What's this course about?

Although the Constitution provides for three branches, the legislative branch is the "First Branch"—the center of lawmaking authority. Regardless of an idea's source, it is Congress that shapes policy proposals into actual laws. The ultimate responsibility for the content and scope of American lawmaking and public policy rests with Congress.

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an introduction to Congressional politics. We will cover numerous topics as they relate to the U.S. Congress: legislative development, representation, Congressional elections, Congressional committees, party leadership and organization, legislative voting decisions, and the lawmaking and policy process. We will cover some classics of Congressional research, even as we use readings, assignments, and class discussion to bring a contemporary perspective to long-standing theories of Congressional behavior.

With that in mind, these are our goals this semester:

- To obtain a general working knowledge of the U.S. Congress, and where possible other legislative bodies;
- To apply the academic literature on Congress to current Congressional politics;
- To stimulate thinking and discussion about the role and effectiveness of Congress in particular and representative democracy in general;
- And to provide you with new perspective that will shape your future attempts to critically evaluate Congress and its members.

What is the workload?

The university catalog defines an A as "excellent," B as "good," C as "satisfactory," and so on (see here). Elsewhere, the catalog contains this interesting policy (here):

"The expectation for undergraduate courses is three hours of work per week per credit hour for the average student who is appropriately prepared; much more time may be required to achieve excellence."
Think that through for a moment. "Three hours of work per week per credit hour" comes out to **18 hours per week** in PlSc 315 (since we are moving at double speed in only half a semester). If you are an "average student" who wants an average grade (roughly a B), plan to spend about 18 hours on this class, on average, each week. In the political science department, "average" means B. If you want to achieve "excellence," the university's definition of an A, then "much more time may be required."

These problems are compounded by an unusual scheduling problem. Most students in this class will be unable to attend the first two weeks of class due to a legislative internship. However, we still need to meet the department's standards in terms of (a) how many pages you read and (b) how many pages you write. **Usually, you get 14 weeks to do three credits worth of work; we will do it in 5.**

Punchline: Expect to be very busy from March 12th on.

**Grades and assignments**

I use a variety of assessment methods to keep final grades as fair as possible, including closed-form questions (e.g. multiple choice, true/false), short answer questions, and essays. You will see all these question types on each exam. You will also write a substantial term paper outside of class.

- 10%  Film paper
- 30%  Midterm
- 20%  Final paper (and assignments 1-6; details below)
- 6%  Critique of a classmate's final paper (Asst 7)
- 4%  Abstract of your final paper (Asst 8)
- 30%  Final exam (partly comprehensive)

**Late assignments**: All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Any paper turned in on the due date but after the beginning of class gets a 5% penalty. One weekday late is a 10% penalty; two weekdays late is a 25% penalty; later is unacceptable. Papers must be turned in hard copy, not by email.

**Final paper**. The major assignment for this course is a 10-15 page paper containing a detailed analysis of a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Throughout the semester, you will complete several smaller assignments leading up to the final product. With the exception of assignments 7 and 8, these preparatory assignments will not receive separate grades. Instead, your work on these assignments will be reflected in your overall term paper grade. Note, though, that failure to complete a preparatory assignment satisfactorily will result in a 10% penalty on the final paper (so if you skip three of the assignments, your paper starts off with a 30% penalty). Also, if you turn one of these assignments in late, the penalty for that particular assignment will be calculated as a percentage of this 10% penalty. Further details about the assignments and paper are available online.

**Missed exams**: No makeups unless you (1) arrange it in advance for a valid reason or (2) have a genuine emergency and contact me as soon as possible to work things out.

**Attendance**: You will do poorly on the exams if you do not attend every lecture. If you must miss a lecture, get notes from another student and then visit me in my office to discuss them.

**Other course policies**: Many of my course policies are the same for every course. For answers to general questions like the following, read my policies by clicking here:

- What do your tests and exams look like (and why)?
- What is plagiarism, and what happens if I do it?
• How do I request a regrade for a particular assignment?

Final exam: The final exam will be in the testing center throughout finals week.

What books do we need to buy?

• **Required:** David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*.
  - The BYU bookstore has the 2nd edition (from 2004), also available at [Amazon ($10-15)](https://www.amazon.com/).
  - The original 1974 edition is identical to the 2004 edition other than the preface. Either version is acceptable. The [1974 edition is at Amazon ($1-18)](https://www.amazon.com/).

