PSC 387.01: Legislative Politics

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Course Content

Americans rule themselves through elected officials who are responsible for advancing the interests and preferences of their constituents. This relationship is most evident in the U.S. Congress: specific politicians are responsible to specific voters at regular intervals.

This course focuses on how the politicians who are “closest to the people” get elected and make decisions that shape our society. In the process, we shall study the basic elements of legislative structure and behavior—elections, individual members, committees, parties—while noting the differences between the House and Senate.

Required Texts

- The American Congress, 3rd Ed., available online at http://congress.wustl.edu/
- Additional readings on reserve in the library

Students are required to read all assigned readings, attend all lectures, take two exams, and complete a research paper. The grade breakdown is:

  - Midterm: 20%
  - Writing assignment: 40%
  - Final: 40%

It is your responsibility to bring three blank blue books to class during the first two weeks; I will re-distribute the blue books during the midterm and final. Students will have the choice of writing papers solo or in teams of two.

Class Rules

Make-up exams are allowed in the event of illness or death in the family with documentation. There are no excuses for late papers; start papers early and protect yourself against computer failures.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 31</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 2</td>
<td>No Class. Read ahead!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 7 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Constitution and Electoral Setting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fenno, <em>The United States Senate: A Bicameral Perspective</em>, ch. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobson 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 14 &amp; 16</td>
<td>Choosing to Run; Incumbency Advantage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobson 3; also 113-116</td>
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- Schaffner, “Local Newspaper Coverage and the Incumbency Advantage in the U.S. House”  
  (know your MCs’ political career and fundraising history)

| Sept. 21, 23 | Congressional Campaigns  
  | Fenno, *The United States Senate: A Bicameral Perspective*, ch. 2  
  | Jacobson 4; also 151-170  
  (know the main issues from your MCs’ last campaigns)
| Sept 28 & 30 | Elections and Representation  
  | Jacobson 7
| Oct 5 | Midterm
| Oct 7 | Overview.  
  | Fenno, *The United States Senate: A Bicameral Perspective*, ch. 3  
  (know your MCs’ staff distribution)
| Oct 12 & 14 | Members of Congress. Lobbyists.  
  | “Study Faults Hill on E-mail” Roll Call 3/19/2001  
  | American Congress 11
| Oct. 19&21 | Committees & Caucuses  
  | American Congress 7  
  | “Caucuses Bring New Muscle to Legislative Battleground” CQ 9/27/2003  
  (know your MCs’ committee assignments and committee-related efforts)
| Oct. 26 & 28 | Parties  
  | American Congress 6  
  | “GOP Whip Team Goes Into Overtime” Roll Call 7/1/2002  
  | “House GOP Practices Art Of One-Vote Victories” W. Post 10/14/2003
| Nov. 2 | Election—Holiday!
| Nov. 4&9 | Making Decisions—House & Senate  
  | American Congress 8  
  | Sinclair, “The 60-Vote Senate”  
  (Has your MC offered amendments on the House floor?)
| Nov. 11 | Veteran’s Day—Holiday!
| Nov. 16 & 18 | The End Game: Conferences, Presidents  
  | American Congress 9  
  (Have your MCs served on any conference committees?)
| Nov. 23 | Divided Government  
| Nov. 25 | Thanksgiving—Holiday!
| Nov. 30 | Budget Politics  
  | American Congress 12
| Dec. 2 | Reform Proposals: Term Limits, Filibusters  
  | Will and Broder columns re: term limits  
  | Frist finger on ‘nuclear’ button Hill, 5/13/2004  
  **Paper due Dec. 7**
| Dec. 13 | Final (3:20 - 5:20)