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PSC 387.01: Legislative Politics

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Political Science 387
Legislative Politics
Spring 2004
MWF 2:10-3:00 LA 337

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Course Content

America is not run as a democracy; it is a representative democracy. 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.

How does representation work? That is, in what sense do politicians respect and reflect their constituents' wishes and/or interests? How do politicians manage the multiple conflicts that arise? This class addresses these questions through a systematic study of the modern Congress. 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

Gary Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 6th edition
The American Congress, 3rd Ed., available online at <http://congress.wustl.edu/>
Additional readings available at:
<http://www.umt.edu/polsci/faculty/koger/kogerhomepage.htm>

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

Do what you ought to do. Turn your cell phones and pagers off. Show up on time and don't leave early. Participate in class discussions. Convince me that you love to learn.

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.

Class	Topics	Readings
Jan. 26-30	Representation	Mansbridge, "Rethinking Representation," APSR Nov. 2003
Feb. 2-6	Constitution and Electoral Setting	Jacobson 2
Feb. 9-13	Choosing to Run; Incumbency Advantage (know your MCs' political career and fundraising history)	Jacobson 3; also 113-116
Feb. 18-20	Congressional Campaigns (know the main issues from your MCs' last campaigns)	Jacobson 4; also 151-170
Feb. 23-27	Elections and Representation	Jacobson 7
Mar 1	Midterm	
Mar 3-5	Members of Congress (know your MCs' staff distribution)	Koger, "Cosponsoring as Position-Taking" LSQ May 2003. See also AC 5
Mar 8-12	Overview. Lobbyists.	American Congress 11
Mar 15-19	Committees. (know your MCs' committee assignments and committee-related efforts)	American Congress 7
Mar 22-26	Parties (know your MCs' partisan voting record and key choices)	American Congress 6
April 5-9	Making Decisions—House. (Has your MC offered amendments on the House floor?)	American Congress 8
April 12-16	Making Decisions—Senate	To be determined
April 19-23	The End Game: Conferences, Presidents, Etc. (Have your MCs served on any conference committees?)	American Congress 9
April 26-30	Paper due April 26. Budget Politics	American Congress 12
May 3-7	Congressional reform. Review.	
May 13	Final (3:20-5:20)	ALL