensively on the course Blackboard web site. The bill assignment that you turn in for a grade will require outside research to demonstrate the problem the legislation is meant to solve, provide where federal authority is derived for the legislation, and estimate its budgetary impact. I suggest you investigate various ideas that interest you early on during the semester. The final report will be a narrative where you demonstrate (and reflect upon) your accomplishments, justify your decisions (and participation), and develop a reelection strategy—all in light of the course concepts. In addition, you will comment on your assigned opponent's accomplishments and provide a strategy to defeat them in their reelection (you play the role as a challenger to the incumbent). Late papers/bills will be assessed a 10% penalty for each weekday they are late. Brief written assignments will not be accepted late.

### **Class Procedures and Student Responsibilities**

Students are to adhere to the proper and respectful conduct during class. It is the student's responsibility to pay attention and take good notes during class lectures, as well as to participate during class discussions. Cell phones (etc.) are to be silenced during the class period. No instant messaging, texting or checking email during class is allowed. Laptop, notebook and tablet computers are to be turned off during the class period. There are only two exceptions to the "no laptop rule": 1) Students make a written request (via email) and receive my permission to use the device during class; and, 2) During the Legsim periods, laptops are encouraged as they are a great resource for students to access the web site online to complete committee work and read various pieces of legislation.

If, for some reason, I am more than ten minutes late to class, a volunteer student should check in Brackett 232 with Ms. Angie Guido. If class is cancelled, I will send an email in advance of class.

Violations of academic honesty, including cheating or plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to borrowing ideas and paraphrasing them within a paper without properly citing them (i.e., in footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical notes), copying passages directly from sources without enclosing them in quotation marks, purchasing or stealing another person's paper to turn in, or having someone else write an assigned paper. If you have further questions regarding plagiarism, you should consult Clemson University's current *Undergraduate Announcements* catalog for information on rules and regulations related to academic integrity. I will prosecute academic honesty violations.

Clemson University's official statement on academic integrity is as follows: "As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a 'high seminary of learning.' Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form."

If a student has a documented disability that requires accommodations on the part of the instructor, the documentation must be presented to the instructor prior to, or at the time of, making the request for accommodation. Accommodations will be provided in accordance with University regulations.

### **Course Outline**

(Tentative schedule, dates subject to change)

#### **Court Introduction (8/22)**

#### **Constitutional Origins of Congress & Its Evolution (8/27-9/3, 2 class days)**

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 1 & 2

*The Constitution of the United States* (link on Blackboard)

*The Federalist 51*, James Madison (link on Blackboard)

To refresh: online lecture from my POSC 101 course: <http://connect.clemson.edu/jpeake101mod3lec1/>

**NO CLASS on August 29.** I will be in Chicago at the American Political Science Association Meetings

#### **The Congress, Today. Does it work or is it dysfunctional? (9/5, 1 class day)**

Loomis, Introduction and Ch. 1 (through p. 26)

Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government*, excerpts (Blackboard)

Listen to this: <http://www.npr.org/2012/04/30/151522725/even-worse-than-it-looks-extremism-in-congress>

#### **Congressional Elections (9/10-12, 2 class days)**

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 3 & 4

Loomis, Ch. 2.

Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (selections, on Blackboard).

\*\*Students log on to LegSim for the first time (by class time 9/10)

\*\*Students ID their party and make requests for states to represent (by class time 9/12)

#### **Representation, Home Style & Congressional Motivations (9/17-9/19, 2 class days)**

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 5.

"What is Representation?" H. Weisberg (Blackboard)

"US House Members in Their Constituencies," 2 parts, R. Fenno (Blackboard).

*Congress: the Electoral Connection*, David Mayhew, selections (Blackboard).

\*\*Assigned states for Legsim will be announced (9/19)

#### **Parties & Party Leadership (9/24-9/26, 2 class days)**

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 6

“CQ Party Unity Study for 2012,” see Blackboard or <http://library.cqpress.com/cqweekly/weeklyreport113-000004207218>

Loomis, Ch. 5

For a refresher, an online lecture from my POSC 101 course: <http://connect.clemson.edu/jpeake101mod3lec2/>

**\*\*Students complete Member/State Profile** (online entry, due by 9/26, 11:59 PM)

**\*\*Parties Caucus for the first time** (9/26, last 3<sup>rd</sup> of class period), separate meetings, select leaders, discuss strategy. Instructor assigns and introduces the Majority Leader to the Leader’s Desk.

### **Exam 1 (in class 10/1)**

#### **Congressional Committees** (10/3, 1 class day)

Primer lecture on Legislative Process (must complete outside of class):

<http://congress.indiana.edu/e-learning-module-the-dynamic-legislative-process>

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 7.

