

PS 391-005

Special Topics in PS: The Congress

Mr. Ryan Voris

MWF 10AM-10:50AM

Whitehall Classroom Building (CB) 247

Contact Information:

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Introduction:

PS 391-005: A study of Congress and the state legislatures, covering the legislative power structure, legislative committees, the selection of legislators and the roles they play, decision making, and the relations of the legislative and executive branches.

Learning Outcomes:

Students who attend lectures regularly and who do the assigned readings should be able to:

- (1) Possess an elementary working knowledge of basic social science theory and data relating to the U.S. Congress.
- (2) Examine the historical development of Congress as an institution of American government.
- (3) Analyze the difference constraints and activities of the law making process, including the role of the president and Supreme Court in this process.
- (4) Understand how political polarization and political parties shape the operation of the modern Congress

Course Requirements:

Grade Determination: Your final course grade will be based on four components:

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|------------------------|-------|
| (1) Final Exam | (25%) |
| (2) Midterm Exam | (25%) |
| (3) Legislation Report | (25%) |
| (4) Reaction Papers | (15%) |
| (5) Readings Quizzes | (10%) |

Required Texts:

- (1) Davidson, Roger, Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee, and Eric Schickler (Eds.), 2014. *Congress and It's Members*, 14th Edition. (CQ Press).
- (2) Hamilton, Lee, 2004. *How Congress Works and Why You Should Care*. (Indiana University Press).
- (3) Other readings as made available by instructor.

Exams (50%): There will be two (2) exams given during the course of the semester weighted as follows; Midterm Exam 25% and the Final Exam 25%. The final exam will be cumulative. Exams will consist of

a mixture of multiple choice and short essay questions. All exams will be conducted in class and students are required to bring a writing utensil to class on the day of the exam. Exams and answer sheets will be provided by the instructor. All material covered in lecture, class discussion, or the assigned readings is considered fair game for the exams.

The final exam will be given at the time and place scheduled by the university, and no rescheduling is permitted except for university approved excuses. Make-up exams will also be given only for university excused absences. When possible, all students should attempt to receive instructor approval prior to missing an exam (university approved travel, scheduled surgery, etc). For unforeseen reasons it is your responsibility to contact me ASAP following the exam. If you miss an exam for an unexcused absence you will receive a zero for the exam.

Legislation Report (25%): Each student will write one report of approximately 8-10 pages in length covering the passage of a major piece of legislation which was passed (or vetoed) during the last two decades (since 1990). The student may choose their own topic covering any area of legislation. Feel free to discuss the topic with me if you have any questions. The report is expected to cover the subject of the legislation, policy discussions about the legislation, information regarding the legislation progress through the committee system and floor action, and actions by other groups regarding this legislation. The overall goal of this report is to explore how Congress functions in the lawmaking process. These reports are to be typed in 12pt Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins. A hard copy of the report will be handed in to the instructor on April 24.

Reaction Papers (15%): Lee Hamilton is a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives representing Indiana. As such, his book represents a unique perspective on the role of Congress in the American political system. Over the course of the semester each student is expected to hand in three (3) reaction papers covering issues raised by Hamilton (2004). The papers should summarize the problem as stated by Hamilton and explore how the required readings relate to that problem. Evaluate Hamilton's proposed solution, do you think that would solve the problem. Each paper is expected to be 3-4 pages, with 1 inch margins and typed using 12pt Times New Roman font. Papers are due on the date the problem is listed in the syllabus, and student must complete at least one paper prior to the midterm.

Reading Quizzes (10%): Completing the assigned readings is essential to participate in class and succeed on the class exams. To encourage students to remain up to date on these readings, ten pop quizzes over the readings will be given over the course of the semester. Each quiz will consist of multiple choice questions to be completed in class. Quizzes will only be made up for excused absences.

Course Policies:

Contacting the Instructor: While I am always willing to meet with you during office hours as well as before and after class, email is the quickest way to get in contact with me for personal and course related business. Feel free to email me anytime, and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Typically I am close to my email and will be able to respond within 24 hours. The exception to this would be over the weekends when it may take me a bit longer to respond. While I will attempt to get back to you promptly, please allow 48 hours for any email sent over the weekend. Also, be sure to see the "Email Policy" section below for more information about how to structure your emails.

