

Congress and the Presidency Spring 2017

Government 370L.10
“Congress and the Presidency”
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THE PURPOSES OF THIS CLASS: To help students become better scholars and citizens by helping them to understand how to apply the concepts of political science to an understanding of the functioning of the American political system, and by showing them how to compare the normative concepts of the public interest and democratic theory to the actual functioning of national institutions. I am interested in facts about American politics not only for their own sake, but because they allow us to compare the actual practice of our politics to the ideal of democracy.

CLASS PREREQUISITE: Upper-division standing in Government.

ASSIGNED READING:

- Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer (eds.) *Congress Reconsidered*, 10th edition (CQ Press, 2013; see note below)
- Michael Nelson (ed.) *The Presidency and the Political System* 10th edition (CQ Press, 2014; see note below)
- Roger Davidson, Walter Oleszek, and Frances Lee, *Congress and Its Members*, 14th edition (CQ Press, 2014; see note below)
- Steven E. Schier, ed. *Debating the Obama Presidency* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2016)
- Some documents, to be distributed in class

IMPORTANT NOTE: Instead of making you buy the three CQ Press books, and then assigning you to read only some of the chapters, I have chosen the relevant chapters for each and put them into an electronic textbook. For the first two sections of this course, and one chapter that you will need to read for the last (third) section, you will access the material electronically. You can purchase your access through the University Co-op. THE ISBN FOR THIS ELECTRONIC READER IS 9781483373294. Please note: *These readings are not available elsewhere unless*

you wish to purchase three separate textbooks. When you go to the Co-op, you will purchase a card, which will contain information about how to download your electronic version of the texts, and an access code to redeem your copy. (This is called a “slimpack” in publisher-speak).

However, the final reading assignment, for the third section of the class, is not available electronically. The book, *Debating the Obama Presidency*, is available at the Co-op on the shelf for this class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Section I: Congress as an institution

ASSIGNED READING

From Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: Chapter 1, “The Two Congresses;” From Dodd and Oppenheimer, Chapters 1 (Sinclair); 4 (Erikson and Wright); 5 (Jacobson); 7 (Smith and Gamm); 13 (Thurber); 14 (Rudder)

LECTURES

Section I: Congress as an Institution

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
January 17	The place of Congress in the American polity
19	On representation/Congressional elections
24	Elections/Local service
26	Structure of power, I: Institutional positions
31	Structure of power, II: Parties
February 2	Legislating
7	Policy consequences of the system
9	Test review
14	FIRST TEST/ESSAY

Section II: The Presidency as an institution

ASSIGNED READING

From Nelson: Chapters 1 (Tulis), “The Two Constitutional Presidencies;” 3 (Skowronek), “The Development of Presidential Power;” 8 (Edwards), “The Faulty Premises of the Electoral College;” 10 (Lim), “The Presidency and the Media;” 11 (Tichenor), “The Presidency and Interest Groups;” 14 (Lewis and Moe), “The Presidency and the Bureaucracy;” 19 (Polsky), “The Presidency at War”

February 16	The place of the Presidency in the American polity
21	Nominations and elections
23	News media, I: Media and elections
28	The election of 2016

March	2	election of 2016, continued
	7	Being President, I: Principles
	9	Being President, II: Case studies
	14 and 16	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS
March	21	Being President, II, continued
	23	News Media, II: Media and Presidency/Reform?
	28	Reform? continued
	30	Test review
April	4	SECOND TEST/ESSAY

Section III: Individual Presidents

ASSIGNED READING

From Nelson reader: chapter 5 (Quirk) “Presidential Competence”

From Schier, ed: chapter 1 (White), 2 (Pitney), 5 (Korb and Juul), 6 (Pletka), 7 (O’Brien), 8 (Busch)

April	6	Evaluating Presidents/Lyndon Johnson
	11	Lyndon Johnson/Richard Nixon
	13	Richard Nixon/Jimmy Carter
	18	Ronald Reagan
	20	George H. W. Bush
	25	Bill Clinton
	27	George W. Bush
May	2	George W. Bush, continued
	4	Test Review
	16 (Tuesday)	FINAL EXAM, 9 a. m. to noon

REQUIREMENTS

Each of the three assignments in this class will be counted equally; that is, each will count one-third toward the final grade. At the end of the semester, the three numerical scores will be averaged, and final grades will be assigned on the basis of the conventional scale: 92.3 and above will receive an “A” in the course, 90 to 92 will receive an “A minus,” 88 to 89.7 will receive a “B plus,” 82.3 to 87.7 will receive a “B,” 80 to 82 will receive a “B minus,” 78 to 79.7 will receive a “C plus,” 72.3 to 77.7 will receive a “C,” 70 to 72 will receive a “C minus,” 68 to 69.7 will receive a “D plus,” 62.3 to 67.7 will receive a “D,” 60 to 62 will receive a “D-minus,” and below 60 will receive an “F.” Anyone missing a grade (that is, anyone failing to take a test or turn in an essay) will also receive an “F.” I may make some small adjustments in these averages to reflect the quality of contribution to class discussion.

