

# POLS 30005: The United States Congress (Fall 2017)

## Course Information

Class Time: Mon./Wed., 3:30pm–4:45pm

Classroom: O'Shaughnessy Hall 115 (Until Fall Break)  
DeBartolo Hall 140 (After Fall Break)

### Professor:

Gary E. Hollibaugh, Jr.  
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Office: 2057 Jenkins Nanovic Halls  
Office Hours: Mon., 12:00pm–2:00pm  
Wed., 10:00am–12:00pm  
By Appointment

### Teaching Assistant:

Andrea Peña-Vasquez  
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Office: 2009 Jenkins Nanovic Halls  
Office Hours: Mon., 2:00pm–3:00pm  
Wed., 1:00pm–2:30pm  
By Appointment

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the political and legislative process of the United States Congress. The course will focus on a semester-long legislative simulation in which students will play the role of United States Senators. Students will organize the legislature, form parties and caucuses, select their own leaders, draft their own bills, debate, and vote on legislation. The first part of the course will consist of traditional lectures to familiarize students with how Congress works; the rest of the semester will be primarily devoted to the legislative simulation.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an appreciation for:
  - The role of Congress in lawmaking and society.
  - The goals and constraints shaping legislative behavior.
  - The legislative process, its logic, and the potential implications of reforms.
  - The value of information and the importance of agenda setting in policymaking.
- Improve communication and listening skills.
- Improve collaborative skills.
- Improve ability to plan and execute a strategy.
- Become an effective representative and legislator.

## Books and Course Materials

The following book is required:

*Congress and Its Members (Sixteenth Edition)* by Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler. (Previous editions are likely to work for most purposes, but the course will be based around the sixteenth edition.)

If you choose not to purchase this book, it will be available on course reserve in the library. Readings from this book will be assigned throughout the semester, and it will also serve as a useful references for any other readings. Online copies of all other readings will be posted on Sakai as needed.

You will also need to register and create a profile on [LegSim](#). There is a \$16 nonrefundable registration fee. The Chamber Authorization Code will be posted on Sakai before the end of the midterm break.

## Policy on Plagiarism

As members of the academic community, we each have a responsibility to uphold rigorous standards of integrity. Every student is thus expected to abide by the University of Notre Dame's Academic Code of Honor. [The Code of Honor can be found here.](#)

Plagiarism (using the ideas, words, or work of others without attribution) will result in serious consequences. If you have any questions about the Code of Honor, plagiarism, or academic honesty, please contact the instructor or the TA.

## Policy on Disabilities

Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Disability Services should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations. Students who are not registered should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#).

## Policy on Technology

This course relies heavily on access to computers and the Internet. At some point during the semester you WILL have a problem with technology: your laptop will crash, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Technology problems will not normally be accepted as excuses for unfinished work. Count on "stuff" happening and protect yourself by doing the following:

- Plan ahead — start early, particularly if scarce resources are required.
- Save work often — at least every ten minutes.
- Make regular backups of files in a different location from the originals.

- Save drafts of work at multiple stages.
- When editing an image, set aside the original and work with a copy.
- Practice safe computing when surfing the web and checking email.
- On your personal computer, install and use software to control viruses and malware.

When submitting any assignment electronically in this course, you are responsible for any technological problems (e.g., internet connection difficulties, corrupted files, etc.). To prevent problems along with the associated lateness penalties, you should submit papers well before the deadline and take proactive steps to ensure that the file was not corrupted (e.g., check it after uploading to Sakai or copy yourself on emails and check the attached file). Again, please do not trust your computer to function correctly at the last minute.

All that said, the access to computers and the Internet should generally be done outside of the classroom. Unless I grant an explicit exception, laptops, cell phones, tablets, and all other electronic devices are not allowed during class *during the lecture portion of the course*, since handwritten note-taking is associated with better comprehension and less distraction (of both the student and those around him/her). *During the simulation, laptops may be used so long as they are used solely for the purpose of the simulation.*

## Grading and Course Requirements

The structure of the course is such that the course is roughly divided into two parts. The portion of the course before the midterm break follows a more standard lecture-based structure, with homework assignments and an in-class midterm examination. The portion of the course after the midterm break will be almost entirely simulation-based.

### Part I – Lecture-Based and Reading Assignments

**Homework** (10% of grade). There will be two homework assignments. They will be assigned on August 28 and September 11, and they will be due on September 11 and September 25, respectively. Each assignment will be worth 5% of your total grade.