Office Hours: Office hours are listed above and are times set aside for you to come and discuss anything related to the course. Anyone may come by my office hours without making an appointment, though letting me know beforehand may help to prevent multiple people coming by at the same time. Also, if the listed times do not work for your schedule; we can set up an appointment at another time. When emailing to make an appointment include a selection of times that you are available to speed the process.

Email Policy: There are a few general guidelines to follow when emailing me. First, begin the subject line with "PS391:" followed by a brief statement about the nature of your email. This will help to ensure that I see your email and am able to respond to it in a timely fashion. Second, emails are not text

messages and should not be written as such. Open the email by addressing me as Mr. Voris, concisely indicating the nature of your problem and/or request, and signing off with your name. Emails that do not follow this procedure risk not being replied to as I may not see it or know who is sending the email. Additionally, be sure to follow University procedures for all email communication. Any emails to the instructor should be sent from your UK email account, and grades will not be discussed over email.

Classroom Standards: I expect all students to behave in a professional manner during class time. This includes coming to class on time and prepared to start at 10am. It is disrespectful to me and to your fellow students to come late and disrupt class, so please be on time. I will not tolerate chronic tardiness, and if you arrive to class more than 5 minutes late, you may be asked to leave. Also, unless you have obtained prior approval from me, you may not leave class early. Furthermore, I do not tolerate rude and disruptive classroom behavior. During class, refrain from talking during the lecture, reading a newspaper, doing crosswords, sudoku or other puzzles/games, sleeping, or listening to your iPod or other .mp3 players. When in class, silence your cell phones and refrain from using them until after class is dismissed. Finally, due to the potential for distracting you and your fellow classmates, please avoid using laptop computers or other devices that may be used to access the Internet for purposes other than class activities (e.g., Facebooking, shopping eBay, emailing, etc.). I reserve the right to dismiss from class any student in violation of any classroom standards policies.

Attendance: Attendance is essential to success in most college courses. Lectures provide material that will not be covered in the readings as well as provide indications about what materials will be covered on the exams. According to University Rule 5.2.4.2 any student who misses more than one-fifth (1/5) of the total scheduled meetings for the course may be required to petition for a "W" in the course.

Grading: The grading scale for the final course grade for this course is as follows: A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%, C = 70-79%, D = 60-69%, and E = 0-59%.

All grades will be posted to Blackboard after the instructor has completed grading them. Allow one week for each assignment to be graded and posted to Blackboard.

Excused Absences: The University defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: illness of the student or serious illness of a member of the student's immediate family; death of a member of the student's immediate family; trips for members of student organizations sponsored by an academic unit, trips for university classes and trips for participation in intercollegiate athletic events; major religious holidays; any other circumstances which the instructor finds reasonable cause for nonattendance. For all absences that can be foreseen (religious holidays, university trips, etc) it is your responsibility to notify me at least one week prior to the absence, for all unforeseen absences you should notify me no later than one week after the absence.

I reserve the right to require documentation for any excused absence, and it is your responsibility to provide proper identification. Students with excused absences that result in missing more than one-fifth (1/5) of scheduled course meetings will be required to petition for a "W" in the course.

Late Assignments: University policy will be followed regarding all make-up exams and writing assignments. Make-up exams and writing will only be allowed for excused absences. For definitions of these terms, please consult the Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Unless the student notifies me of the excused absence, all late assignments will be penalized 10 percentage points per calendar day late. Having an excused absence will only push back the deadline for assigned work and not eliminate the deadline entirely.

A Note on Cheating & Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: All work submitting for this course is expected to be the result of each student's own thought, research, or self-expression. Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated. The University of Kentucky defines plagiarism as submitting "work purport[ed] to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording, or anything else from another source without appropriate acknowledgement of the fact" (Student Rights and

Responsibilities, Section 6.3.1). Cheating “includes, but is not limited to, the wrongfully giving, taking, or presenting any information or material by a student with the intent of aiding himself/herself or another on any academic work” which determines the final grade for the course, whether or not any benefit actually occurs (Student Rights and Responsibilities, Section 6.3.2). Any student(s) caught in violation of any form of academic dishonesty will automatically receive a zero (0) on that portion of the final grade. This includes all exams, the UK Core Essay, MyPoliSciLab assignments, and attendance.

