

SYLLABUS

THE CONGRESS (PO 501)

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Norfolk Campus

Gary Donato

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SPRING 2014

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Taking a historical/analytical perspective on the development, structure, and procedures of Congress, this course focuses on both the design and performance. We will look at the evolution and growth of the institution, its inner workings, failings and reform efforts.

REQUIRED TEXT: CQ Press Editors. 2013. How Congress Works 5th edition. CA Press. ISBN: 9781608719112.

Oleszek, Walter J. 2014. Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process. 9th edition. CQ Press. ISBN: 9781452226033.

OBJECTIVES: Among the topics we will focus on are: the pre-Constitutional and Constitutional basis of the institution; highlights of the development of the body of Congress; elections and members; strengths and weaknesses of the institution; interbranch relations with the President and the Courts; key domestic and foreign issues as well as current trends; major policy issues presently under consideration.

More specifically, upon completion of this course, you the student should be able to:

- Understand, properly differentiate, and critically analyze primary and secondary historical sources.
- Make use of critical thinking techniques including problem solving, integration, analysis and synthesis, and to develop these skills both orally and in writing.
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the major historical issues and events of the period under study.
- Develop an insight and awareness of the paradoxical relationships of the Congress to the other branches of government.
- Develop an understanding and appreciation of the origins and ever-changing nature of the American Congress.
- Develop a critical analysis of the relationship of citizens to Congress through the introduction of casework as constituency service
- Gain an insight into the dynamics of elite decision-making placing those decisions into the broader framework of an increasingly polarized electorate.
- Gain an of key concepts related to the institution of Congress such as bicameralism, federalism, oversight, institutional ethics, philosophical basis of decision-making; rules and procedures governing each body; committee and caucus systems; and representation vs legislation.
- Gain a basic understanding of congressional membership and elections including such concepts as gerrymandering, redistricting, and reapportionment
- Gain an understanding of the very different ways floor debate occurs in the House and Senate
- Gain an understanding of the amending and lawmaking process (orthodox and unorthodox methodology).

METHOD OF EVALUATION:

- Student participation/individual contribution (this is vital for a course of this caliber)..
- Two take-home examinations (mixed question type)
- Four short response papers (~5 pages)
- Election prediction paper
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GRADING CRITERIA: Your final grade will be computed as follows:

- Participation 15%
- Attendance 10%
- Response papers 40%
- Examinations 35% (15% midterm; 20% final)

A	93-100	C	73-77
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	88-89	D+	68-70
B	83-87	D	63-67
B-	80-83	D-	60-62
C+	78-79	F	Unsatisfactory

READINGS: I assign the reading for each class session in the syllabus. Participation and articulation of a position cannot occur without reading the assigned material. To make this class a success, keep up with the readings.

ATTENDANCE: The student handbook clearly outlines the attendance policy. If you do not have a copy of the handbook, I strongly recommend you get one. I expect you, the student, to make every effort to attend all classes scheduled. The fourth unexcused absence will result in a drop of one grade level (i.e. from B to B-).

DISABILITIES STATEMENT: If you have a hidden or visible disability which may require classroom or test-taking modifications, please see me as soon as possible.

MAKE-UP EXAMS: Are **not** given. This policy also applies to papers and oral presentations. Advance notification and working with me concerning scheduling problems signifies a mark of maturity and responsibility. Remember, you scheduled when the papers are due.

PERFORMANCE: How well you perform in class and on examinations is a combination of three factors:

- How well I present the material.
- Your personal motivation to learn. (Notice that I did not mention your capability. You are capable by the mere fact that you are sitting here.)
- Your personal discipline to prepare.

OVERALL: I handle the course similar to the job environment. Call me before class and you get a “sick day,” call after and I “dock your grade.” Talk to me to resolve issues, to solve problems, and to get your questions answered. I am here to help you, let us work together for your academic achievement.

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS CLASS IS TO ENJOY IT.

Boston Univ.
The Congress
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Spring 2014
PO 501
6 – 8:15

Metropolitan College
GARY DONATO
Norfolk Campus

WEEK	TOPIC	READING
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1 (1/27)	Introduction and Constitutional Basis Basic Structure of Congress	Article 1 & II “Worst Congress Ever”
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- 1st Congress: 4/1/1789; 1st Committee: Committee on Elections – Why?
- NJ v VA Plans; CT Compromise; horizontal and vertical separation of powers; checks and balances.
- Explain why the House was more productive than the Senate.
- Why is Congress presently rated as the “worst congress ever” with an approval rating ranging between 5% and 9%?