• **Required:** Richard Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*.
  - The BYU bookstore has the 2nd edition (from 2003), also available at [Amazon ($20-50)](https://www.amazon.com/).
  - The original 1978 edition is identical to the 2003 edition other than the preface. Either version is acceptable. The [1978 version is at Amazon ($3-55)](https://www.amazon.com/).

• **Required:** Loomis and Schiller, *The Contemporary Congress*, 5th edition.
  - BYU bookstore. [Amazon: $30-60](https://www.amazon.com/).  

• **Required:** Paul Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, 5th ed.

  - BYU bookstore. [Amazon: $25-30](https://www.amazon.com/).

Reading schedule

Dates may change, of course. You can also view the reading schedule in [calendar format](https://www.amazon.com/).

Although my lectures may diverge considerably from the readings—more so for some topics than for others—be advised that anything from lecture or the readings is fair game for the exams.

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**Unit 1: The Two Awkward Weeks**

**Fri, Feb 26th, 2010.** No class today.
- Readings (none):
  - Start reading Fenno's book
- FYI: Over the next two weeks, you will read Fenno's and Mayhew's books on your own. As you do so, ask yourself: Does Mayhew's theory seem more plausible than Fenno's (or vice versa)? In what ways do the two books agree, and in what ways do they disagree? According to Mayhew, what do members of Congress want? Does Fenno agree? What does each author's theory suggest about the value of Congress as an institution—does Congress work, or is it somehow flawed?

**Mon, Mar 1st, 2010.** Course overview.
- Readings (100 pages):
  - Fenno's book, first third of book or more [100 pages]
  - FYI: Attendance is required today unless you are currently in the Utah legislature internship program.

**Wed, Mar 3rd, 2010.** No class today (read Fenno).
- Readings (100 pages):
  - Fenno's book, second third of book or more [100 pages]

**Fri, Mar 5th, 2010.** No class today (finish Fenno).
- **DUE:** Finish Fenno's book
• Readings (100 pages):
  • Fenno's book, remainder of book [100 pages]
  • Start Mayhew's book

Mon, Mar 8th, 2010. Member goals. What behaviors does the reelection incentive lead to? Does Mayhew's book show that our Constitutional structure is flawed? How does Fenno's theory differ from Mayhew's?
  • Terms: Hierarchy of needs; reelection incentive; power within the House; median voter theorem; advertising; credit claiming; position taking; protectionist phase; expansionist phase; inductive; deductive
  • Readings (80 pages):
    • Mayhew, pages 1-77 [77 pages]
    • "Media darling Jason Chaffetz is 'having the time of my life' as a member of Congress" (or as PDF) [3 pages]
    • Be prepared to discuss Fenno, especially ch 5
  • Resources: Show resources
  • FYI: Current Utah legislative interns heard a version of this lecture in PlSc 297 last fall; the rest of you need to attend today.

  • DUE: Finish Mayhew's book
  • Readings (99 pages):
    • Mayhew, pp 81-180 [99 pages]

Unit 2: Congress—The Basics

Fri, Mar 12th, 2010. Congress in the Constitution. Why don't we like Congress? Why did the founders design Congress the way they did?
  • DUE: Watch a film (see film paper instructions). The paper is not due just yet, but start watching the films now.
  • Terms: Congress vs most members of Congress vs your member of Congress; tyranny vs efficiency tradeoff
  • Readings (5 pages):
    • The Constitution, Article I (online) [5 pages]
    • You should have already read 100% of Fenno's and Mayhew's books by now. If you haven't, finish pronto.
  • FYI: Now that the Utah legislative session is over, everybody should attend from here out. Prepare to get busy.