Classroom and Learning Accommodations: If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, email address jkarnes@email.uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities.

Course Schedule:

Note: All items in the “Course Schedule” are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. These changes will be announced in class and/or on Blackboard. You are responsible for all announced changes, so come to class and check Blackboard regularly. All additional readings will be made available via Blackboard.

Date	Topic	Readings	Hamilton Problem
Jan 14	Introduction	Syllabus	
Jan 16	Comparative Legislatures	Comparative Ch. Edmund Burke Speech	
Jan 19	No Class: Martin Luther King Jr. Day		
Jan 21	Origins of Congress	Davidson et al Ch.1 Federalist 52 Federalist 62	
***January 21: Last day to withdraw and receive 80 percent refund			
Jan 23	Origins of Congress (cont)		
Jan 26	Origins of Congress (cont)		
Jan 28	The Modern Congress	Davidson et al Ch.2	
Jan 30	The Modern Congress (cont)		
Feb 2	The Modern Congress (cont)		Tackling the Tough Issues
Feb 4	Congressional Elections: Candidacy	Davidson et al Ch.3 Federalist 54	
***February 4: Last day to drop a course without it appearing on transcript			
Feb 6	Congressional Elections: Candidacy (cont)		
Feb 9	Congressional Elections: Candidacy (cont)		
Feb 11	Congressional Elections: Running	Davidson et al Ch.4 <i>Wave Elections</i>	
***February 11: Last day to withdraw and receive 50 percent refund			
Feb 13	Congressional Elections: Running (cont)		
Feb 16	Congressional Elections: Running (cont)		The Money Chase
Feb 18	Home and Hill Style	Davidson et al Ch.5	
Feb 20	Home and Hill Style (cont)		
Feb 23	Home and Hill Style (cont)		
Feb 25	How Congress Works: Leadership	Davidson et al Ch.6	

Feb 27	How Congress Works: Leadership (cont)		
Mar 2	How Congress Works: Leadership (cont)		Declining Civility
Mar 4	How Congress Works: Committees	Davidson et al Ch.7	
Mar 6	How Congress Works: Committees (cont)		
Mar 9	How Congress Works: Committees (cont)		Improving Public Understanding of Congress
Mar 11	Make-Up/ Review Day		
Mar 13	Midterm Exam		
Mar 16	No Class – Spring Break		
Mar 18	No Class – Spring Break		
Mar 20	No Class – Spring Break		
Mar 23	How Congress Works: Rules and Procedures	Davidson et al Ch.8 Loomis Ch.8	
Mar 25	How Congress Works: Rules & Procedures (cont)		
Mar 27	How Congress Works: Rules & Procedures (cont)		Importance of a Good Process
Mar 30	How Congress Works: Decision Making	Davidson et al Ch.9	
Apr 1	How Congress Works: Decision Making (cont)		
Apr 3	How Congress Works: Decision Making (cont)		
Apr 6	Congress and the President	Davidson et al Ch.10 Federalist 66	
Apr 8	Congress and the President (cont)		
Apr 10	Congress and the President (cont)		Better White house Congressional Consultation
***April 10: Last day to withdraw without “urgent non-academic reasons”			
Apr 13	Congress and the Bureaucracy	Davidson et al Ch.11 Federalist 51	
Apr 15	MPSA Conference – No Class		
Apr 17	MPSA Conference – No Class		
Apr 20	Congress and the Bureaucracy (cont)		True Congressional Oversight
Apr 22	Congress and the Courts	Davidson et al Ch.12 Loomis Ch.9	
Apr 24	Congress and the Courts (cont)		
**Legislation Report due at beginning of class			
Apr 27	Congress and Interest Groups	Davidson et al Ch.13	
Apr 29	Congress and Interest Groups (cont)		Congress and the Common Good
May 1	Make Up/ Review Day		
May 4	Final Exam @ 10.30am		