

Washington University in St. Louis

L32 Political Science 345  
The Legislative Process

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Spring 2010

## Syllabus for The Legislative Process

This course examines the US Congress, focusing on the historical development of parties and institutions within both the House and the Senate and the impact of these developments on public policy and national politics. The class will focus on three main concepts in examining Congress in both the past and the present:

1. Political behavior and preferences: how and why do politicians and voters decide to do what they do?
2. Political institutions: what are the “rules of the game,” and how and why have they changed over time?
3. Political outcomes: Congress is just one piece of the policymaking puzzle – what roles does it play, and how do these roles differ across political issues?

The course’s goal is to help us come to a deeper understanding of the complexities of Congressional politics. It is not too strong to claim that Congress is the most important institution in American politics: it is simultaneously the most “current” barometer of the American electorate and the most enduring of American political institutions.

This is survey, lecture-based course. It is appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate students and both types of student are graded in the same way, as detailed below. The assigned readings are somewhat extensive (typically 75-100 pages per week), and my lectures cover even more material. Attendance at all lectures is a natural expectation of the course, as the quizzes and final exam may include material from the lecture.

**Course Textbooks.** The required texts for the course, which should be available in the campus bookstore, are

- Walter J. Oleszek. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, 7th Edition. CQ Press, 2007.
- Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress*, 6th Edition. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

**Contact Information.** My office is Seigle 242, my office phone is (314) 935-7473, and my email is [jpatty@wustl.edu](mailto:jpatty@wustl.edu). Most importantly, the course website is

<http://patty.wustl.edu/congress/>

All materials for the course will be on this website and you are responsible for checking it regularly. My office hours for the Spring will be Mondays, 2-3pm, and by appointment.

**Course Meetings.** The course meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-4:00 PM in room L004 of Seigle Hall (in the basement).

**Course Grading.** Each student's grade for the course will be based on the following:

1. *Legislative History Paper.* Each student will be required to choose a statute and write a paper both describing the statute's *legislative history* and its place in the broader historical context of the years leading up to its passage. This paper will be evaluated at three points.
  - (a) A one page proposal specifying the statute and providing a brief outline of its content and legislative history is due October 10th. This represents 5% of the final course grade.
  - (b) A 5000 word paper is due October 31st. This represents 15% of your final course grade.
  - (c) A revised and extended final version of the paper (between 7.5K and 10K words) is due December 5th. This represents 25% of the final course grade.

2. *3 Midterm exams.* These in-class exams are each worth 10% of the final course grade.
3. *Comprehensive final exam.* This in-class exam is worth 25% of the final grade.

The course is graded on the following 10 point scale:

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
≥94	A	≥83	B	≥73	C	≥63	D
≥90	A-	≥80	B-	≥70	C-	≥60	D-
≥87	B+	≥77	C+	≥67	D+	<60	F

**Teaching Philosophy.** I hope you will meet with me during the semester, especially if you have questions about the course material. I welcome questions during class: if you have a question or a comment, please interrupt me! I will generally pause after each slide and ask if there are any questions – please feel encouraged to raise questions during class. The course is generally too large for “true discussion,” but I hope you will feel free to raise questions if you are confused or want me to talk more about some topic. There is a lot of material in the course, so help me teach you what you want to know!

**Academic Honesty.** I strongly encourage you to review the University’s policies regarding academic honesty. In general, if you have *any* question, please feel free to ask me.

**The Midterm & Final Exams.** Each midterm exam will cover only the material since the previous exam, and the final exam will cover the entire course. All exams will be “closed book” and “closed note.”

### **Class Schedule.**

1. (August 31st) Introduction.
2. (Sept. 7th) The Constitutional Foundations of Congress.
  - The U.S. Constitution.
  - TAC, Chapter 1.
3. (Sept. 12th) History of Congress, I: 1789-1865.
  - TAC, Chapter 2.
4. (Sept. 14th) History of Congress, II: 1865-1970.
5. (Sept. 19th) History of Congress, III: 1971-2008.
  - CPPP, Chapter 1.
6. (Sept. 21st) **1st Midterm Exam.**
7. (Sept. 26th) Congressional Elections, I.
  - TAC, Chapter 3.
8. (Sept. 28th) Congressional Elections, II.
9. (Oct. 3rd) Members, Resources, and Strategies.
  - TAC, Chapter 4.
10. (Oct. 5th) Political Parties, I.
  - TAC, Chapter 5.
11. (Oct. 10th) Political Parties, II.
  - **Legislative History Paper proposal due.**
12. (Oct. 12th) The Committee System.
  - TAC, Chapter 6.
13. (Oct. 17th) **2nd Midterm Exam.**

14. (Oct. 19th) The Congressional Agenda.
  - CPPP, Chapters 3.
15. (Oct. 24th) Procedures of the House, I.
  - CPPP, Chapter 4.
  - TAC, Chapters 7 & 8. (For this and the next 3 classes.)
16. (Oct. 26th) Procedures of the House, II.
  - CPPP, Chapter 5.
17. (Oct. 31st) Procedures of the Senate, I.
  - CPPP, Chapter 6.
  - **Legislative History Paper Due.**
18. (Nov. 2nd) Procedures of the Senate, II.
  - CPPP, Chapter 7.
19. (Nov. 7th) The Congressional Budget Process, I.
  - CPPP, Chapter 2.
20. (Nov. 9th) The Congressional Budget Process, II.
  - TAC, Chapter 12.
21. (Nov. 14th) Relations between the Chambers.
  - CPPP, Chapter 8.
22. (Nov. 16th) **3rd Midterm Exam.**
23. (Nov. 21st) Congress and the President.
  - TAC, Chapter 9.
24. (Nov. 28th) Legislative Oversight, II.
  - CPPP, Chapter 9.

- TAC, Chapter 11.
25. (Nov. 30th) Congress and the Courts, I.
- TAC, Chapter 10.
26. (Dec. 5th) Congress and the Courts, II.
- **Revised Legislative History Paper Due.**
27. (Dec. 7th) Exam Review
28. (Dec. 9th) **No Class.**