Concepts: federalism, bicameralism, representation, legislation, oversight.

2 (2/3)	Background: Origins/Power Federalist/Antifederalist Debate	FP 51, 52, 54; 62-65 AFP Brutus 4, XVI Melancton Smith
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- Tonight we take a closer look at the origins of the institution of Congress as well as the concerns of such anti-Federalists as Melancton Smith and Brutus. Read Smith and Brutus carefully to see what the concerns were. Were they correct in their concerns?
- How did the Federalists counter the Anti-Federalist concerns regarding majority rule vs minority rights?
- How do we see the debate and the construct of the institution both empower the federal government yet at the same time limit that power?

3 (2/10)	The precedent and the first crisis Enumerated vs implied powers Tenth amendment vs Art I Sec 8 Cl 18	Oleszek Ch 1 FP 39, 51
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- How can Congress establish for itself implied powers? What is the effect of that establishment?
- What about the structure of government as well as the form of powers creates the basis of conflict and compromise?
- Differentiate between the stages of congressional development:
 - Experimental 1789 - 1812
 - Democratic 1820 - 1850
 - Reconstructive 1865 – 1896
 - Textbook 1912 – 1968
 - Reform post 1968

Response Paper #1 Due in class 2/10 – Topic – see prompt.

4
2/17 No classes – holiday President’s Day

5
2/24 Congressional Makeup/Elections CQ ch 3
Oleszek 1 & 3
Handouts

- Describe the present makeup of Congress (demographic)? Should Congress be electorally structured to become a sociological microcosm of whom they represent?
- Does it make sense to draw some congressional districts so that they are majority-minority?
- What are the effects of campaign funds in congressional elections?
- What motivates individuals to run for elective office?
- What is the effect of the census on the structural makeup of congressional districts?
- What have been the effects of campaign money and campaign finance reforms on Congress?
- What has been the role of parties in Congress (PIG:PIE:PO)

Concepts: representation (allocative, casework, constituent; symbolic); gerrymandering; redistricting; reapportionment; turnover vs tenure; midterm election effect.

Websites: opensecrets.org; politicalmoneyline.com

Response paper #2 due in class 3/3 – see prompt for guidance

6
(3/3) Congressional Committee System Oleszek 1, 3
CA 3
“Crackup of the Committees”

- How does Congress determine the structure and makeup of the committees in each chamber?
- What are the factors in individual assignments to particular committees?
- Describe the differences and similarities of the Party System vs the Committee System.
- What has been the effect of the caucus on the committee system?
- What is the importance of the Rules Committee?

Concepts: standing, joint, select, conference

Examination #1 Due in Class 3/10

7
(3/10) Leadership Oleszek 3 & 4
Bureaucratic structure (staff) CQ 1

Trace the development and roles of congressional staff over the various time periods of Congress.

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How has the growth of congressional resources affected the functions of Congress?

8
(3/17)

Procedures of the House

Oleszek Ch 3-5
CQ 2

The procedures of the House are significantly more complex than the Senate.

- Discuss the reasoning of the complexity of House procedures?
- How are bills introduced and moved through the House?
- Describe the various “pedigrees” of legislation in the House.
- Describe the various forms of bill changes in the House: amendments; amendments to amendments; substitute amendments and amendments to substitutions.
- How are bills referred in the House: subcommittee; full committee, Committee on the Whole; Rules Committee?
- What is the 5 minute rule and why is it important in the House?
- What is meant by “suspend the rules”?
- Describe the calendars of the House: Union, House, Private, Corrections.

9
(3/31)

Procedures – Senate

Oleszek Ch 6 - 8
CQ 2

- Who is the floor manager of the Senate and how does that role compare to the House?
- Describe the differences and significance between limited and unlimited debate.
- What is the filibuster/cloture?
- Harry Reid recently coordinated a significant shift in the filibuster rules. What was that shift and what are its implications?
- Describe the importance of the senatorial hold.
- What is the purpose of unanimous consent?

