**Political Science 426: The Legislative Process**

Fall Semester 2013  
Monday & Wednesday 9:55-10:45am  
6104 Social Sciences

Professor Barry C. Burden  
301 North Hall  
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Office hours: Monday 2-4pm

**Description**

This course introduces students to analysis of the United States Congress. The subject matter covers many aspects of Congress – from political parties to redistricting to roll call voting to the committee system. The course emphasizes how elections connect what happens in Washington with what happens back in the district, or what the textbook calls the “two Congresses.” We will examine how the goals of members, particularly reelection, shape the organization of the institution and the policies it produces.

**Requirements**

Students are expected to do all of the assigned reading and be engaged members of the class. Keeping up with the reading is the only way to get the most out of the course and perform well on exams. Required readings are Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler’s *Congress and Its Members* (14th edition, available at the UW Bookstore and from most on-line booksellers) and miscellaneous readings (available on the Learn@UW web site). I might distribute a few additional readings during the semester that relate to current events. In addition, the schedule will change if guest speakers or other opportunities become available. Selected slides and articles will be posted on the course web site, so I recommend checking it regularly.

Given the size of the class, the format will be primarily lectures, with a focus on the textbook. Sections will provide an opportunity to analyze lecture material and synthesize with topic readings. You will learn more and earn a higher grade if you intellectually engaged with the lectures and participate actively in section discussions.

We will often spend the first part of class discussing congressional news. Students should be monitoring current events as they relate to Congress during the semester. I recommend tracking coverage in a newspaper such as the *New York Times* or a beltway publication such as *The Washington Post*, *The Hill* or Politico, all of which are available on line at no cost.
The final grade will be based on a mid-semester in-class examination comprised mostly of short answers (25% of grade), a final examination with a mix of short answers and essays (40%), a medium-length paper analyzing the prospects of a specific bill in the 113th Congress (25%), and performance in section discussions and response papers (10%). I will provide details about the longer paper and exams later in the semester. The grading scale is as follows:

- A = 93-100%
- AB = 88-92.9%
- B = 83-87.9%
- BC = 78-82.9%
- C = 70-77.9%
- D = 60-69.9%
- F = 0-59.9%.

Your success in this class is important to me. If you have a disability or circumstance that could affect your performance, please contact me early in the semester so that we can consider accommodations. The McBurney Center for Disability Services can provide official documentation of disabilities.

All students are strongly encouraged to visit office hours if only to introduce yourself and let me know how the course is working for you.

Academic misconduct is not tolerated. Please make sure you are familiar with the policies outlined by the Dean of Students.
Introduction (Sept 4)
*Congress and Its Members* [CAIM] (chapter 1)

Historical Development (Sept 9, 11, & 16)
CAIM (chapter 2)
*Articles of Confederation, U.S. Constitution, Federalist* 51 & 62 (find them!)

Public Opinion and Representational Style (Sept 18, 23, & 25)
CAIM (chapter 3 up to page 58 & chapter 5)

Incumbency and Elections (Sep 30, Oct 2, 7, & 9)
CAIM (remainder of chapter 3 & chapter 4)
“Taking on the Kennedys” film

Making Decisions (Oct 14 & 16)
CAIM (chapters 9 & 13)

Midterm Examination (Oct 21)
Party Leadership (Oct 23, 28, & 30)
CAIM (chapter 6)

Committees (Nov 4, 6, & 11)
CAIM (chapter 7)

Legislative Procedures (Nov 13, 18, & 20)
CAIM (chapter 8)

Budgets and Domestic Policy (Nov 25 & 27, Dec 2)
CAIM (chapter 14)

The President and Foreign Policy (Dec 4 & 9)
CAIM (chapters 10, 11, & 15)

Paper Due (Dec 11)

Conclusions (Dec 11)
CAIM (chapter 16)

Final Examination (Dec 19 2:45-4:45pm)