

Course Syllabus
PSC 304: Legislative Process

Spring 2020

Class Time: Tue, Thu 8:30 – 9:45 AM

Class Location: Wright Hall C 235

Professor: Kenneth Miller

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Office: Wright Hall A 208

Office Hours: Tue. 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

and Thu. 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Course Description and Objectives

The U.S. Congress is our most democratic federal institution, but the American public doesn't like it very much. Approval of Congress' performance has hovered around 15% since 2011, compared to presidential approval over that same time span that has ranged from 37% to 55%. Lawmaking is difficult and it can seem complicated. Is the public's dim view of Congress because the public simply doesn't understand Congress? Or is Congress not functioning as it should, and the public doesn't like what it sees?

To decide if we think the public is being unfair to Congress, or if the public is correct that something is amiss, we need to study how Congress works. In this course we will study the origins of the institution, the legislative process, the various factors that influence how members of Congress behave, how Congress interacts with the other branches of government, and what this all means for public policies.

If you and I have both been successful in this course, you should be able to: recall and explain electoral, institutional, and systemic features of the U.S. Congress; accurately apply political science concepts that relate to Congress; and demonstrate the ability to think and write critically about the U.S. Congress, as evidenced in exams, in-class discussions, and an applied paper project.

American Government (PSC 101) is a prerequisite for this course.

Course Format

The course will be a mix of lecture and discussion, and at times I will ask questions of the class. You should feel free to ask me questions if anything is unclear, or if you would like more information on a subject. In addition, we will often discuss relevant news related to Congress, so I recommend reading a daily newspaper (Washington Post, New York Times, and Wall Street Journal are all high quality and offer deep discounts or even free subscriptions for students). Roll Call is a good source of daily news about Capitol Hill.

Attendance

The lectures and accompanying discussions do not repeat the readings, so not attending class is a bad idea. Furthermore, in-class points for quizzes and polls (see below) cannot be made up, so not attending class carries the risk of losing points.

Evaluation

There will be two in-class exams each worth 30% of your grade (60% total), a writing project worth 20% of your grade, and a quiz and poll component that will count for 20% of your grade. There will be no extra credit in this course.

	<u>Scheduled Date</u>	<u>Portion of Course Grade</u>
Midterm Exam	3/26	30%
Applied Writing Project	5/5	20%
Final Exam	5/12	30%
Quizzes and Polls	Ongoing	20%

Exams: 60%

There will be two exams in this course, a midterm and a final. The exams cover both the readings and lecture material. The exams are not cumulative. The format for the first exam will be multiple choice and brief essays. The second exam will be a take-home essay, distributed on the last day of class and due during the scheduled period for the final.

The midterm must be taken in class, on the day and time that it is administered. Make-up exams are only given for: (1) University sanctioned events (verification required); (2) extreme emergencies (and I am the sole arbiter of what constitutes an extreme emergency); or (3) religious observations. If you intend to miss class for a religious holiday, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days in advance.

Applied Writing Project: 20%

This course will have a writing assignment where you apply the concepts of the course to address specific legislative challenge or event. Some examples are:

- A strategy memo for a Member or an interest group seeking to pass a specific bill. What needs to be done? What are the threats to passage?
- Take a major piece of legislation and analyze why it succeeded, and how the institutional features of Congress affected the final form of the bill.
- A post-mortem on a failed legislative effort. Why did the policy change fail? What could the proponents have done differently? What did the opponents do well?

The essay/memo should be about 6 pages, +/- 1 page, not including references and any tables or figures. It must be typed, double-spaced, with 12 point font and 1 to 1.5 inch margins. You will need to use some outside sources for background on the topic, but this is not a research project that requires numerous outside academic sources. You must include citations of non-original arguments, material from the readings, and any outside sources. The project is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, May 5, 2020.

Quizzes and Polls: 20%

Throughout the semester many classes will include a short quiz or poll. Quizzes will cover the readings due for that class day or material covered in the previous class. Polls are a bit different in that you get full credit simply for answering. There will be no make-

ups for missed quizzes, but the lowest three grades will be dropped. For example, if we had 9 polls and quizzes in the semester and a student has 5 with 5/5, 1 with 3/5, 1 with 2/5, and missed 2 (0/5), then the student drops the two that she missed and the 2/5 score, so the overall grade is counted as: $(5 \times 1) + (1 \times .6) / 6 = 93\%$. You should view the policy of dropping the three lowest three scores as something like an allotment of personal time off and an insurance policy against a bad day or two. Use your three drops judiciously.

