Welcome to POL 304, a course on the American legislative process. We will focus largely on the U.S. Congress, an institution where we observe representative democracy most directly at work. We will discuss and experience how Congress functions as both a lawmaking and representative institution.

The U.S. Congress as well as most state legislatures have become increasingly partisan bodies over time. House Republicans have now held the majority in Congress for a decade, a period long enough to affect the institutional culture and practices. The party margins within Congress - the difference between Republicans and Democrats - has remained slight and the number of ideologically moderate members has declined. A theme of this semester’s class will be to reflect on the benefits, costs, limits, and possibilities of party government in Congress. Does strong party organization help or hinder legislative productivity, civility, or accountability?

We will discuss this legislative party government theme within a general discussion of Congress. The course objective is to learn about how congressional elections and Congress as an institution operate by studying and practicing the legislative process. The course readings and discussions are organized by four general topics: the nature of legislative representation, the legislative electoral process, legislative organization, and policymaking.

This class will include lectures, discussions, and a simulation. We will devote much time to discussing public policy debates pending before the current Congress. Also, a big part of the class (half of your grade) will be your involvement in a congressional simulation in which you will play a Member of Congress. The best way to learn about the legislative process is to do it. I will be giving you descriptions of simulation and related assignments very soon. The usefulness of these discussions and simulation will largely depend on your level of preparation and willingness to participate. Please read critically each assignment by the start of the week that it is assigned. I also strongly recommend that you read a good national news source such as The New York Times, www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS, Congress Daily or NationalJournal.com. These news sources will help you to be an informed participant in class discussions.

The course grade will be determined by three papers and two exams. I'll weight these requirements as follows:

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Optional Exercises 0-5% (See the back page.)

Exams and papers are to be completed at the scheduled times. Late papers will be marked down a third of a letter grade for each business day late. Mark on your calendars the following important due dates: Feb. 10 (paper 1), March 1 (midterm exam), March 31 (paper 2), May 5 (Paper 3), May 10 (final exam). I will only accept confirmed emergencies as excuses for missed deadlines. Talk to me before the due dates if you foresee a problem.

I will discuss the format and expectations of the papers and exams as we approach their dates. I'll distribute handouts describing each of the three writing assignments as the course progresses. The final exam will only cover material from the second half of the class. Attendance and class participation will be considered in cases of borderline grades. To protect student privacy, I will not give out or discuss student grades over the phone or Internet. If you have any questions regarding your grade, please talk to me in person.

**ATTENDANCE, ACADEMIC HONESTY, AND LEARNING ASSISTANCE POLICIES:**

Your attendance is expected at all class meetings. Refer to Section I of *The M Book* if you have questions about attendance or academic discipline policies. I will intermittently take attendance, and students who have unexcused absences more than half of these times may be dropped from the class. Please speak with me if you have a medical, personal, religious or other University-recognized reason for missing class. Excellent attendance and class participation will be noted for borderline cases. University rules of academic misconduct and dishonesty will also be enforced. Refer to Section I of *The M Book*. Please see the Academic Support Center (350 Martindale) or the Office of Student Disability Services (234 Martindale) if you have a disability and require accommodations to complete the work of this class. They will notify me of the necessary accommodations.

**CONSULTATIONS:**

Please stop by if you want to discuss the course, your academic program, or your grade. My office hours are Monday, 3-4:30 pm, Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:30 p.m., or by appointment. My office is 116 Deupree, the phone number is 915-5423, and my e-mail address is rforgett@olemiss.edu. If you still can’t reach me, call the Political Science Department number at 915-7401 or leave a note in my mailbox in 116 Deupree.

**ASSIGNED TEXTS:**

The following books are required readings and may be purchased at the bookstores:

COURSE ORGANIZATION:

I. Different Perspectives of Legislative Governance and Representation

Weeks 1 and 2: Jan. 18, 20, 25, 27
A theoretical overview: Is the purpose of a legislature primarily lawmaking or representation? What are the different types of representation? What are the practical motives of Congress members?

Assignment:
DavOl., ch. 1
Forgette, chs. 1-3

Week 3: Feb. 1, 3
A Constitutional Historical, and Comparative Perspectives of Congress: What is the constitutional role of Congress? How do state legislatures differ from Congress? What were its antecedents and how has the institution changed?
What are the differing evolutionary and cyclical perspectives of congressional change?

Assignment:
DavOl., ch. 2

II. The Legislative Electoral Process: Legislative Recruitment, Campaigns and Elections, Electoral Accountability and Members’ Responses to Electoral Insecurity.

Week 4: Feb. 8, 10
Congressional Recruitment and Elections: How do potential candidates decide to run? What implications do modern recruitment practices have? How do voters decide?

Assignment:
DavOl., ch.3, 4
Forgette, ch. 4

*** PAPER ONE DUE. (FEB. 10) ***

Week 5: Feb. 15, 17
Electoral Accountability and the Incumbency Advantage: What is the incumbency advantage and what are its sources? How electorally insulated are incumbents?

Assignment:
DavOl., ch. 5


Week 6: Feb. 22, 24
The Congressional Process: Days in the Lives of the House and Senate. How are the chambers structured and why does it matter?

Assignment:
DavOl., ch. 8

***EXAM ONE – MIDTERM (MARCH 1) ***

Week 7: March 3, 8
The Committee System: Why does Congress have a committee system, and how do committees work internally?

