

PSC 304
Legislative Process
Spring 2007

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Location: WRI C237
Time: MW 8:30 – 9:45

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Office: WRI B213; Phone: 895-3217
Office Hours: MW 10:00 – 11:30

Scope and Purpose:

This course provides an examination of the legislative process, with particular attention given to the United States Congress. The course is divided into four parts. Part one examines congressional elections and how election outcomes affect representation and congressional organization and procedures. Part two assesses the formal power allocated to Congress by the Constitution, the institutionalization and development of Congress over time, and differences between the House and Senate. Part three addresses the nuts and bolt of congressional operations (e.g., the role of parties and leaders, committees, and other formal procedures, as well as individual and collective decision making). Part four examines the relationship between Congress and other actors in the political environment (e.g., the president, the federal courts, the bureaucracy, interest groups, the media, and the public).

Readings:

Davidson, Roger H., and Walter J. Oleszek. 2006. *Congress & Its Members*, 10th ed. Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly.

Jacobson, Gary C. 2004. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 6th ed. New York: Longman.

Polsby, Nelson W. 2004. *How Congress Evolves*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Students also are expected to ready a daily national newspaper.

Requirements:

1. Exams (90%): Four in-class exams consisting of multiple choice, identifications, and essays (each exam counts for 22.5% of course total).
2. Classroom Contribution (10%): Determined by students' attendance, attentiveness, and contribution to class discussions.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred for investigation.

2. UNLV requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit the UNLV copyright web page (<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>).

3. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well). If the assignments for this course conflict with other obligations, either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly. If you need to miss class because of observance of a religious holiday or because you represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity you must notify me no later than week three of the semester.

4. Lecture begins at 8:30 and ends at 9:45. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for its duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Repeated interruptions, including ringing cell phones and pagers and text messaging, will adversely affect your final grade. It is your choice to take this course; if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unable to meet its expectations, do not enroll.

5. It is expected that assigned reading will be completed prior to lecture.

6. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of material presented in lecture and readings. Rather, students are expected to synthesize course material in a coherent and succinct manner that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their understanding (e.g., you will need to think and apply yourself to do well in this course).

7. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you need to contact Disability Service (DS) for coordination of your academic accommodations (the DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in the Student Services Complex, Room 137, 895-0866, www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les).

8. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93.0	B = 86.9–83.0	C = 76.9–73.0	D = 66.9–63.0
A- = 92.9–90.0	B- = 82.9–80.0	C- = 72.9–70.0	D- = 62.9–60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9–67.0	F = 59.9–0

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
January 17	Course Overview	Davidson and Oleszek: Preface
Part I: Congressional Elections and Representation		
January 22	The Context of Congressional Elections	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 3 Jacobson: chapters 1 and 2
January 24	Micro and Macro Level Explanations of Congressional Elections	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 4 Jacobson: chapters 4, 5, and 6
January 29	The Incumbency Effect	Jacobson: chapter 3
January 31	The Impact of Elections on Congress	Jacobson: chapter 7
February 5	Representation in Washington and at Home	Davidson and Oleszek: chapters 1 and 5
February 7	Catch-up and Review	
February 12	Exam 1	
Part II: The Institution of Congress		
February 14	Congress in Historical Perspective	Polsby: chapter 1
February 21	The Formal Powers of Congress	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 2
February 26	House and Senate Differences	Polsby: chapter 2
February 28	Institutionalization of Congress	Polsby: chapter 3
March 5	Congressional Organization and Institutions	Polsby: chapters 4 and 5
March 7	Exam 2	
March 12, 14	Spring Break	
Part III: Internal Dynamics and Decision Making		
March 19, 21	Rules and Procedures	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 8

March 26, 28	Parties and Leaders	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 6
April 2, 4	Committees and Subcommittees	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 7
April 9	Decision Making	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 9
April 11	Policy Making	Davidson and Oleszek: skim chapters 14 and 15

April 16 **Exam 3**

Part IV: Congress and the Political Environment

April 18	Congress and the President	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 10
April 23	Congress and Organized Interests	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 13
April 25	Congress and the Federal Bureaucracy	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 11
April 30	Congress and the Federal Courts	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 12
May 2	Congress, the Media, and Public Opinion	Davidson and Oleszek: chapter 16

May 9 **Exam 4, 8:00 – 10:00**

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.