Overall course grades are assigned according to the following scale:

93.0% - 100%	A	77.0% - 79.9%	C+
90.0% - 92.9%	A-	73.0% - 76.9%	C
87.0% - 89.9%	B+	70.0% - 72.9%	C-
83.0% - 86.9%	B	60.0% - 69.9%	D
80.0% - 82.9%	B-	0% - 59.9%	E

Final course grades are calculated based on a percentage rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. For example, a final score of 92.95 is rounded to 93.0 and is an A, while an 82.91 is rounded to 82.9 and is a B-.

Course Materials

Two books are required for this course:

1. *Congress, The First Branch*. by Sean Theriault and Mickey Edwards. Oxford University Press
2. *The American Congress Reader*. Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Weilen, eds. Cambridge University Press

Readings noted as “T&E” in the schedule are from *Congress: The First Branch* textbook. Other readings not found in the *American Congress Reader* will be provided on the course Webcampus page. The readings from these two books constitute the “core readings” for the course and will be periodically supplemented by others that cover current events related to Congress. Additions or subtractions to the list will be announced in class prior to that week’s reading.

Class Policies and Procedures

Classroom Environment: I will do my part to start and end class on time: we will start at 8:30 AM and end by 9:45 AM. Please do your part and do not make a habit of arriving late to class or leaving class early. I encourage you to engage in class discussions, ask questions, and respond when I ask you questions. However, side discussions during lecture are especially distracting for me and make my job a lot harder.

Technology: Laptops, tablets, etc., are welcome in class for taking notes (although a growing body of research indicates that taking notes by hand is associated with better retention of material and deeper understanding). Using laptops and tablets in a manner that is distracting to the instructor or other students, or in an otherwise inappropriate way is not acceptable. If students report distracting behavior with technology this policy may

change and the devices may be banned from the class. Turn off all mobile phones prior to entering the classroom. Texting and messaging during class is not acceptable.

Readings: You should perform the readings listed on the syllabus in preparation for the week on which they are listed. As a general rule, on Tuesdays we will cover the textbook portion of a topic area and then on Thursday we will discuss additional readings. The lectures will often be used to highlight material different than the reading, so it is necessary to do both the reading and regularly attend class to be fully prepared for quizzes and both exams.

Communication: The best way to communicate with me is during office hours. I encourage you to visit me in office hours for any reason: you are having trouble with something, you have questions, you want to discuss your research paper, you want to talk politics, you have a good restaurant recommendation for me, or most anything else. Email correspondence is also welcome. Please format your emails as business correspondence, with a greeting and signature. I will try to get to your emails within 24 hours or, at the latest, during my next scheduled office hours unless the answer to a question is in the syllabus or was discussed in class (in which case you should consult a classmate). I may also answer through a general email to the class rather than writing you back personally if your question reflects a general concern. If your question via email requires a long or complicated response, I may ask that we set a time to meet instead. I am also happy to schedule an appointment with you if you cannot make my office hours.

Make-ups and Late Assignments: Make-ups are only offered for the following circumstances: (1) University sanctioned events (verification required); (2) religious observations (see University policy, below); or (3) extreme emergencies, and I am the sole arbiter of what constitutes an extreme emergency. If you intend to miss class for a religious holiday, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days in advance. **NB:** Some things that do not qualify for make-ups are: vacation travel, light illness (i.e. a common cold). Late assignments are subject to a penalty of 5 percentage points per day.

Procedures for Dealing with Grade/Evaluation Concerns: Grade/evaluation concerns will only be considered if the following procedure is followed: All grade complaints must be typed and must clearly express the student's specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbook, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy. Written statements will not be considered until one week after the assignment is returned to students. This allows the student time to reread his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made. Grievances will not be considered once two weeks have passed. For example, if I return a graded assignment on Monday, the student must submit a complaint before the Friday of the following week. Once class is over on that Friday, no complaints will be considered for that assignment. In other words, there is a one-week window to submit a written statement. Since class time is limited, I will only deal with questions or concerns during scheduled office hours. Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

University Policies

Academic Misconduct: Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the Campus community; we all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, and are encouraged to always take the ethical path whenever faced with choices. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's educational mission. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person, from the Internet or any other source without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Conduct Code, <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Diversity Statement: As an institution of higher learning, UNLV represents a rich diversity of human beings among its faculty, staff, and students, and is committed to aspiring to maintain a Campus environment that values that diversity. Accordingly, the University supports understanding and appreciation of all members of its community, regardless of race, sex, age, color, national origin, ethnicity, creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, or political affiliation. Please see University Statements and Compliance, <https://www.unlv.edu/about/statements-compliance>.

