

*Government 401  
Congressional Politics  
Summer, 2007*

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Hours = M, T, Th before and  
after class, and by appt

This course will provide a whirlwind, four week exploration of the U.S. Congress, the world's most powerful legislative body. We will examine the role of Congress in the constitutional design, in the federal system, and in comparison to legislatures in other countries. We will explore the way that public preferences are aggregated in Congress, focusing on elections and on interest groups and lobbying. Next, we will examine the structures of Congress, including the individual members, party leadership, and committees. We will conclude by examining policymaking in Congress, and draw some assessments of how it functions.



This is a summer class, and it is over in 4 weeks. This means that the final exam is in 4 weeks, that all papers have to be written in 4 weeks, and that class sessions are long. It is important to keep up with the readings, and to get an early start on class papers.

Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss readings. You should also keep up with current events in Congress over the summer. Students are also expected to turn cell phones *off* before coming to class, and if you take notes on laptop computers, you should refrain from checking e-mail and surfing the web in class.

Texts: The following texts are required of all students, and are available at the campus bookstore. These are available as used books at Amazon.com as well.



Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek, *Congress and Its Members*, 10th ed., 2005. CQ Press.

Paul Herrnson, *Congressional Elections*, 4th ed., 2003. CQ Press.

Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer, *Congress Reconsidered*, 8th ed., 2004. CQ Press.

Kenneth R. Mayer and David T. Cannon, *The Dysfunctional Congress* 1999. Westview.

Other reading assignments will be placed on reserve or handed out in class.

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### ***Grading:***

Grades are based on the following:

Final Exam	40%
Paper	40%
Class participation	20%

Class participation will be measured both on quantity and quality. To receive a good grade on participation, you should demonstrate that you have done the readings, and have kept up with this session of Congress.

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## Paper

Undergraduates can choose either of two paper assignments. You may write a paper about a U.S. Senate election in 2006 (or 2004 with instructor permission), or about a bill considered by Congress that has passed by at least one chamber in a recent session. The paper should be 8-10 double-spaced pages long.

Graduate students are expected to write a literature review or a research paper, 12-15 pages long. I am willing to discuss paper topics.

The course paper is due on Tuesday, June 12, at the start of class.

Please familiarize yourself with Georgetown's policy on academic honesty. <http://www.georgetown.edu/undergrad/bulletin/regulations6.html>. I comply with University policy on plagiarism. Keep a backup copy of your paper, and back it up regularly during the writing process. Traditionally, hard drives fail most frequently when papers are due for reasons that continue to baffle statisticians.

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### Week 1

May 21 -- US Congress, an overview

☞ Students should bring a copy of the U.S. Constitution to class.

☞ <http://www.house.gov/Constitution/Constitution.html>

☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 1, Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 3

May 22 - US Congress in historical perspective

☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 2, Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 1, 2

May 24 - Recruitment and Elections, Overview

☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 3-5, Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 4, 5, 6, 7

☞ [http://osiris.colorado.edu/CES/report\\_final.html](http://osiris.colorado.edu/CES/report_final.html)

### Week 2

May 28 -- Memorial Day, no class

May 29 - Congressional Elections

☞ Herrnson, entire

May 31 -- Groups and Lobbying -

- ☞ Davidson and Oleszek, 13,
- ☞ review Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 5

### Week 3

June 4 - Parties and Polarization

- ☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 6,
- ☞ Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 8-10

June 5 - Committees and policymaking

- ☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 7
- ☞ Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 11, 12

June 7 - Congress and the Other Branches

- ☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 10-12;
- ☞ Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 13

### Week 4

June 11 - Congressional Policymaking

- ☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 9, 14, 15
- ☞ Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 14-15

June 12 - Congress and Change, an Evaluation

- ☞ Mayer and Cannon (entire),
- ☞ Davidson and Oleszek, Ch 16;
- ☞ Dodd and Oppenheimer, Ch 16-18

June 14 - Final Exam

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