POL 30110—Congress
Kent State University—Spring 2007
Jason MacDonal

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Office Hours: M/W, 10:30-11:45am; 3:15-4:30pm
(or by appointment)
Class Meetings: MWF, 2:15-3:05
SFH 122

OVERVIEW:

Politics constitute the often conflictual processes (roll call votes in Congress, presidential elections, arguing with one’s roommate at 3am) through which societies translate their values into public policies. In the United States, Congress is a (the?) major translator. In other words, it is a political institution that makes decisions about what the laws (public policies) of the country will be. In fact, it is the political institution that is empowered by the Constitution to do so. Of course, American government has evolved so that Congress shares policy-making authority with the President, the courts and the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, it remains the lynch pin to policy-making in the United States.

As an institution, Congress is a collection of rules—formal and informal—and people. Its rules come both from the Constitution and from past decisions made within Congress. This semester we will study Congress from the standpoint of congressional elections, the mechanism used to determine who serves in the institution, the institution itself, and congressional interaction, in the formulation of public policy, with other political institutions and actors.

This class will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. I will lecture a lot. However, being forced to think on your feet about challenging material is critical to your intellectual development. Therefore, as noted below, class participation is part of your grade. I do not wish to impose a hard and fast rule about the structure of class meetings but I think 25-40 minutes of lecture and 10-25 minutes of discussion per class is about right. Of course, there may be meetings when I won’t shut up and meetings when it is appropriate for discussion to take up most if not all of the class.

REQUIRED READING:

The books assigned below are available in the bookstore in the Kent State Student Center.

Books:

Davidson and Oleszek, Congress and Its Members, 10th edition
Herrnson, Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington, 4th edition
Sinclair, Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress, 2nd edition
Additionally, there are other articles, book chapters, and newspaper and periodical articles that I have assigned. You can find them on the library’s electronic reserve system. To access this system, go to the appropriate reserve services webpage, http://reserves.library.kent.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?page=search, and search for this course using one of the search parameters, e.g., “course number.” Once the course is retrieved on your computer screen, enter the course’s case specific password: congress27. If a reading is an electronic reserve reading, it is denoted as such with the following abbreviation in **bold** print: (ER).

Some days, the schedule may make it look like there is a lot of reading. Certainly, some days there is a good amount of reading assigned. Please know, though, that many of the **ER** readings are newspaper articles that span only two or three pages. Also note that the reading during Part IV of the course is noticeably lighter than for the rest of the course. This “lightness” is intentional on my part to allow to spend most of your time outside of class working on your paper.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

I will assess your performance in this course through examinations, quizzes, a research paper, and class participation. I will administer an examination on congressional elections, an examination on the institution of Congress, and a final examination on congressional interaction with other political actors/institutions.

I will provide you with a separate hand-out on the paper.

Finally, as I note above, you are required to participate intelligently in a classroom discussion of the concepts which we cover. Along these lines, let me note that attendance is a necessary condition for participation: if you do not attend regularly, your participation grade will be poor and may even be a zero.

I will determine your grades as follows:

- Congressional Elections Exam 20%
- The Institution of Congress Exam 20%
- Congress and Inter-Branch Policy-Making Exam 20%
- Research Paper 20%
- Class Participation 10%
- Reading Quizzes 10%

**DISABILITY POLICY**

Kent State University recognizes its responsibility for creating an institutional climate in which students with disabilities can succeed. In accordance with University Policy, if you have a documented disability, you may request accommodations to obtain equal access and to promote your learning in this class. Please contact Kent State University Student Disability Services Office at 330-672-3391, regarding your request. After your eligibility for accommodations is
determined, you will be given a letter which, when presented to instructors, will help us know best how to assist you.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Jan. 15  NO CLASS—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan. 17  Course Overview

Part I—Congressional Elections

Jan. 19  Representation in the U.S. Congress and the U.S. more generally

Jan. 22  Congressional Candidates: Incumbents, Challengers, Open Seat candidates
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 3: 56-64; Herrnson, Ch. 1, “The Strategic Context”

Jan. 24  Congressional Candidates: Fundraising
Herrnson, Ch. 3, “The Anatomy of a Campaign,” Ch. 6 “The Campaign for Resources”

Jan. 26  Congressional Candidates: Campaign Strategy (Consultants & Polling)
Herrnson, Ch. 7, “Campaign Strategy”
Herrnson, “Hired Guns and House Races: Campaign Professionals in House Races” (ER)

Jan. 29  Congressional Candidates: Campaign Strategy (Message & Advertising/Voter Targeting)
Herrnson, Ch. 8, “Campaign Communications”
Freedman and Lawton, “The View from the Air: Television Advertising in Virginia’s 2000 Senate Campaign” (ER); Farhi, “Parties Square Off in a Database Duel” (ER)