Mon, Mar 15th, 2010. Legislative development. How/why do the internal institutions of Congress change over time? What role do norms play?
  • DUE:
    • Assignment 1 (see term paper instructions)
    • Assignment 2 (see term paper instructions)
  • Terms: Institutionalization; well-bounded; internal complexity; universalism; centralization/decentralization; norms; sociological learning vs rational apprenticeship
  • Readings (57 pages):
    • Loomis and Schiller, chs 2-3 [54 pages]
    • Deseret News (2009), "Hatch, Kennedy made political theater as 'odd couple'" (or as PDF) [3 pages]
  • Resources: Show resources

  • DUE: Assignment 3 (see term paper instructions)
  • Terms: Geographic constituency; reelection constituency; primary constituency; personal constituency (intimates); issue representation (" substantive" representation); service representation; allocational representation; descriptive representation; delegate vs trustee
  • Readings (15 pages):
    • Loomis and Schiller, ch 1 [12 pages]
    • Politico (2009), "Women Lawmakers Best Men" (or as PDF) [3 pages]
    • Sen. Robert Byrd (read about him) once gave us an excellent example of home style; view it here [2:45]
  • FYI:
    • Note to legislative interns: While you were gone, I lectured on member goals. You heard this lecture in PlSc 297 in the "What legislators want" lecture. Review your notes from 297, as this material will be on the 315 exam. Visit with me if you
have questions.
- The "member goals" lecture and today's "representation" lecture both draw heavily on Fenno's and Mayhew's books, the two most important things you will read in this course. If for some reason you haven't read both books yet, do so. They will be covered heavily in the exams; you will also need to be able to discuss them in your term paper.

Unit 3: Congressional Elections

Fri, Mar 19th, 2010. Reapportionment and redistricting. What method do we use to apportion House seats, and why? What values influence redistricting, and when do these values conflict? How do redistricting committees and legislators have competing interests?
- **DUE:** Watch another film (see film paper instructions). The film paper will be due next time we meet.
- **Terms:** Apportionment vs districting; Alabama paradox; Method of equal proportions (Huntington-Hill method); Texas redistricting controversy
- **Readings (33 pages):**
  - Play the game at [http://redistrictinggame.org/](http://redistrictinggame.org/). No, really. At a minimum, try the "basic" version of missions 1, 2, 3, and 4. Mission 5 is optional.
  - Poke around at [RedistrictingTheNation.com](http://RedistrictingTheNation.com)
  - Read ahead (or catch up if needed)

Mon, Mar 22nd, 2010. Recruitment, nominations, and strategy. Why do some people run for Congress but others don't? What kinds of people run? When do the "best" candidates run?
- **DUE:** Film paper (see film paper instructions)
- **Terms:** Ambition (discrete, static, progressive); types of amateur vs professional; strategic entry calculus; opportunity costs of running
- **Readings (91 pages):**
  - Loomis and Schiller, ch 4 [25 pages]
  - Herron, chs 1-2 [64 pages]
  - AP (2010), "3 Democrats—2 senators, 1 governor—to retire" (or as PDF) [2 pages]
- **Resources:** [Show resources](#)

- **DUE:** Assignment 4 (see term paper instructions)
- **Terms:** Campaign finance; FECA; Buckley v Valeo; BCRA; soft money; hard money; PAC; 527; issue advocacy; electioneering communication
- **Readings (111 pages):**
  - Herron, chs 5-6 and 10-11 [103 pages]
  - NY Times (2010), "Justices overturn key campaign limits" (or as PDF) [3 pages]
  - Yahoo Reuters (2010), "Landmark Supreme Court ruling allows corporate political cash" (or as PDF) [2 pages]
  - Yahoo AP (2010), "Analysis: Winners, losers in Supreme Court ruling" (or as PDF) [2 pages]
  - Yahoo AP (2010), "Obama blasts Court decision on campaign finance" (or as PDF) [1 page]

- **DUE:** Assignment 5 (see term paper instructions)
- **Terms:** Recall vs recognition; rolloff; coattail; incumbent; challenger; open seat; incumbency advantage; frank; Chaffetz; Spencer; Hatch; Bennett
- **Readings (135 pages):**
  - Herronson, chs 3-4 and 7-9 [135 pages]

Mon, Mar 29th, 2010. Woohoo!
- **DUE:** Midterm (in testing center; no class)
- **FYI:** The midterm will be in the testing center two days only, March 29-30 (Monday and Tuesday).
Unit 4: Organization. Who Runs This Place?

Wed, Mar 31st, 2010. Part 1: Congressional committees. Why do we have committees? When are committees most autonomous? What powers do committees have (negative, positive)? What are the limits on these powers? Which committees are most powerful? Part 2: Parties and leadership. If committees are really autonomous, what four things would you expect to observe? What evidence is there that party leaders are more powerful than committees? What makes some leaders more powerful than others?