**Midterm Examination** (20% of grade). There will be an in-class midterm examination on October 11. It will cover the material covered in lecture as well as the material in the readings up to that point.

### Part II – Simulation Assignments

More information regarding each assignment will be provided in the Simulation Assignments Handout.

**Quiz on Senate Procedure** (5% of grade). This online quiz must be completed before class on October 30. The goal is to encourage you to familiarize yourselves with the rules for the simulation as well as the resources available in LegSim<sub>3</sub>.

**Legislative Profile** (5% of grade). Each member of the U.S. Senate represents a state, which can include just over half a million or just under forty million citizens. This task asks you to create your member profile on the LegSim website. Other students will be relying on your profile to learn more about you. Focus on the characteristics that would likely affect your own priorities and behavior as an elected representative. This is due on or before class on October 30.

**Legislative Agenda** (5% of grade). This task asks you to prepare a memo to distribute to your colleagues. In this memo you should begin with how you view your role as a representative, provide information about your personal issue priorities, and discuss how you intend to advance your issue goals given that there are many other legislators and issues competing for attention. This is due to me as well as the class (distributed via LegSim) on or before class on November 1.

**Committee Research Project** (5% of grade). This assignment asks you and your colleagues to research your committee's primary issue responsibilities.

**Major Bill** (5% of grade). This assignment asks you to research and draft an original and significant bill of your choosing. It should have accompanying text explaining the problem that the bill address, how the bill will address the problem, and the rationale for the provisions of the bill and any cost estimates.

**Reelection Tasks** (10% of grade). You can earn Reelection Points in a variety of ways. If you earn more than ten reelection points, every point you earn beyond ten is worth an additional 1/4 of a percentage point of your final grade (with a limit of five full percentage points).

**Campaign Advertisement Video and Reelection Strategy Memo** (25% of grade). This assignment is based on a rather fantastic hypothetical event—the Constitution has been amended reducing the number of Senators in each state to one. In order to win reelection, you will have to face the other Senator from your own state, regardless of what party they are in. For this assignment, write a memo to your campaign manager outlining your reelection strategy against your fellow Senator. Focus on reelection tasks you have completed (and why you have chosen the tasks you have performed, given your party and state). Also address what your opponent's shortcomings might be. Additionally, create a 30-second campaign advertisement (for yourself) that mentions at least three reelection tasks, and try to make it as realistic as possible. (For example, don't say you "performed X reelection task (committee chair) because it was worth Y number of points." Instead, say something like "As Chair of the [name] Committee, Congressperson Z has fought to ensure [something] for all residents of [state].") Note that the three reelection tasks can also include reelection tasks your opponent *did not do*; if you choose to mention your opponent, make it as realistic as possible (without *ad hominem attacks*).

**Campaign Appearance** (5% of grade). There will be no final exam. Instead, on the day of class set aside for final exams (Thursday, December 14, tentatively from 4:15pm–6:15pm), we will screen the campaign advertisements and hold mock "campaign appearances." Each Senator will present his or her campaign advertisement and will then have two minutes to hold a "campaign appearance" wherein they will summarize the most important aspects of his or her case for re-

election. Your goal will be to make the strongest case possible for your reelection in the allotted time. (Focus on explaining given the contours of your state why the things you did are good.)

**Participation** (5% of grade). Regular attendance and participation are absolutely essential to make a simulation-based course work. Your contributions to in-class activities not only provide opportunities for learning and evaluation, they also help other students learn. Accordingly, students will be evaluated based on frequency and quality of in-class participation. Students are expected to attend all classes. Failure to attend class will negatively affect your participation grade unless the absence is excused. If you cannot attend class due to an important family or medical reason, please notify the instructor or the TA in advance. You will be responsible for getting notes from a classmate.

### Extra Credit Opportunities

In addition to the extra credit opportunities provided to you by the reelection tasks, there are two additional opportunities to gain extra credit, both of which are geared towards overcoming potential collective action problems. These will be the only other opportunities for extra credit.

