Political Science 468/568
Winter 2015
Time/Place: T+Th., 2:00-3:20/105 ESL

Instructor: Dr. Farhad Malekafzali ("Ma" "lek" "af" "za" "i") malekafz@uoregon.edu Office/Hours:
397D Anstett/M&W 10:00 - 11:45
GTF: Cary Fontana, cfontana@uoregon.edu, Office/Hours: 821 PLC/T 11:00-12:00

Description

This is a course about one American political institution, Congress. Yet, no government institution can be understood in isolation. Consequently, we will study not only the inner workings of the House and Senate and how they relate to each other but also the ways Congress fit into the larger political and economic environment. The course will examine five interrelated topics: 1) Constitutional arrangements and the evolution of Congress, 2) Elections and representation, 3) Interaction of Congress with other policy stakeholders, and 4) Role of Congress in domestic and foreign policy. The theme connecting these four topics will be the relationship between economic and political power.

Grading

There are three non-cumulative essay exams worth 1/3rd of the course grade each. For each exam you will answer four questions out of six. Three will be drawn from the readings and three will be based on class material (lectures and film discussions). The six questions will be given to the class one day in advance. On the day of the exam, I will provide you with the four questions that you must answer.

Steady improvement during the term will be taken into account if you are on the borderline (within no more than two points below the next higher letter grade). However, there will be no bargaining over grades. In absence of clerical errors, your grade is final.

Grading Policy Percentage

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<td>97 - 100%</td>
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<td>93 - 96%</td>
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<td>90 - 92%</td>
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Readings

Davidson et.al, *Congress and Its Members*, 2013
Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*, 2014

Articles on Blackboard (marked on this syllabus by asterisks)
Some current news items related to issues in class will be posted on Blackboard and should be treated as required course readings.
Rules

1. Punctuality is required.
2. Use of laptops and all other electronics is not allowed in class.
3. Once class starts, students are to remain seated until the end of the period.
4. There are no makeup exams or extension of deadlines without a documented personal medical emergency.
5. Students are responsible for saving their graded exams.
6. Extra credit assignments, or "study guides" are not provided.
7. Students are expected to do the readings before the day they are assigned.
8. Films shown in class are integral part of the course and should be treated as such.

Online Lecture Notes/Review Sheets

In this course, review sheets are not used and lectures will not be posted online. The dynamic of classroom lectures, discussions, and the exchange between instructors and students, the hallmark of the university learning experience, are lost when lectures and review sheets are posted online resulting in students becoming passive observers rather than active participants in their learning. The result are correspondingly poor grades.

Academic Misconduct

University's policies on scholastic dishonesty will be enforced in this course. These penalties include failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For additional information, see http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx

Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

1. Analyze the role of economic interests in shaping Congress as an institution.
2. Describe the institutional design and historical development of Congress in relationship to socio-economic changes.
3. Evaluate the structure and internal operations of US Congress to understand the nature of representation.
4. Analyze the interaction between Congress and other political stakeholders to understand its policymaking role in a system of independent and competing institutions.
5. Understand the role of Congress in formulating domestic and foreign policy within a globalized corporate economic system.
Lecture and Readings Schedule

Completing the reading assignments in this course is the student’s responsibility. Many of the lectures will use the readings as a point of departure, so your understanding of lecture material will be enhanced by having completed and understood the assigned reading before coming to class. Students should also keep track of current events by following a major national newspaper such as the New York Times or Washington Post.

January 6 & 8: Introduction: Free Enterprise and Political Power
* "America’s wealth gap is widest on record,” Pew Research, December 17, 2014

January 13 & 15: Constitutional Structure: Wealth, Power, and Democracy
* Steward, “Congress and the Constitutional System”
* Film and Class Discussion: “Frontline: The Untouchables” (Discussion questions will be posted on Blackboard)

* Klein, “14 reasons why this is the worst Congress ever,” Washington Post, July 13, 2012

January 27: Mid-term # 1

January 29 & February 3: Elections: Ideals, Wealth, and Democracy
* Film and Class Discussion: “Frontline: Big Sky, Big Money” (Discussion questions will be posted on Blackboard)

February 5 & 10: Representation: Private, vs. Public Interests
* Rucker, “Besieged by crickets, Utah ranchers see earmark as essential,” Washington Post, March 17, 2009

February 12 & 17: Congress and the President
* Dayen, “Congressional Oversight Doesn’t Have to Be a Benghazi-Style Joke,” The Fiscal Time, November 25, 2014

February 19: Mid-term Exam

February 24 & 26: Congress, Bureaucracy, and Courts
March 3 & 5: Congress and Domestic Policymaking: Distributive, Regulatory, and Redistributive Arenas
* Congress and Its Members, Chapter 8, 9 & 14
* Affluence and Influence, Chapter 4

Film and Class Discussion: “Frontline: Obama’s Deal” (Discussion questions will be posted on Blackboard)

March 10 & 12: Congress and Foreign Policy: Trade, Diplomacy, and Crisis
* Congress and Its Members, Chapter 15
* Affluence and Influence, Chapters 7 & 8

Final Exam: March 16 @ 12:30