



## Legislative Politics

PSC 216

Fall 2006

Thursdays 2:00 – 4:40 p.m.

Morey 505

Valeria Sinclair-Chapman  
316 Harkness Hall  
275-7252  
E-mail: vsan@mail.rochester.edu

Office Hours:  
W 2:00-3:30 p.m.  
OR by appointment

---

### Course Objectives

Established as the center of lawmaking authority by the U.S. Constitution, the legislative branch provides a fascinating vantage point from which to view the American political system in action. Although policy proposals may be crafted by a variety of sources, including the executive branch, other government actors, organized interest groups, and citizens like you and me, Congress as a collective body debates and shapes these proposals and generally must grant its consent before they become public law. A microcosm of democratic politics, Congress is not only a lawmaking institution, but it is also a representative assembly comprised of members who represent diverse local interests.

This course will examine Congress in its dual roles as both a national lawmaking institution and the nexus of public representation in the policymaking process. We will survey some of the major theories and concepts used to understand and explain the operation of Congress through an examination of the role Congress plays in policymaking and representation, the formal rules that govern its operation, and the interaction that takes place between Congress and other political actors. This class has considerable reading, writing, and discussion requirements. All students are welcome to participate, however the demands of this course may best suit experienced juniors and seniors.

### Course Readings

In addition to the books listed below, several articles, which are required reading, are available electronically or through the Rush Rhees Library reserve system.

### Required Texts:

Canon, David T. 1999. *Race, Redistricting, and Representation*.

Dodd, Lawrence C. and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, editors. 2005. *Congress Reconsidered*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition.

Fenno, Richard F. 2000. *Congress at the Grassroots: Representational Change in the South, 1970-1998*.

Jacobson, Gary C. 2001. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition.

### Grading

20% class discussion, 40% short essays, 40% research paper

Attendance and Participation. Regular attendance and participation in class are required. Because the exchange of ideas is an important part of learning, you are encouraged to frequently ask questions and share your informed opinions during class discussions. Reading and any additional assignments should be completed before class on the day assigned. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior permission except in cases of unforeseen emergency. Students with special needs should meet with Professor Sinclair-Chapman early in the semester so that

proper accommodations can be made in a timely fashion.

Discussion Leaders. Each student will lead class discussion (individually or as part of a group) at least once during the semester depending on the rotation schedule. The rotation schedule will be based on the number of students in the course and will be assigned by the instructor. Discussion leaders are expected to meet with me during office hours (or by appointment) prior to their presentations. You should come to the meeting prepared to discuss the readings in terms of important contributions from the authors, weaknesses or potential areas for future research, and continuities or discontinuities from earlier readings. Well-organized students should expect the meeting to take an hour or less of their time. Each discussion leader is expected to complete all of the readings for the week.

Short Papers. Four (4) short papers will be used to calculate 40% of your final grade. Short papers should follow proper writing, spelling, and grammar rules, and be 3-4 pages in length with 1-inch margins and a 12-point font. Papers should address a central question in the readings, critically evaluate the readings, and/or analyze underlying issues in the readings. They should demonstrate an understanding of the major points raised in the readings and the evidence offered in support of those points. You should complete at least one short paper prior to Oct 16 (Fall Break). A missed assignment will result in a grade of zero.

Research Paper. One (1) research paper will be used to calculate 40% of your final grade. Papers should follow proper writing, spelling, and grammar rules, and be 6-8 pages in length with 1-inch margins and a 12-point font. You are encouraged to discuss your paper ideas with either Prof. Sinclair-Chapman prior to submitting a paper proposal. **Paper proposals** are due at the beginning of class on **October 19<sup>th</sup>**. This 2-4 page paper proposal should describe your research topic, central question of interest, a preliminary review of the literature you plan to use, and your plans for addressing the question (data/evidence sources and research approach). **The final research paper** is due in Professor Sinclair-Chapman's mailbox in Harkness Hall no later than **4:30 p.m. on Friday, December 15** (early papers are welcome). While course readings may be used, all papers should include a minimum of 6 outside scholarly sources (journal articles or books). Please properly cite your material that you reference in the paper as well as in a bibliography.

Writing requirement. Students enrolled in the course for writing credit will need to complete a 12-16 page research paper following the criteria listed above. "W" students are required to have at least one draft of their papers reviewed with a graduate student in the writing center. "W" students should turn in the draft of their papers reviewed by the writing center as well as the revised final draft by **4:30 p.m. on Friday, December 15**. "W" papers should include a minimum of 10 outside scholarly sources.

The College Writing Center provides help at all stages of the writing process (from brainstorming to drafting to revising) on any writing project. Students can sign up for a one-hour appointment with an experienced graduate-student consultant at the Writing Program office, Rush Rhees G-121, or call 273-3584. In addition, students may visit The Undergraduate Writing Fellows, who offer critical peer feedback and are available for walk-in hours at various campus locations. For more information on all writing resources visit: <http://writing.rochester.edu>

Academic Honesty. You are expected to turn in material that you have completed yourself. Both cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that will be reported for disciplinary action. Please refer to the University Handbook and/or speak with the instructors if you have any questions in this area.

## Course Outline

Sept 7

*Course Overview*

Sept 14 *Change and Continuity in Congress*

(DO): Sinclair, Barbara, "The New World of US Senators," pp. 1-22; Dodd and Oppenheimer, "A Decade of Republican Control," pp. 23-54; "Re-envisioning Congress: Theoretical Perspectives on Congressional Change" pp. 411-446

Sept 21 *Congress in the Constitutional Framework*

(H) Stewart, Charles, "Congress and the Constitutional System," in *The Legislative Branch*, Quirk, Paul J. and Sarah A. Binder, eds. pp. 3-34; (H) Smith, Steven, Jason Roberts and Ryan J. Vander Wielen, "The American Congress: Modern Trends" in *The American Congress*, pp. 1-23; (DO): Dodd and Oppenheimer: Cooper, Joseph, "From Congressional to Presidential Preeminence: Power and Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century America and Today," pp. 363-393.

Sept 28 *Elections and Representation*

(DO) "Prologue: Perspectives on the 2004 Congressional Elections" pp. xxi –xxx.; Jacobson, "Elections, Representation, and the Politics of Congress," pp. 219-258.

Oct 5 *Congressional Elections and Polarization*

Jacobson, "The Context," and "Congressional Candidates" pp 5-57

(DO): Oppenheimer, Bruce, "Deep Red and Blue Congressional Districts: The Causes and Consequences of Declining Party Competitiveness," pp. 135-158

Oct 12 *Money and Congressional Campaigns*

Jacobson, "Congressional Campaigns" pp. 59-112; (DO) Herrnson, "The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and Congressional Elections" pp. 107-134.

Oct 19 *National Politics and Congressional Elections*

Jacobson, "Congressional Voters," and "National Politics and Congressional Elections," pp. 113-218; (DO) Erickson, Robert and Gerald Wright, "Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections," pp. 77-106

Oct 26 *Representation in Action*

Fenno, *Congress at the Grassroots*, (All)

Nov 2 *Race and Representation*

Canon, *Race, Redistricting and Representation*, pp. 1-142

Nov 9 *Race and Representation*

Canon, *Race, Redistricting and Representation*, pp.143-264

Nov 16 *Gender and Representation*

TBA

Nov 23 Thanksgiving Break

Nov 30 Paper Presentations

Dec 7

Paper Presentations