The three assignments are due Tuesday, February 14, Tuesday, April 4, and (the day of the final exam), Tuesday, May 16. The first two assignments are due at the beginning of the class session, while the third is due at the beginning of the final exam.

For your three assignments, you may choose to write two essays and take one test, or take two tests and write one essay. It is up to you to decide how you mix the tests and essays, and in what order you choose to do them. You may not, however, "load up" by turning in an essay at the same time that you take a test, thus getting two-thirds of the assignments out of the way on the same day.

ESSAYS

Essays are due the same day as the tests: Tuesday, February 14, Tuesday, April 4, and Tuesday, May 16, although, if you choose to write an essay for the third assignment you may turn it in early. For the first two sections, you will have the option to write on one of two possible topics; all students choosing the essay option for the third section will write on the same topic. Each essay must be typed, double-spaced, and no more than five letter-size pages long. No legal-size paper. Normal margins. Each must have a cover page giving your name, the class catalogue number (Gov 370L), the semester, and the paper topic in brief. **DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE INSIDE PAGES OF YOUR ESSAY.**

Section #1:

Optional Essay Topic A: Pretend that the United States has just adopted a new Constitution, in which it has reformed its political structure so that it now has a parliamentary system. There are no longer states or Congressional election districts. Instead, each party is assigned seats in the unicameral (only one house) Congress in a manner proportional to its national popular vote. No candidates' names appear on ballots; citizens vote for parties. Party leaders in the Congress determine who will fill the seats allotted to the party by the electoral system. These leaders also control all financing of electoral campaigns, and advancement within Congress. The chief executive is now a prime minister; there is no longer a president. The prime minister is elected by a majority of the members of the Congress. If the prime minister loses an important vote in Congress, he or she must resign. He or she may at any time dissolve Congress and ask for a new election, but in any case must not allow more than five years to elapse between elections.

Write an essay in which you speculate on how the nation's political system would be different from the Congressional system that has existed over the last few decades. Take into account any major changes that may have been instituted since the Republican takeover of Congress in 1995, the Democratic takeover in 2007, and the Republican takeover of the House in 2011. Do not neglect to discuss relevant points made in the assigned reading.

Consider the following points--

1. The number of parties
2. National versus local orientation of representatives
3. Party voting cohesion in Congress
4. The power of institutional leaders
5. Patterns of national policymaking
6. In your opinion, would the United States be better or worse governed under this reform than it is now?

Optional Essay Topic B:

In lecture, I discussed the "conditional party government" thesis. This thesis is also discussed in Smith and Gamm's article in the Dodd and Oppenheimer reader (*Congress Reconsidered*), pages 167 to 192.

Write an essay in which you evaluate the thesis. (You will first, of course, first have to explain it). Does the theory explain party activities in Congress now? In the past? For one house but not the other?

Your essay will be better if you touch on the following topics:

1. Changes through history
2. Means of measuring the strength of party government
3. Differences and similarities between the two houses

Note: You will get no points, in your essay, for agreeing with me. Your grade will be based on the competence with which you evaluate evidence, and construct an argument of your own.

Section II:

Optional Essay Topic A: Assuming you had the power to do so, how would you change (reform) the institution of the American Presidency? In particular, address at least two of these issues:

1. Should the President have more or less Constitutional power? In what policy areas? Why?
2. Should the system of electing Presidents be changed? How?
3. Should the Presidential term be lengthened? Shortened?
4. Should other institutions (Congress, media, Supreme Court) be reformed to make for a better Presidency?
5. Should there be a Constitutional amendment explicitly permitting Congress to regulate campaign finance?

For each topic, explain briefly what the problem is, and how your proposed change would solve it. Do not neglect to discuss relevant points made in the assigned reading.