Response Paper # 3 Due in Class 4/7 topic TBD – see prompt

10
(4/7)

Procedures (continued)
Forms of government

Oleszek Ch 3 – 8
CQ 2

- Political scientists often say “who controls the rules controls the outcomes.” Apply this maxim to both the House and the Senate – how do they differ?
- What are strategic and tactical opportunities in the House/Senate to either “kill a bill” or move it to floor consideration?
- What is the power of congressional leaders as applied to chamber procedures?
- What are the forms of government and the effects of each on policy making? (unified; divided; truncated A; truncated B).
- How can one measure legislative success – from whose perspective are we measuring and why?
- Discuss the terms gridlock and shutdown.
- Discuss the various forms of vetoes: presidential, legislative, line item.

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- What is the result of *INS v Chadha* (legislative) and *US v Clinton* (line item)?

11 Budget Process Oleszek Ch 2
(4/14) Nelson 35-42

- One of the most complex processes in congress deals with the budget.
- What is the budgetary lifecycle and timeline?
- How and why did the budget lifecycle change in the 1920s?
- What is the implication of the budget process when considered against the bicameral and separation of powers/checks and balances system?

No classes 4/21 – Easter holiday.

12 Interbranch Relations FP 52, FP 63
(4/28) Art I & II
CQ 2 & 3 (esp 180)

- What is the relationship between the executive and legislative? Judicial and legislative?
- What tools does the legislative branch have to exercise congressional oversight?
- What is the relationship between the Congress and the Bureaucracy?

Research Paper (RP#4) due in class 28 – see prompt.

13 The Need for Reform Handouts
(5/5) FP 51

There is very little disagreement regarding the necessity of reforming both the institutional construct and the procedures of Congress. This, however, is not a new concern.

- What is the necessity of reform from the Federalist perspective?
- One of the favored reforms from the electorate is term limits. Describe the effects of term limits on congressional function.
- What was the ruling in *U.S. Term Limits Inc. v Thornton*?
- What has Congress done to reform and control its members? Refer to the Government Reform Committee as well as the individual chamber ethics committees.
- What has been the overall implications of the various major reforms since the Legislative Reform Act of 1946?

Final Exam due in class 5/5.

14 The 2014 mid-term elections handouts
5/12

Predictive paper on the 2014 elections due

Papers and Examination Information

I will constantly evaluate your writing skills as the course develops.

EXAMS: Examinations will be of the "mixed type" combining true/false, multiple choice, short answer (less than a paragraph), longer answer (paragraph), and essay (page to page and a half). Responses other than multiple choice require supporting evidence in the form of citation/quotation using either MLA/APA/Chicago Manual of Style format.

NOTE: Grading on take home examinations consist of 50% for the correct answer and 50% for germane supporting evidence.

PAPERS All written material must be typed double-spaced and with 1 ½" left margin, 1" margins top/bottom/right. The writing must comply with MLA standards. I most strongly recommend you acquire a writing guide/handbook. I evaluate the papers for content, grammar, and historical accuracy and most importantly, integration of reading material (text, reader, contemporaneous readings). The best way to ensure you have a presentable paper is to conduct both spell and grammar check and have at least one peer read your paper, preferably aloud so you can hear your errors. The quality of your papers falls into and between three categories: Superior, Excellent, and Good.

Superior:(A/A-) Paper is historically accurate with main ideas supported by facts. The paper has a clear thesis, original/thoughtful interpretation and demonstrates significant knowledge of the topic. This paper also exhibits creative use of wide ranging sources that advance the thesis and analysis. Finally, this paper exhibits a balance between interpretations.

Excellent:(B+/B/B-) The main ideas have factual support but can be improved with more evidence. The thesis is present, but not clearly stated. This paper presents more description than analysis. The author uses a variety of sources to support the thesis but provides little analysis of the supporting material. Finally, this paper inordinately selects one position over another with little convincing evidence or analysis.

Good:(C+/C/C-) Little evidentiary material to support thesis. The paper has a focus but no clear thesis. The work is essentially non-specific in that there is little analysis and factual material to support a position. Source material is not diverse, too much emphasis on one type of resource. The paper only presents one point of view when it is obvious that others exist.

POOR: (D/F) There are no cogent or pertinent ideas present. No evidence or analysis, source material not present. The paper was obviously written in haste. (you generally have to "work" to achieve a grade this low!)