A successful learning experience requires mutual respect and trust between the students and the instructor. Accordingly, the instructor asks that students be willing to listen to one another's points of view, acknowledging that there may be disagreements, keep discussion and comments on topic, and use first person, positive language when expressing their perspectives.

Classroom Conduct: Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn or of instructors to teach. Use of electronic devices such as pagers, cellular phones, or recording devices, or potentially disruptive devices or activities, are only permitted with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. The instructor may rescind permission at any time during the class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative drop of the student from the course.

Missed Classwork: Any student missing class, quizzes, examinations, or any other class or laboratory work because of observance of religious holidays will be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up opportunity will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for Fall and Spring courses (except for modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for Summer and modular courses, of their intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please

visit the Policy for Missed Work, under Registration Policies, on the Academic Policies webpage, <https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=26&navoid=6046>. In accordance with the policy approved by the Faculty Senate regarding missed class time and assignments, students who represent UNLV in any official extracurricular activity will also have the opportunity to make up assignments, provided that the student provides official written notification to the instructor no less than one week prior to the missed class(es).

The spirit and intent of the policy for missed classwork is to offer fair and equitable assessment opportunities to all students, including those representing the University in extracurricular activities. Instructors should consider, for example, that in courses which offer a “Drop one” option for the lowest assignment, quiz, or exam, assigning the student a grade of zero for an excused absence for extracurricular activity is both contrary to the intent of the Faculty Senate’s policy, and an infringement on the student’s right to complete all work for the course.

This policy will not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the University that could reasonably have been avoided. There should be a good faith effort by both the instructor and the student to agree to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy arise, decisions can be appealed to the Department Chair/Unit Director, College/School Dean, and/or the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.

For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to: fine arts activities, competitive intercollegiate athletics, science and engineering competitions, liberal arts competitions, academic recruitment activities, and any other event or activity sanctioned by a College/School Dean, and/or by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Disability Resource Center (DRC): The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A, Room 143, <https://www.unlv.edu/drc>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. Students who believe that they may need academic accommodations due to injury, disability, or due to pregnancy should contact the DRC as early as possible in the academic term. A Disabilities Specialist will discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours, so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

Final Examinations: The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur on the date and at the time specified in the Final Exam schedule. The general schedule is typically available at the start of the semester, and the classroom locations are

available approximately one month before the end of the semester. See the Final Exam Schedule, <https://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

Incomplete Grades: The grade of “I” (Incomplete) may be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session, but cannot complete the last part of the course for reason(s) beyond the student’s control and acceptable to the instructor, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. For undergraduate courses, the incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the period indicated, a grade of “F” will be recorded, and the student’s GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete grade do not register for the course, but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the “I” grade.

Auditing Classes: Auditing a course allows a student to continue attending the lectures and/or laboratories and discussion sessions associated with the course, but the student will not earn a grade for any component of the course. Students who audit a course receive the same educational experience as students taking the course for a grade, but will be excused from exams, assessments, and other evaluative measures that serve the primary purpose of assigning a grade.

Library Resources: Librarians are available to consult with students on research needs, including developing research topics, finding information, and evaluating sources. To make an appointment with a subject expert for this class, please visit the Libraries’ Research Consultation website: <http://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian>. You can also ask the library staff questions via chat and text message at: <http://ask.library.unlv.edu/>.

Tutoring and Coaching: The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching, and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, please visit the ASC website, <https://www.unlv.edu/asc>, or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A, Room 254. Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library, and on the second floor of the College of Engineering building (TBE A 207).

UNLV Writing Center: One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, <https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>, located in the Central Desert Complex, Building 3, Room 301 (CDC 3–301). Walk-in consultations are sometimes available, but students with appointments receive priority assistance. Students may make appointments in person or by calling the Center, 702-895-3908. Students are requested to bring to their appointments their Rebel ID Card, a copy

of the instructions for their assignment, and two copies of any writing they have completed on their assignment.

Rebelmail: Rebelmail is UNLV's official email system for students, and by University policy, instructors and staff should only send emails to students' Rebelmail accounts. Rebelmail is one of the primary ways students receive official University communications, information about deadlines, major Campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the University. Emailing within WebCampus is also acceptable.