Optional Essay Topic B: How would you reform the news media (print and electronic) so as to make them better serve the purpose of creating intelligent election campaigns and wise national government in the United States? Discuss both the ends you wish the media to serve and means to enable them to serve those ends. Consider whether those ends and means would be best served by allowing the media complete freedom under the First Amendment, or whether a Constitutional amendment is needed to allow for more regulation. If you endorse the idea of more regulation, explain who should do the regulating, and what principles they should follow in making their decisions.

Do not neglect to discuss relevant points made in the assigned reading.

Section III:

Essay Topic: Using the explicit framework of judgment elaborated in this course, evaluate Barack Obama as President. As evidence for your argument, use information that you have gathered from the book *Debating the Obama Presidency*, edited by Steven Schier, plus class lectures, plus the assigned essays in the Nelson reader, and any other source you may care to employ.

NOTE: You will notice that the scheduled final exam for this course, and thus the deadline for the final essay (if you choose to write it) is Tuesday, May 16, twelve days after the final class session. You may not want to hang around on campus waiting for the day of the final exam. Therefore, you may decide that you want to write the final essay on Obama, *and* turn it in early, so that you may leave town. Such a strategy is perfectly acceptable to me. Notice that I am not assigning you to write the essay instead of taking the test.

Nor am I requiring you to turn in the essay before the deadline. I am merely pointing out some information that you may want to consider when planning your semester.

TESTS

There are three tests in this class, February 14, April 4, and May 16. Each test consists of two parts. In the first part, there will be twenty-five multiple-choice questions, mostly dealing with concepts to be listed shortly. A correct answer on each of these counts two points. In the second part, you will be given a group of ten words or phrases, also chosen from the lists provided below. You will be asked to define each word or phrase, and then explain why it is important to the study of Congress and the Presidency, all in sixty or fewer words. A correct definition is worth two points, and correct explanation is worth three points, for a total of five points per term. Thus, each test offers a possible perfect score of one hundred, fifty from the multiple-choice questions and fifty from the short-answer questions.

Because it is impossible to predict the direction of every conceptual discussion ahead of time, I may make a few additions to and subtractions from the following list of concepts during the course of the semester. Basically, however, the following list contains all, or almost all, of the concepts that you will be expected to know.

Because I may slightly fiddle with the concept list over the course of the semester, you should remember that the “official” list of concepts that might appear on a test is the one that I put on the screen during lecture. The concept list on this syllabus is advisory only, and may not be complete.

Section I—

Concepts from the reading:

(from Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, chapter One)-----Berman and Sherman, Edmund Burke, Israel and the Netherlands

(from Dodd and Oppenheimer)----SINCLAIR: hostage-taking, hold, reconciliation bills; ERICKSON AND WRIGHT: policy mood, incumbency advantage, correlation of +.84; JACOBSON: ticket-splitting, super PACs; SMITH AND GAMM: Aldrichism versus Cannonsim, a partisan syndrome; THURBER: Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 and Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Supercommittee; RUDDER: the least equal, least mobile country; Lesson #1

Concepts from the lectures: Congress’s existential dilemma; Harry Reid; the most powerful branch; ambition to counteract ambition; Fenno’s Paradox; sausages and laws; turnout in Congressional elections; proportional representation; geographic representation; gerrymander; Constitutional gerrymander; Alaska; Tip O’Neill; Contract With America; electoral trends, 1960s to 2016; Lloyd Doggett; religiosity; Kelly Ayotte; characteristics of political contributors; Jim Nicholson; incumbency re-election rates; Tom Foley; pork barrel; military bases; constituency service; term limits; "conditional party government" theory; "pivotal voter" theory; Rules Committee; Speaker Newt Gingrich; “Fiscal Cliff;” Senate majority leader; Bill Frist; Presidential success rate; Arlen Specter; whips; Blue Dog Coalition; 90% rule; 50% rule; party ideology; earmarks; riders; filibuster; line-item veto; conference committee; logrolling; the distributive tendency; African drought bill; Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005; NAFTA; Emergency Economic Stabilization Act; individual rationality; collective rationality; structural irresponsibility; balanced budget amendment; “revolving door;” Jim Wright and Tom DeLay

Section II--

Concepts from the reading:

From Nelson-----TULIS: original constitution, second constitution; SKOWRONEK: “the executive power,” *the* American political tradition; EDWARDS: political equality; direct election; LIM: the plebiscatory era, *Federalist* # 71; TICHENOR: collaborative breakthrough politics, Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010: LEWIS AND MOE: 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, Civil Service Reform Act, Executive Order #12291; POLSKY: “Bush Doctrine,” Wartime Presidential agency