**Senate Majority** (Up to an extra 3% of the grade). After the debates we will have an election, with the prize being a share of a 3% pot of extra credit points. The party that receives a majority of the seats will receive a majority of the prize proportional to their majority, with the minority party receiving the remainder. So, for example, if a party received 2/3 of seats after the election, then everyone in the winning party would receive 2 additional percentage points on the final grade, and everyone in the losing party would receive 1 additional percentage point. Your likelihood of winning your own election—and thereby contributing to your party's majority—will be dependent on your ability to earn Reelection Points.

**Course Evaluations** (Up to an extra 2% of the grade). If at least 90% of the class completes a course evaluation, everyone in the class will receive one extra percentage point on his or her final grade. For each additional percentage point of the class that completes an evaluation, everyone in the class will receive 1/10 of an additional bonus point (for example, if 95% of the class completes the course evaluation, then everyone in the class will receive 1.5 additional percentage points on the final grade). The total amount of extra credit students may receive from course evaluations is two bonus percentage points. **Note that I am unable to see who fills out evaluations. I am also unable to see the contents of the evaluations until after the semester ends. I am, however, able to see what proportion of the class fills them out.**

### Grading Scale

Below is how your final percentage grade will be mapped into a letter grade. Because of the substantial opportunities for extra credit, there will be no rounding. So if you get an 89.999999% when the semester is over (for example), your final grade will be a B+. **No exceptions.**

Percentage point range	Letter grade
93+	A
90–92.999...	A-
87–89.999...	B+
83–86.999...	B
80–82.999...	B-
77–79.999...	C+
73–76.999...	C
70–72.999...	C-
60–69.999...	D
0–59.999...	F

### Late Assignments

Assignments are due at 3:30pm on the dates indicated on the syllabus. **All papers must be submitted via Sakai; written material must not be submitted in hard copy.** Written material submitted within 24 hours of the deadline will be accepted with a 25% grade reduction, and nothing will be accepted more than 24 hours after the deadline. **Because of the substantial opportunities for extra credit, there will be no exceptions.**

### Grade Appeals

All appeals must be made in writing to the instructor. No grade appeals will be considered within the first 24 hours of a grade being posted on Sakai; those that come in within the first 24 hours will be discarded. All grade appeals must be received within ten calendar days of the grade being posted on Sakai to be considered; those that arrive after this deadline will be discarded. All appeals must contain the following information:

- The name of the assignment in question.
- The reason why you believe your grade should be higher. Be specific and discuss this in the context of the requirements of the assignment.
- Determine whether you believe it is an error of calculation (that is, the instructor/TA incorrectly tabulated points), judgment (the grade received does not reflect the quality of the assignment), or both.

If the instructor determines that an error of calculation is present, then the correct grade will be calculated and the correct grade will be posted. If it is argued by the student that an error of judgment is present, then the student has the option to have the assignment graded *de novo* by the instructor. Because this will be a regrade, there is the possibility that the grade given to the regraded assignment will be lower than that given to the initial submission. Regardless, all decisions by the instructor are final.

### Policy on Email

Any requests to the instructor/TA (e.g., meetings outside of office hours) *must* be made in writing via email so we everyone has a record of the request and decision. **For emails sent between**

Monday and Thursday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 48 hours to respond. For those sent between Friday and Sunday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 96 hours to respond. The instructor endorses the general principles for email communication (for any professional communication via e-mail, not just those for this class) outlined here.

## Course Topics

**Note:** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. We may not cover all of these topics. Conversely, time permitting, other topics might be covered in this course. Moreover, even if we do not cover something in class, you are still responsible for knowing what is in the readings. More generally, note that some topics covered in lecture are not in the readings, and some topics in the readings will not be covered in lecture. They are meant to supplement—not replace—one another.

### August 23: Introduction and Overview

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 1: “The Two Congresses.”

### August 28: Origins and Development of Congress

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 2: “Evolution of the Modern Congress.”
- Toobin, Jeffrey. 2013. “Our Broken Constitution.” *The New Yorker*.

### August 30: NO CLASS

### September 4, 6, and 11: Congressional Elections

- Homework 1 due on September 11.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 3: “Going for It: Recruitment and Candidacy.”
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 4: “Making It: The Electoral Game.”
- McGhee, Eric, Brendan Nyhan, and John Sides. 2014. “Midterm Postmortem.” *Boston Review*.
- Sides, John. 2014. “Why weird congressional districts can be good congressional districts.” *The Washington Post*.
- Thomsen, Danielle. 2014. “Political polarization discourages moderate state legislators from running for Congress, making the problem worse.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.

