Spring 2-1-2003

PSC 387.01: Legislative Politics

Meg Corwin

The University Of Montana, meg.corwin@umontana.edu

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Legislative Politics
PSC 387
Spring 2003
LA 105

Instructor: Dr. Meg Corwin
Office: LA 354
Phone: 243-4418
E-mail: mcorwin@selway.umt.edu
Office Hours: M, W – 2:00-3:00, TR – 3:15-4:15

Assigned Texts:
West, Darrell M. and Burdett A. Loomis. 1999. The Sound of Money: How Political

Assigned Readings on E-Reserve:
Patterson, Kelly D. and Daniel M. Shea, eds. Contemplating the People's Branch. New

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course provides an overview of the structure, processes and policy outputs of the U.S. legislature. My
goal is for you to become familiar with the theoretical foundations and historical evolution of the legislative
branch, to understand the dynamics of Congressional elections, and to develop a working knowledge of
Congress as an institution, including procedures, rules, party dynamics, and leadership.

During the second half of the term, we will focus on the politics of policymaking in Congress. This will
require an examination of the other actors and institutions that help shape national policy output. Interest
groups are key players in the policy process, as are the Executive and the Bureaucracy. We want to
understand the dynamics of the interaction between Congress and these other actors and institutions. The
goal of this section is for you to clearly grasp the ‘why’ behind the scope and substance of national policy
in America today.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Students are responsible for all course readings and lectures. Exam questions will be drawn from both these
sources. Your grade will be based on two take-home essay exams, a series of short, weekly notebook
assignments, and a group project, to be discussed in-depth the first day of class.

EVALUATION CRITERIA
Midterm exam - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -25%
Final exam - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -25%
Notebook assignments- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -25%
Group project- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -25%
Take-home exams will be 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages. Notebook assignments will consist of a weekly take-home question that requires you to integrate the course readings that cover the following week's topic. Notebooks will be collected periodically, without notice.

Attendance can affect your final grade. You will be allowed 3 unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of your final letter grade by 10 points. On the other hand, if your final grade is on the borderline between two grades, regular attendance will be weighted in your favor.

The class will be organized around lectures, discussions, and group activities. This is a participatory course. You are required to keep up with the assigned readings and attend class each day.

Grades will be assigned according to the standard +/- grading system.

**COURSE OUTLINE and READING ASSIGNMENTS**

I. **Introduction and Overview**
   
   **Origins and Evolution – Struggle and Compromise**
   D&O: Chapter 1&2  
   P&S: pp. 13-32 (on e-reserve)

II. **Getting There: Congressional Campaigns and Elections**
   
   **Recruitment, Campaign Strategy and Voter Behavior**
   D&O: Chapter 3&4  
   P&S: pp. 70-78 (on e-reserve)  
   Price: Chapter 1,2, 3 and pp. 159-164.

III. **After the Election**
   
   **Hill Style**
   D&O: pp. 123-137  
   Price: Chapter 4

   **Home Style:**
   D&O: pp. 137-156  
   Price: Chapter 9

IV. **Internal Structure and Operation**
   
   **Leadership and Political Parties**
   D&O: Chapter 6  
   Price: pp. 165-178

   **Committee Structure**
   D&O: Chapter 7  
   Price: Chapter 5

V. **Policymaking: The Effect of Procedures and Rules**
   
   D&O: Chapters 8&9  
   Price: Chapter 6
VI. Working With Others

Congress and the Executive
D&O: Chapter 10
Price: pp. 178-185

Congress and the Bureaucracy
D&O: pp. 321-341

VII. Policymaking: The Politics of Policy

The Role of Interest Groups in Congressional Decision-Making
D&O: Chapter 12 & pp. 371-380
W&L: Chapters 1-3
Price: Chapter 10

Domestic Policy, Act 1 – Crafting the Budget
D&O: pp. 380-396
Price: Chapter 7

Domestic Policy, Act 2 – Case Studies
Health Care Reform
W&L: Chapter 4 & 7
The Contract With America
W&L: Chapter 5
Reforming Telecommunications
W&L: Chapter 6

VIII. Conclusion – What Next?

D&O: Chapter 15
Price: Chapters 11 & 12