POL SCI 426-001
Congressional Politics

Fall 2014
Mon & Wed 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM
Bolton B95

Professor Hong Min Park
Email: hmpark1@uwm.edu
Office: Bolton 680
Office hours: Tue 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the politics of the U.S. Congress. Even though we will sometimes deal with facts and figures, the main focus is to examine the workings of the U.S. Congress in a scientific way. The topics that we will intensively discuss include: 1) congressional elections; 2) goals and strategies of congressional members; 3) parties and leaders; 4) rules of the legislative game; 5) committees; 6) floor and voting; 7) inter-branch politics; and 8) scientific research on congressional politics.

Prerequisites

There is no official pre-requisite course except for junior standing. However, it is generally assumed that students are familiar with materials that are normally covered in POL SCI 104 (Introduction to American Government and Politics).

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to
1) describe how U.S. Congress has developed over time;
2) understand the key nature of congressional elections, including redistricting, incumbency advantage, and the relationship with presidential elections;
3) understand how goals and strategies of individual members affect congressional organizations;
4) describe why political parties and congressional committees are crucial in congressional politics in the United States;
5) compare the differences between the House and the Senate;
6) analyze how a bill becomes law; and
7) generalize congressional politics under the inter-branch environment.

This 3-credit course meets 3 hours of lecture per week during the semester. Students are expected to set aside a minimum of 6 hours each week studying the material and working on assignments to achieve the learning goals of the course.
Required Texts

The following two books are *required* and available at the UWM bookstore:


This course will have a site on the Desire 2 Learn (D2L) system. The address for D2L is d2l.uwm.edu or you can click on the D2L quick link from the UWM homepage. The site will be used to share course materials including, but not limited to, lecture notes (with blanks). Make sure that you print and bring them to the class.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that students regularly read national as well as local newspapers. The New York Times (www.nytimes.com) and the Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com) are two excellent sources of news on politics and government. If needed, CQ Weekly, Roll Call, and the Hill would be nice supplements.

Course Requirements and Grading

The final course grading will be based upon five parts:

1) **Exam I** (40%): The exam will be taken in class on October 13th. It will consist of multiple-choice, T/F, “definition,” and short-essay questions.

2) **Exam II** (40%): The exam will be taken in class on November 19th. It will be cumulative, and will consist of multiple-choice, T/F, “definition,” and short-essay questions.

3) **Legislation Project** (15%): Students will form a group (number of students within one group TBD) and conduct a research on the history and politics of one (or several) legislation(s) that nicely shows what students have learned throughout the semester. The choice of legislation(s) should come from the current Congress. Then, each group will present their analysis in front of class (15 minutes per group) after we finish Exam II.

4) **Class Attendance** (5%): There will be several (random) days when I check attendance. When a student misses more than three (3) times, he/she loses this portion of the grade. Otherwise, he/she gets full points. In addition, for those who get full attendance points, there is an opportunity for bonus points given to more frequent comers (0.5% for each time of attending class).

5) **Class Participation** (Bonus, up to 5%): There will be a lot of opportunities where students can participate in class activities, and express their opinions and thoughts. Note that *quality* is more important than quantity in general.
Students who take this course under the Pass/Fail option must receive a grade of C or better in order to obtain a Pass on their final grade. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of Professor Park. As a general rule, make-ups for exams will not be given. Students who miss exams because of scheduled activities of an official University student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact Professor Park in advance of missing an exam so that alternative arrangements can be made.

If there is a dispute regarding a grade on an exam, re-grading is possible under two conditions:

- All grade complaints must be typed and must clearly express specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbooks, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy.
- The entire part, not just the section under dispute, must be subject to re-grading. Thus, it is very possible that a lower grade could eventually result.

### Classroom Policies and Instructor Availability

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. I am intolerant of disruptive behavior in the classroom, including talking during lectures, reading newspapers, and especially the ringing of cell phones or pagers. Laptops may be used to take notes in class, but not for playing games, checking emails, or surfing the internet. Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom in order to preserve the learning environment for other students. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of others’ opinions. Please do not intimidate, patronize, or ridicule anyone else during the course of classroom activities.

If students would like to speak with me outside of class time, feel free to stop by my office (Bolton 680) during regularly scheduled office hours (Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:30 AM). If students are unable to attend office hours, but would like to meet with me, please contact me via email (hmpark1@uw.edu) to arrange an appointment. I am typically quick to respond to such emails. I, unfortunately, cannot guarantee that I will be able to meet with students that come to my office without first scheduling a time to see me.

**Email** is a convenient way to continue contact between professor and student outside of class. Students should take advantage of this opportunity but should also do so in a professional manner. I will not reply to emails that do not include a salutation (“Dear Prof. ...” of “Hello Dr. ...”). I will also not respond to emails that ask for answers to questions that can easily be found on the syllabus or the lecture notes. If you have a question regarding lectures or assigned material that you just cannot seem to master, then ask a question in class, or come to me during office hours. Email is best for 1-2 sentence responses, and conceptual questions do not lend themselves well to email.
**Academic Integrity**

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has detailed its policies on academic integrity ([http://www3.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad_Aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm](http://www3.uwm.edu/Dept/Acad_Aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm)). Students should acquaint themselves with policies concerning cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and academic interference. Any submission of work by a student in this course constitutes a certificate that the work complies with university policies on academic integrity.

**Student Disabilities**

Any student with disabilities of any kind (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact Professor Park and the Student Accessibility Center (Mitchell 112, 414-229-6287, [http://www4.uwm.edu/sac](http://www4.uwm.edu/sac)) at the beginning of the semester.

**Tentative Schedule**

Below is a tentative schedule for the semester. Professor Park reserves the rights to alter the reading assignments and test dates in a timely fashion according to the progress of the class. **SRV** indicates Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen (2013) textbook. And, **Oleszek** indicates Oleszek (2013) book.

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