Assignment:
DavOl., ch. 7
Forgette, ch. 5
Week 8: March 10
Party Leadership: How is legislative party leadership organized and how has it changed?
Assignment:
DavOl., ch. 6
Forgette, ch. 6

SPRING BREAK (MARCH 14-18)

Week 9: March 22, 24
Congress & Entitlements Politics: Health Care, Social Security
Assignment:
DavOl., ch. s 13
CQ, ch. 3, 4

***PAPER TWO DUE (MARCH 31)

Week 10: March 29, 31
Congress and Appropriations Politics: Education
Assignment:
DavOl., ch. 13
CQ, ch. 1, 12

Week 11: April 5, 7
Congress and Authorizations Politics: Social Policy, Foreign Policy
DavOl., ch. 15
CQ, 15, 16

IV. Congressional Policymaking

Week 12, 13, 14: April 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28 (The in-class simulation starts April 12.)
The Executive, Interest Groups and Congress: How does Congress operate within our system of shared powers?
Assignment:
DavOl, ch. 9, 10, 11, 12

Weeks 15: May 3, 5
Simulation Debriefing & the Future of Legislative Politics
Assignment:
DavOl, ch. 16
Forgette, ch. 7

***PAPER THREE DUE. (MAY 5)

*** EXAM TWO - FINAL (AS SCHEDULED, TUESDAY, MAY 10 – 4 P.M.)
OPTIONAL SHORT WRITING EXERCISES

The purpose of the optional exercises is to allow you to do some independent research beyond the material presented and discussed in class. Also, completion of these optional exercises will allow you to improve upon an exam or paper grade that may be pulling down your overall course grade. Here’s how it will work. There are 8 short writing exercises, each with a specified due date. Your completed exercise should be a typed, 1\frac{1}{2} to 2 page, informed response to the question(s) posed submitted in-class on or before the due date. If all of these requirements are met, then you will receive a check (√) grade. Your final grade will be adjusted accordingly:

4 completed exercises ⇒ 2 point  
5 completed exercises ⇒ 3 points  
6 completed exercises ⇒ 4 points  
7 completed exercises ⇒ 5 points  
8 completed exercises ⇒ 7 points

(1) Representation & Congress: Due no later than Feb. 8.

Find the reference book, Politics in America, 2002 or 2004 edition (REF JK1010.P64 2002) or the Almanac of American Politics (JK271. A48x) in the Williams Library Reference Area. You may also want to refer to the Almanac online at http://0-nationaljournal.com.umiss.lib.olemiss.edu/pubs/almanac/2002/people/#. Read the brief district and Member-profile for your hometown representative (To find your hometown’s member, refer to the state districting map at the beginning of your state’s chapter.) What sort of representation do you receive? Apply the terms discussed in class to describe the nature of representation provided by your Member.

(2) Historical Development: Due no later than Feb. 8.

Refer to any of the following reference books: The Encyclopedia of the U.S. Congress (REF JK1027 E63 1995); Encyclopedia of the American Legislative System, vol. 1 (REF JF501 .E53 1994); or Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to Congress, Part One – Origins & Development (REF JK 1021 .C565 1999). Research some interesting and important period or individual in the history of Congress. (Note the history sections in the 2nd and 3rd reference books. The first reference book includes short biographies of important former Members). Why was this period or individual important to the institution?

(3) Legislative Recruitment: Due no later than March 1.

Refer to the following website: Open Secrets: Election 2004 http://www.opensecrets.org/races/index.asp this page allows you to search the campaign financing of House and Senate candidates in the 2004 election. How much money did the incumbent raise relative to the challenger in your state and House district races? What/who are the “money constituencies” of your elected House member? Your Senators? Note something interesting that you found about campaign financing off this site. What role should money play in congressional elections?

(4) The Congressional Process: Due no later than March 1.

Refer to the House and Senate websites: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov. Compare the legislative schedules of the two chambers. How are they similar or different? Compare the design, procedures, electoral rules, or institutional powers of the U.S. Congress to some other national assembly by following the links to some site: http://wc.wustl.edu/steve/smith/parliaments.htm What do you think may be the significance or consequences of these structural differences?

(5) The Committee System: Due no later than April 5.

Go to http://thomas.loc.gov/. This is THOMAS, the Library of Congress’ website. Click on “House Committees” and “Senate Committees.” Compare the schedules and recent activities of parallel House and Senate Committees (ex. House Agriculture and Senate Agriculture). Note two or three differences between the two chambers’ committees. Relate our class discussion of theories of committee organization (distributive, informational,
partisan) to your chosen committees. What theory fits these committees and why? What role should committees play in the legislative process?

(6) Party Leadership: Due no later than April 5.
   Check out the House and Senate websites: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov Click on “Leadership Offices” and “Senate Leadership” respectively. What are the different legislative party organizations and their functions? What are the different policy priorities reflected on the party webpages? Are House/Senate differences in party leadership evident from the on-line materials? Do you think parties play too much of a role in organizing the contemporary congressional process?

   There are newspapers and magazines that specialize in reporting on Congress. Refer to www.hillnews.com or http://library.cqpress.com/ or http://0-nationaljournal.com.umiss.lib.olemiss.edu/pubs/nj/. Search for 2 or 3 news stories on tax, appropriations, or budget-related policymaking on Capitol Hill. What are these stories about, and how do they require some knowledge of the congressional budget process? What effect does Congress have over the budget?

(8) Interest Groups, the Public & Congress: Due no later than May 3.
   Go to http://www.netlobby.com/pgic.htm and look over “A People’s Guide to Influencing Congress.” What 2 or 3 things do they recommend you do to effectively communicate to a Member of Congress? How important is citizen input to Congress relative to interest group lobbying? Is Congress controlled by special interest, and, if so, what can be done about it? Draft a letter to a Congress member that relates some policy or political concerns. Attach the letter to your paper.