**\*\*1<sup>st</sup> Legsim Assignment (Journal) due** (online entry, due by 10/3, 11:59 PM)

#### **Congressional Rules & Procedures** (10/8-10/10, 2 class days)

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 8.

Loomis, Ch. 6, 7 and 8.

**\*\*Students request Committee Assignments from leadership** (by class time, 10/10)

### **Fall Break (No Class, 10/15)**

#### **Congressional Decision-Making & Deliberation** (10/17, 1 class day)

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 9.

Kingdon, “Models of Congressional Decision-Making” (see Blackboard)

**\*\*Leaders assign Committee Positions** (by 10/17, 11:59 PM)

**\*\*Students complete LegSim Procedures Quiz—on Blackboard** (by 10/17, 11:59 PM)

#### **Congress & the President** (10/22-10/24, 2 class days)

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 10.

“CQ Vote Study on Presidential Support for 2012”, on Blackboard or

<http://library.cqpress.com/cqweekly/weeklyreport113-000004207218>

**\*\*2<sup>nd</sup> Legsim Written Assignment (Journal) due** (online entry, due by 11:59, 10/22)

**\*\*Instructor assigns opponents**

#### **Congress, Policymaking and the Budget** (10/29, 1 class day)

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 14

**PAPER DUE 10/29** (Paper on the book, *An Act of Congress* is due. See Blackboard for details).

#### **LegSim Procedures Day** (10/31, half of class, be there, as committees meet for first time)

**\*\*Committees Meet, Elect Committee Chairs & discuss agendas** (during class time)

**\*\*Party Leaders assign Committee Chairs on Legsim**

#### **Congress & the Separation of Powers** (10/31-11/5, 1.5 class days)

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 11-12

Loomis, Ch. 9.

#### **Congress and Foreign Policy** (11/7, 1 class day)

*Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 15.

Loomis, Ch. 11

“President Obama, the Senate, and the Polarized Politics of Treaty-making” (Blackboard)

## Exam 2 in class (11/12)

**11/14 Class “deferred” due to Tigers football game.** Committees will plan one out-of-class meeting between 11/12 and 11/19 to discuss the committee agenda. Detailed minutes and attendance will be required.

**\*\*Students submit first bill (online on Legsim by 11:59, 11/18, i.e., prior to class on the 19th)**

*Note: This is when legislating begins in earnest.*

## Simulation Days (including 11/19, 11/21, 11/26, 12/3, and 12/5)

\*\* Includes in-class committee meetings, debates on legislation, floor voting, etc.

\*\* Committees may need to meet outside of class-time, as well as online through the Legsim website.

\*\* Legislation will be debated and voted on the Legsim web site, in addition to in class. Participation in online voting / debate is tracked, so be sure to participate there as well. The likely time frame is we will focus on committee business on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, with floor action during the final 3 days of class.

**\*\*Students submit Bill Writing Assignment to instructor (by 11/21).** It will be graded and turned back, with opportunity to resubmit for a new grade.

**\*\*3rd Legsim Written Assignment (Journal entry)** (online submission, due by 11:59 pm, 11/21)

**\*\*12/6 through adjournment (Thursday, December 12, exam period), online meeting/debating/voting continues. Be sure to check the Legsim web site & email.**

**\*\*All Last Minute bills and re-writes must be turned in by 12/12 (exam period) for grade.** Other bills may continue to be submitted but will likely stall as committees continue to work.

## Exam Period (12/12, Thursday, 8:00 to 10:30 AM)

\*\*Last Period for any remaining floor debate, Legislature Adjourns, *sine die*.

**\*\*Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments due at beginning of exam period**

\*\*Legsim debriefing.

**NOTE:** The simulation is ongoing during the final weeks of the course (including during exam week). Votes and debate will occur both in class and online at the Legsim web site. The forums for debate/voting depend upon the Motion to Consider or Unanimous Consent Agreement written for each bill—a process controlled by the leadership. Some bills will be handled entirely in class, whereas others will be handled entirely online; still, others may utilize both approaches. *Students are responsible for participating in class and online.* Make sure you monitor the web site and pay attention to calls to vote online (which will come via e-mail). Additionally, students should closely monitor their e-mail and look carefully at messages from your Committee Chairs and the Leadership, as they will notify you regarding opportunities to participate. Your participation online is closely monitored by the Legsim program and your opponents will have access to your votes, voting rates, and online debate statements. The Legsim system sends all email to me, so if you don't want me to see what are you sending, use a different email method. *The success of the simulation is incumbent upon student participation. Not participating in the simulation is the quickest way to ruin your grade in this class.* Each student should try to participate during in-class debate on at least one piece of legislation. Don't let one person do all of the speaking for your party! *Of course, effective participation can only help your course grade.* Finally, **DO NOT** volunteer for a leadership post if, for some reason, you cannot participate at a high rate.