Concepts from the lectures: Head of State; Head of Government; the transformation of George W. Bush; “rally ‘round the flag” effect; “energy in the executive;” Constitutional position of the President; executive orders; dialogue of democracy; demagoguery; “The Bear;” primary; Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp; Electoral College; job of the press in democratic theory; First Amendment; harlot's prerogative; sound-bites; horse-race; scandal; 35 minutes versus 125 minutes; a liberal bias? dialogue of democracy (again); Reagan coalition; Democratic coalition; 60% negative; cross-cutting issues; “the post-truth Presidency;” fascism?; “uneducated White male voters in strategic states;” a good democratic election?; Tea Party; commander-in-chief clause; War Powers Act; “high Crimes and Misdemeanors;” Deepwater Horizon; the Presidential dilemma; unitary executive theory; signing statements; 16%; Robert Bork; capital gains taxes; health care reform (1993-94); ANWR; U. S. v. Belmont; Cuban Missile Crisis; opening to China; Iran-Contra affair; landing troops; *Zivotofsky v. Kerry*; Imperial Presidency; Korematsu v. United States; USA PATRIOT ACT; How do we know when the war is over?; bully pulpit; spin doctors; (personalization, dramatization, and fragmentation); “balance;” leak; Edward Snowden; killing bin Laden; F. E. C. A.; National Popular Vote Interstate Compact; “Clean Elections” laws; “policy trials;” PatriotCo; Central Elections Committee; Senate Rules committee; AIRC; six-year Presidency; “liberated time;” “break up the big media corporations”

Section III—

Concepts from the reading:

From Nelson reader—QUIRK: self-reliant presidency, minimalist presidency, strategic competence

From Schier, *Debating the Obama Presidency*: WHITE: Tea Party; Trans-Pacific Partnership; PITNEY: Jonathan Gruber; presidential memoranda; KORB AND JUUL: “stimulus rather than austerity;” Operation Atlantic Resolve; PLETKA: “the end of the American century;” 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance; O’BRIEN: *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; BUSCH: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Common Core

Concepts from the lectures: Presidential personality; Iraq wars; Carter and Iran; leadership test; character test; success test; intelligence test; primacy of politics; mendacity; Tonkin Gulf Resolution; Great

Society; credibility gap; Joseph Alsop; classical tragedy; wage-and-price controls; democratic psychopath; Bismarck; The Other; Watergate; The Paradox of Nixon; structural problem of the Presidency; The Carter Paradox; Andrew Young; "Jimmy the Engineer;" Paul Volcker; stagflation; The genial dunce; "The Great Communicator;" Americanism; King Hussein; Mike Royko; 1982 Defense budget; "voodoo economics;" new political coalition; redistribution upwards; "Have Half;" Pledge of Allegiance issue; "Read my lips;" Desert Storm; "faithful son;" "I feel your pain;" Slick Willie; William the Waffler; New Democrats; don't ask, don't tell; "Bushisms;" supply-side economics; big-government conservatism; "the reality-based community;" lie number one; lie number two

Miscellaneous Useful Information

- A. Study questions that may help you understand what is important about the terms/phrases/concepts:
1. How does this term help us to understand a causal, moral, or interpretive argument in the lectures or reading?
 2. How does this term illustrate/exemplify an important principle discussed in the class?
 3. How does this term help me to understand how American democracy differs from foreign democracies?
 4. How does this term help me to understand how American democracy has changed over time?
- B. Answers to common questions about the tests:
1. Is it important to know dates? YES
 2. Will I be penalized if I go over the 60 word limit? YES
 3. Must I write in complete sentences? NO, BUT IF WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND YOUR ANSWER, IT IS WRONG
- C. Any disabled student may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259. <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>
- D. Dishonesty: I hope it goes without saying that cheating will be dealt with in a merciless manner. But because the University requires me to say it anyway, let me direct you to the UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>)
- E. Religious Holidays: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
- Because I do not take roll, you do not need to "notify" me if you are simply going to miss an ordinary class session, for religious reasons, because you are ill, or for any other cause. (You should, of course, get the lecture material from a friend or from some other source, but you do not have to tell me of your absence in advance). You only need to let me and the TA know of your absence if it will interfere with your taking of a test or completing some other assignment.