This class will introduce you to the study of the US Congress, with a focus on thinking analytically about the determinants of Congressional behavior. Among the factors examined will be the characteristics and incentives of legislators, Congressional elections, rules governing the legislative process and internal organization, separation of powers, and political parties. My hope is that this class will teach you a little bit both about the actual US Congress, and about the social scientific study of the US Congress.

**FORMAT:** Class will be taught as a mixture of lecture, discussion, and in class exercises; with emphasis on lecture. Course readings are listed by week.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

**READINGS**
The course readings are a mixture of book chapters, academic journal articles, and popular press articles. The most updated information for the schedule and location of each reading (textbooks, web hyperlink, Moodle) is listed on the version of the syllabus in Moodle. I may also add short popular press articles to the readings as we move through the semester.

Note that there is sometimes considerable overlap between the two course textbooks. *Congress and its Members* is more descriptive, while *Analyzing Congress* is more theoretical. Both perspectives are important for giving you a fuller understanding of key course topics, but in general I will not test you on “facts and figures.”

Readings marked with [D] are generally descriptive and give the facts and trends associated with the topic. These can be pretty dry, but contain material you need to know to put the analytical material in context. Those with [C] are popular press articles that discuss contemporary happenings in Congress. These are chosen both to give you a general sense of what has been going on “recently” (i.e. the last 3 decades), and to illustrate key concepts in the theoretical readings. They’re not just for fun, so don’t skip them.

Those with [PS] represent political science articles. These are more interesting, but may use mathematical techniques you are not familiar with. Don’t get bogged down in the details of these analyses (which often leave much to be desired anyway); try to extract the gist of the authors’ argument and conclusions. But you may want to dig deeper if you are interested in pursuing political science further.
**GRADING POLICIES:** Grades will be determined as follows.

- Participation & Exercises - 15%
- Take Home Midterm - 35%
- Take Home Final - 50%

**Participation & Exercises:**
Attendance and in-class participation are **mandatory**. I reserve the right to choose this portion of your grade based on your value added to class discussion.

There will be about five take home exercises over the course of the quarter. They will be graded for “on-time completion and honest effort” with either a 0 or a 1 (I may very rarely give a 2 for truly exceptional work). I strongly suggest that you make a serious effort on these, as they are representative of what you can expect on the exams. The grades will be folded into your participation grade. Detailed solutions will be distributed, and we sometimes discuss the solutions in class.

**Exams**
A third to a half of the content of the midterm and final will be formal mathematical problems that resemble the exercises. The remainder will ask you to respond in essay and short answer format, and test your analytical and substantive knowledge of Congress.

The midterm will be a 2-hour timed exam during the midterm period. The final will be a 24-hour take home exam during finals period. The exam policies are as follows.

- Exams are open book, open note, open internet.
- You may not discuss the exam, or course more generally, with anyone from the moment the window opens up to download, until the moment the window closes and all exams are submitted.
- “Discussion” is interpreted broadly to include the sharing of any course material, including lecture notes, reading notes, or problem sets; **even if these materials are unaltered from their original form and do not reflect any knowledge of the exam contents.**
Week 1 – Class Introduction

Introduction
[C] Selection of popular press articles [Moodle]
[D] Congress and its Members Ch. 2 [textbook]

Week 2 – Congressional Elections, in theory and in practice

Politics as a Game and elections “in theory”
[PS] Stewart, Analyzing Congress, pp. 3-49 [textbook]

Elections “in practice”
[D] Congress and its Members pp 41-45, 96 - 100 [textbook]
[D] Congress Reconsidered (10th ed.), Chapter 4 [Moodle]

[Be prepared to discuss academic papers]

Week 3 – Candidates and Legislators, Introduced

Congressional Candidates
[D] Herrnson, Congressional Elections, “Candidates and Nominations,” Ch. 2 [Moodle]
[D/PS] Analyzing Congress Ch 4 [textbook]
[C] “Why would anyone ever want to run for Congress?” The Atlantic [Moodle]
[C] “Joe Sestak, the 60th Democrat,” New York Times [Moodle]

Congressional Incumbents
[D] Congress and its Members Ch. 5 [textbook]
Week 4 – Theorizing about Legislators

