2014

345-01 Congress and Pressure Groups

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the history and structure of the American legislative system, including constitutional arrangements, institutional structures, campaigns and elections, and the role of political parties. As part of the course, students will participate in a multi-week congressional simulation in which they assume the role of a Member of Congress, the media, or the representative of an interest group.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- distinguish between different theories and types of representation;
- identify and evaluate the significance of different theories of congressional decision-making;
- explain the modern legislative process and identify key moments in the development of the modern Congress;
- distinguish between the major actors that shape legislative outcomes;
- write a press release and a constituent letter;
- analyze a congressional district and assess the key constituencies that a member of Congress would be responsive to given the member’s history, ideological background and goals.

REQUIRED BOOKS


OFFICE HOURS

My office is located at Schott #710. My office hours are by appointment, but my schedule is flexible. I am always available by cell phone (513-508-6849) or e-mail if you want to discuss something or set up a time to meet. If you text me, please be sure to include your name at the end of the text.

CANVAS

Course materials, including online readings, the syllabus, assignments and (possibly) video lectures, will be accessible through the Canvas course management system. All assignments and papers should be turned in on canvas unless I make an announcement otherwise.
COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule can be viewed on canvas, the online course management system. The class will be broken into four modules, each of which will include a number of assignments. There will be a quiz at the end of the first three modules. At the conclusion of the fourth module, there will be a comprehensive final exam. Additional assignments may be added to the schedule over the course of the semester and the schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor. Please check announcements regularly and adhere to announced course deadlines.

GRADING POLICIES

Your final score in the class will be based on your performance on the following assignments/requirements:

- 20% Assignments
- 20% Simulation
- 30% Quizzes
- 30% Final Exam

Grades will be based on the following scale:

- A >94.0%
- A- 91.0-93.9%
- B+ 88.0-90.9%
- B 84.0-87.9%
- B- 81.0-83.9%
- C+ 78.0-80.9%
- C 74.0-77.9%
- C- 71.0-73.9%
- D 60.0-70.9%
- F <60%

Late Papers and Assignments – Generally, late assignments and quizzes will receive an immediate one letter grade penalty (An A becomes a B and so on). Assignments and quizzes that are more than one week late will receive a two letter grade penalty or more. Late simulation assignments will receive an immediate two letter grade penalty and late simulations and assignments that are more than one week late will receive a failing grade.

Unfrozen Caveman Lawyer Rule - If you don’t know the answer to any open-ended question in a quiz or exam, tell me what you do know and you will receive partial credit. For the origins of this rule, check out this video: [http://videosift.com/video/SNL-Unfrozen-Caveman-Lawyer](http://videosift.com/video/SNL-Unfrozen-Caveman-Lawyer). I can’t be more straightforward about this: DO NOT EVER LEAVE AN OPEN-ENDED ANSWER BLANK. Blank answers receive a zero, while a partial, incomplete or completely wrong answer, or an answer that refers to a question that I did not even ask, may receive partial credit.

Participation – Students are expected to attend class, stay current with course readings, and actively participate in class discussions. If you are frequently unprepared for class or have more than four unexcused absences, you may receive a participation penalty up to one full letter grade.
ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Students with Disabilities - Any student in need of accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should notify the course instructor and contact Cassandra Jones in the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 or e-mail jonesc20@xavier.edu to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Learning Assistance Center - The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) provides support services to facilitate learning. The LAC has two main purposes: tutoring and disability services. The tutoring services include subject specific tutoring, drop-in sessions, study skills assistance, and Supplemental Instruction (SI). For students with documented disabilities, services include accommodations such as extended time on exams, reduced distraction testing environment, note-taking assistance, and assistive technology. Services are provided in a positive and encouraging environment, which promotes appreciation for diversity and cura personalis. The LAC is located in the Conaton Learning Commons room 514. The web address is: http://www.xavier.edu/lac/.

Writing Center - The Writing Center offers free one-on-one tutoring on writing assignments for all Xavier students. The Writing Center is located in the Conaton Learning Commons room 400. http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Honesty Policy - The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited, as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.

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