Copyright: The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with, and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional copyright policy information is available at <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Identity Verification in Online Courses: All UNLV students must use their Campus-issued ACE ID and password to log in to WebCampus. UNLV students enrolled in online or hybrid courses are expected to read and adhere to the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/misconduct/policy>, which defines, "acting or attempting to act as a substitute for another, or using or attempting to use a substitute, in any academic evaluation or assignment" as a form of academic misconduct. Intentionally sharing ACE login credentials with another person may be considered an attempt to use a substitute and could result in investigation and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Academic Misconduct Policy. UNLV students enrolled in online courses are also expected to read and adhere to the Acceptable Use of Computing and Information Technology Resources Policy, <https://www.it.unlv.edu/policies/acceptable-use-computing-and-information-technology-resources-policy>, which prohibits sharing university accounts with other persons without authorization. To the greatest extent possible, all graded assignments and assessments in UNLV online courses should be hosted in WebCampus or another UNLV-managed platform that requires ACE login credentials for access.

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Because some topics may run long and some topics may wrap up a little more quickly the precise dates on this schedule are a best guess. If significant changes to the schedule are needed, I will inform everyone in class and online.

Week 1 – 1/21 and 1/23: Introduction

- The U.S. Constitution, Article I
- Federalist, Nos. 10 and 51. *James Madison*

Week 2 – 1/28 and 1/30: What (if anything) is wrong with Congress?

- “What is Wrong with the American Political System?” *John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse*
- “A Reassessment of Who’s to Blame: A Positive Case for the Public Evaluation of Congress.” *David W. Brady and Sean M. Theriault*
- “Between the Campaign: Public Approval and Disapproval of Government” *James A. Stimson*

Week 3 – 2/4 and 2/6: Electing Senators and Representatives

- T&E, Chapter 3
- “Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections, 1946-1986.” *Gary C. Jacobson*
- “Congress: The Electoral Connection.” *David R. Mayhew*

Week 4 – 2/11 and 2/13: Members, their constituents, and representation

- T&E, Chapter 2
- “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *Richard Fenno*
- “Collective vs. Dyadic Representation in Congress.” *Robert Weissberg*

Week 5 – 2/18 and 2/20: Life as a member of Congress

- T&E, Chapter 4

Week 6 – 2/25 and 2/27: The legislative process 1: Schoolhouse Rock

- T&E, Chapter 5
- “On the Effects of Legislative Rules.” *Gary W. Cox*
- “The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990.” *Sarah A. Binder*

Week 7 – 3/3 and 3/5: The legislative process 2: irregular order

- T&E, Chapter 6
- “Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process,” Ch.2 *Oleszek, et.al.*

Week 8 –3/10 and 3/12: Committees

- T&E, Chapter 7
- “Principals, Goals, Dimensionality, and Congressional Committees.” *Forrest Maltzman and Stephen S. Smith*

- “Nonlegislative Hearings and Policy Change in Congress.” *Jeffrey C. Talbert, Bryan D. Jones, and Frank R. Baumgartner*

Week 9 – 3/24 and 3/26: Catch-up, review, and first exam on 3/26

Week 10 – 3/31 and 4/2: Parties in Congress

- T&E, Chapter 8
- “Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn.” *Joseph Cooper and David W. Brady*
- “Setting the Agenda.” *Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins*
- “Consequences of Electoral and Institutional Change: The Evolution of Conditional Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives.” In *New Directions in American Political Parties*. *David Rohde and John Aldrich*

Week 11 – 4/7 and 4/9: Polarization and gridlock

- “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-1996.” *Sarah A. Binder*
- “Party Wars: Polarization and the Politics of National Policy Making.” Ch. 10. *Barbara Sinclair*
- “Party Polarization in Congress.” Ch. 7. *Sean M. Theriault*

Week 12 – 4/14 and 4/16: The President and Congress

- T&E, Chapter 9
- “Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power.” *Charles M. Cameron*
- “The Politics of Shared Power: Congress and the Executive.” Excerpt. *Louis Fisher*

Week 13 – 4/21 and 4/23: The courts and Congress

- T&E, Chapter 9
- “Senate Voting on Supreme Court Nominees: A Neoinstitutional Model.” *Charles M. Cameron, Albert D. Cover, and Jeffrey A. Segal*
- “From Abe Fortas to Zoë Baird: Why Some Presidential Nominations Fail in the Senate.” *Glen S. Krutz, Richard Fleisher, and Jon R. Bond*

Week 14 – 4/28 and 4/30: Interest groups and Congress

- T&E, Chapter 9
- “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.” *Richard L. Hall and Frank W. Wayman*
- “Legislative Lobbying.” Excerpt. *John Wright*

Week 15 – 5/5 and 5/7: Wrap-Up: Re-assessing the state of Congress

- T&E, Chapter 10

Final Exam: To Be Determined: Either 5/12 or 5/14, 8:00 AM – 10:30 AM