### September 13: Representation

- Broockman, David. 2013. “Why Electing Minorities Matters.” *The Monkey Cage*.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 5: “Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles.”
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 16: “The Two Congresses and the American People.”
- Ryan, Timothy J., and David Broockman. 2016. “Voters aren’t talking to the other party’s politicians. Here’s why that matters.” *The Washington Post*.

### September 18: Congressional Parties and Leadership

- Buchler, Justin. 2015. “How divided government and party polarization brought down John Boehner.” *The Washington Post*.
- Curry, James M., and Frances Lee. 2016. “Congress is far more bipartisan than headlines suggest.” *The Washington Post*.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 6: “Leaders and Parties in Congress.”
- Harbridge, Laurel. 2015. “Congress is more bipartisan than you think.” *The Washington Post*.
- Reynolds, Molly E. 2017. “Filibuster: Republican friend or foe?” *The Brookings Institution*.

### September 20: Congressional Committees

- Berry, Christopher R., and Anthony Fowler. 2016. “Congressional committee membership is less important than previously thought, but chairs are really influential.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.
- Clemens, Austin, Michael Crespin, and Charles J. Finocchiaro. 2015. “In Congress, committees are still at the center of pork barrel politics.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 7: “Committees: Workshops of Congress.”

### September 25 and 27: Lawmaking in Congress

- Homework 2 due on September 25.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 8: “Congressional Rules and Procedures.”
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler — Chapter 9: “Decision Making in Congress.”
- Lizza, Ryan. 2013. “Getting to Maybe.” *The New Yorker*.
- Volden, Craig, Alan E. Wiseman, and Dana E. Wittmer. 2013. “On average, women in Congress are more effective lawmakers than men.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.



## October 2: Congress and the Executive Branch

- Clinton, Joshua. 2013. “More complex Congressional oversight over government agencies means reduced influence relative to that of the White House.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler – Chapter 10: “Congress and the President.”
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler – Chapter 11: “Congress and the Bureaucracy.”
- Howell, William, and Jon Rogowski. 2013. “During wartime, Congress is more willing to defer to the president on matters both foreign and domestic.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.
- Kriner, Douglas L., and Dino P. Christensen. 2017. “Congressional critics do check presidential power – by leading public opinion.” *The Washington Post*.
- Kriner, Douglas L., and Eric Schickler. 2014. “Sustained congressional investigations into the president can seriously erode their popular support.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.

## October 4: Congress and the Courts

- Dancy, Logan, Kjersten R. Nelson, and Eve M. Ringsmuth. 2014. “Judicial nominees who have confirmation hearings during divided government are much more likely to face ideological questions.” *LSE-USAPP Blog*.
- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler – Chapter 12: “Congress and the Courts.”
- O’Connell, Anne Joseph. 2017. “The end of the filibuster paves the way for more diverse courts.” *The Brookings Institution*.

## October 9: Congress and Interest Groups

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler – Chapter 13: “Congress and Organized Interests.”
- Madonna, Anthony, and Ian Ostrander. 2015. “If Congress keeps cutting its staff, who is writing your laws? You won’t like the answer.” *The Washington Post*.
- Reynolds, Molly E. 2017. “On the ACA, don’t just watch Congress—watch interest groups too.” *The Brookings Institution*.

## October 11: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

October 16: MIDTERM BREAK – NO CLASS

October 18: MIDTERM BREAK – NO CLASS

October 23: LegSim – Introduction

October 25: NO CLASS

October 30: LegSim – Organizational Meetings

- Legislator Profile due.

- Quiz on Senate Procedure due before class.

**November 1: LegSim – Caucus Meetings and Leadership Elections**

- Legislative Agenda due.

**November 6: LegSim – Committee Meetings I**

- LEADERSHIP: Assign Senators to committees before class.

**November 8: LegSim – Committee Meetings II**

**November 13: LegSim**

**November 15: LegSim**

- Committee Research Report due.

**November 20: LegSim**

**November 22: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

**November 27: LegSim**

- Major Bill due.

**November 29: LegSim**

**December 4: LegSim**

**December 6: LegSim**

**December 14: LegSim – Campaign Advertisement Presentations and Campaign Appearances (tentatively 4:15pm–6:15pm, room TBA)**

- Campaign Advertisement due.
- No more Reelection Tasks may be performed once class begins.