The Electoral Connection, Introduced
[No lecture; discussion of Mayhew]

Voters and Legislators as Principals and Agents
[Be prepared to discuss academic papers]

Week 5 – What Congress actually does, and how

What Congress does
[D] Congress and Its Members Ch. 14 [textbook]

“How a bill becomes a law”
[D] Congress and its Members Ch. 8 (we will cover the details again) [textbook]
MIDTERM – 2 hour take home during midterm period

Week 6 – Legislative Procedures 1

Midterm Review, Modeling Policymaking and Legislative Procedures Game
[In class game]

Scheduling and Floor Procedures in the House, Agenda Power
[PS] Stewart, Analyzing Congress, pp. 361 - 397 [textbook]

Week 7 – Legislative Procedures 2

Scheduling and Floor Procedures in the Senate

Reform in the House and Senate
[C] Assorted popular press articles on filibuster reform [Moodle]
[No lecture; discussion of reform readings]
Week 8 – Modeling Separation of Powers, Introduction to Committees

“Pivotal Politics” Lawmaking Model
[PS] Stewart, Analyzing Congress, pp. 3-49 [textbook, review]
[PS] Stewart, Analyzing Congress, pp. 70 – 87 [textbook]
[D] Stanford GSB case on Health Care Reform [Moodle]

Introduction to Committees
[D] Congress and its Members Ch. 7 [textbook]
[C] Assorted popular press articles on committee assignments [Moodle]
(Optional) [PS] Fenno, Congressmen in Committees, Ch 4 p. 81-138 [Moodle]

Week 9 – Committees, cont.
Explaining agenda power & Distributive Theories
[PS] Krehbiel Information and Legislative Organization, Ch. 2 [Moodle]
Handout on Distributive Theories of Committee Organization [Moodle]

Informational Committee Theories & Game
[PS] Krehbiel Information and Legislative Organization, Ch. 3 [Moodle]
Handout on Informational Theories of Committee Organization [Moodle]
[In class game]

Week 10 – Parties in Congress

Introductory Material
[D] Congress and its Members Ch. 6 [textbook]
[C] Assorted popular press articles on party whipping [Moodle]
[C] Assorted popular press articles on party punishment [Moodle]

Advanced Material
[D] Analyzing Congress pp. 263-289 [textbook]
[PS] Cox and McCubbins, Setting the Agenda; Chs. 1 & 2 [Moodle]
[C] Assorted popular press articles on fiscal cliff battles [Moodle]
FURTHER READING ON SELECTED TOPICS

The Incumbency Effect
[PS] Stone et al “Quality Counts…” AJPS 2004 Link

Representativeness and Representation
[PS] Ansolabehere et al “Candidate Positioning…” AJPS 2001 Link
[C] Giroux “Pursuing the Political Prize of America’s Hispanic Vote” 6/29/2002 Link

Campaign Finance Law & Motives for Giving
[D / PS] Analyzing Congress pp. 226 – 244 [textbook]
[D] Herrnson, Congressional Elections, "The Campaign for Resources," Ch. 6 [Moodle]

Districting
[D] Congress and its Members pp 45-56 [textbook]
[C] Giroux “For Redistricting Control, the Future is Now” 9/19/2005 Link
[PS] Cain “Assessing the Partisan Effects of Redistricting” APSR 1985 Link
[PS/C] Monkey Cage “Redistricting didn’t win Republicans the House”
[C] “The House GOP can’t be beat”
[PS] “Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?” AJPS 2009 Link
[PS] “Unintentional Gerrymandering” QJPS 2013 Link

Congressional Parties
[D] Herrnson, Congressional Elections "The Parties Campaign," Ch. 4 [Moodle]
[C] “Vulnerable House Dems Declare Their Independence” [Moodle]
Polarization
[PS] Fiorina. 2006. *Culture War*. Chs. 1, 2, and 4

Lobbying

Congress and the Bureaucracy
[D] Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, "American Government," Ch. 7
[D] *Congress and its Members*, ch 11
[PS] Handbook of Political Economy, Ch.14, “Politics, Delegation, & Bureaucracy,” Huber and Shipan