Jan. 31  Congressional Candidates: Campaign Strategy (Message & Advertising/Voter Targeting continued)
Herrnson, “Ch. Evans, “Johnson versus Koskoff: The 1998 Campaign for Connecticut’s Sixth District” (ER)

Feb. 2  Congressional Candidates: Campaign Strategy (Homestyles)
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 5
Leibovich, “Grass-Roots Route; In South Dakota, Sen. Tom Daschle Finds His Cruising Speed” (ER)

Feb. 5, 7  Voters in Congressional Elections
Herrnson, Ch. 7, “Campaign Strategy”
Feb. 9  Political Parties in Congressional Elections
    Herrnson, Ch. 4, “The Parties Campaign”
    “GOP Aims to Turn Tables on Texas Democrats” (ER)
    “Hard Cash is Main Course for GOP Fundraiser,” Allen (ER)

Feb. 12  Interest Groups in Congressional Elections
    Herrnson, Ch. 5, “The Interests Campaign” (ER)
    Justice, “New Rules on Fund-Raising Bring Lobbyists to the Fore” (ER)
    Niedowski, “A Bundle from Virginia” (ER)
    Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 4: 96-98

Feb. 14  Nationalization of Congressional Elections
    Savodnik, “Democrats See Tidal Wave Coming in ’06,” (ER)

Feb. 16  Wrap up & Review

Feb. 19  Examination on Congressional Elections

Part II—The Institution of Congress: Members, Committees, Parties, and Rules

Feb. 21  Members of Congress I
    Davidson, Ch. 9

Feb. 23  Members of Congress II
    Dodd, “Congress and the Quest for Power (ER)
    Fiorina, “The Rise of the Washington Establishment” (ER)
    Eilperin, “House GOP Practices Art of One-Vote Victories” (ER)

Feb. 26  Bicameralism
    Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 8
    Murphy, “Security Grants Still Streaming to Rural States” (ER)
    Stolberg, “A Capitol Hill Mystery: Who Aided Drug Maker?” (ER)

Feb. 28  Congressional Committees I: Committee Jurisdictions

Mar. 2  Congressional Committees II: What They Do, Who Serves on Them
    Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 7
    Granat, “1st Freshman Text: The Right Committee Seat” (ER)

Mar. 5  Congressional Committees III: Who Controls Congressional Committees?
    Canon and Stewart, “The Evolution of the Committee System in Congress” (ER)

Mar. 7  Parties and Leaders in Congress I: What They Do, How They Are Chosen
    Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 6
Mar. 9  Parties and Leaders in Congress II: Exerting Influence
Schickler and Pearson, “The House Leadership in an Era of Partisan Warfare” (ER)
Allen, “GOP Leaders Tighten Their Grip on House” (ER)

Mar. 12  Parties and Leaders in Congress III/House Floor Procedure: Exerting Influence through the Rules Committee
Refer back to Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 8; handout

Mar. 14  Senate Floor Procedure
Refer back to Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 8; handout

Mar. 16  Changing the Rules

Mar. 19  Changing the Rules (continued if necessary)/Members of Congress III

Mar. 21  Wrap Up & Review

Mar. 23  Examination on the Institution of Congress

March. 26-30: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

Part III—Unorthodox Lawmaking

Apr. 2  Unorthodox Lawmaking I
Sinclair, Ch. 1-4

Apr. 4  Unorthodox Lawmaking II
Sinclair, Ch. 6-9

Apr. 6  Unorthodox Lawmaking III
Sinclair, Ch. 5, 10-12

Apr. 9  Library Meeting: Library: 6th floor—“Collaborative Learning Space”

Part IV—Congress and Inter-Branch Policy-Making

Apr. 11  The President and Congress I: Why the President is Weak
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 10

Apr. 13  NO CLASS

Apr. 16  The President and Congress II: Why the President is Strong Unilateral Action, “Howell and Moe” (ER)
Apr. 18  The President and Congress III: Lawmaking under the Separation of Powers System

Apr. 20  Interest Groups and Congress I: Outside Lobbying
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 13: 404-410

Apr. 23  Interest Groups and Congress II: Inside Lobbying
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 13: 395-406
Henriques, “Insurers Rely on Congress to Keep Access to G.I.’s” (ER)

Apr. 25  The Budget
Morgan, “Hastert to Seek Funds for Cut Road Projects” (ER)
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 14: 433-449

Apr. 27  Congressional Control of the Bureaucracy I
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 11

Apr. 30  Congressional Control of the Bureaucracy II

May 2  The Courts and Congress I: Shaping the Courts through Confirmation
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 12: 376-391
Perine, “Precedent Heeded, But Not Revered on High Court” (ER)

May 4  The Courts and Congress II: Congressional-Court Interaction
Davidson and Oleszek, Ch. 12: 363-376
Perine, “‘Heightened Tensions’ Fray Judicial-Legislative Relations” (ER)
Research Paper Due

May 7  Final Exam, 12:45-3:00