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Spring 2-1-2003

### PSC 387.01: Legislative Politics

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## Legislative Politics

PSC 387  
Spring 2003  
LA 105

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Office Hours: M, W – 2:00-3:00, TR – 3:15-4:15

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**Assigned Texts:** Davidson, Roger H. and Walter J. Oleszek. 2002. *Congress and Its Members*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.  
Price, David E. 2000. *The Congressional Experience: A View From the Hill*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boulder: Westview Press.  
West, Darrell M. and Burdett A. Loomis. 1999. *The Sound of Money: How Political Interests Get What They Want*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

**Assigned Readings on E-Reserve:**

Patterson, Kelly D. and Daniel M. Shea, eds. *Contemplating the People's Branch*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. pp. 13-22, and 70-78.

### 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.

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## **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