- Terms: Committee; floor; chamber; committee-dominant model; party-dominant model; informational (chamber-dominant) model; standing committee; joint committee; select committee; conference committee; negative power vs positive power; discharge petition; multiple referral; reciprocity; unrepresentativeness; preference outliers; seniority; continuity; self-selection; specialization; conditional party government; coolies; cartel theory; the Johnson treatment

- Readings (54 pages):
  - Loomis and Schiller, chs 5 and 8 [43 pages]
  - Green (2010), Assessing Pelosi (several parts): intro, part 1, part 2 (Pelosi and health care), part 3 (origins of Pelosi's power), part 4 (Pelosi's future). If the links don't work, download PDF versions here. [11 pages]

- Resources: Show resources

Fri, Apr 2nd, 2010. Part 1: Parties and leadership continued. Part 2: Rules and procedures. Why do rules matter? How do structural (Constitutional) differences between the Senate and House influence the types of procedures that each chamber adopts? What role does the Rules committee play in the House? Given that it has no Rules committee, how does the Senate control floor time?

- **DUE**: Assignment 6 (see term paper instructions)
- Terms: Arrow's paradox; transitivity; Powell amendment; Rules committee; open rule, closed rule, etc.; unanimous consent agreement; cloture

- Readings (108 pages):
  - Loomis and Schiller, ch 7 [15 pages]
  - Sinclair, chs 1-4 [90 pages]
  - "Senate parliamentarian stands to become central figure in a health care vote" (or as PDF) [3 pages]

Unit 5: The Legislative Process

Mon, Apr 5th, 2010. Voting decisions. What kind of information do members of Congress like best? What sources do they look to the most? How important is content relative to source? Why do members of Congress sometimes ignore district opinion? What incentives do members of Congress have to vote sincerely or strategically?

- Terms: Brevity; political relevance; evaluative; gatekeepers; "revolving door"; intensity; Powell amendment; strategic voting; sincere voting

- Readings (2 pages):
  - Very few readings; finish up your term paper.
  - "Relationships, expertise, and the revolving door" [2 pages]

- Resources: Show resources

FYI: I assigned very few readings today to ensure plenty of time to write your paper. Write early so that you have time to visit me if you have questions.


- **DUE**: Term paper (for review). Bring a complete copy of your paper. It should be final draft quality. You will exchange with another student for peer reviews.

- Terms: Delegate vs trustee (Burke); crafted talk; pandering; false consensus; democratic ideals; democratic practice

- Readings (28 pages):
  - Hibbing and Theiss-Morse. 1996. "Civics is Not Enough: Teaching Barbarics in K-12" [6 pages]
  - AP via Yahoo (Nov 2009), "Legislation inflation grips GOP" [2 pages]

- Resources: Show resources
Fri, Apr 9th, 2010. Interbranch conflict. What are the president's formal and informal legislative powers? What sorts of authority does Congress delegate to the executive branch? Why? What tools do members of Congress have at their disposal to ensure that delegated authority is not abused?

- **DUE:** Assignment 7 (see term paper instructions). Bring two copies—one for me to grade, and one for the student whose paper you reviewed.
- Terms: Bully pulpit; veto; signing statement; bureaucracy; police patrol; fire alarm; the Federal Register; oversight
- Readings (63 pages):
  - Loomis and Schiller, ch 6 [15 pages]
  - Sinclair, chs 5-6 [47 pages]
  - Rudalevige (2010), "Agenda setting and the budget message" [1 page]

Mon, Apr 12th, 2010. The budget and policy process. How do Congressional politics vary by policy type?

- **DUE:**
  - Term paper (final draft; see term paper instructions)
  - Assignment 8 (see term paper instructions). Bring enough copies for everybody (including me).
- Terms: distributive; regulatory; redistributive; iron triangle; earmark
- Readings (46 pages):
  - Sinclair, ch 12 [20 pages]
  - Loomis and Schiller, ch 10 [20 pages]
  - Davidson @ Deseret News (2009), "Chaffetz may end full earmark ban" (or as PDF) [2 pages]
  - Davidson @ Deseret News (2009), "Chaffetz ends personal ban on earmarks" (or as PDF) [1 page]
  - SLT editorial (2009), "Kosher pork: Chaffetz sets his own earmark rules" [1 page]
  - NY Times (2010), "House leaders bar earmarks to for-profit companies" [2 pages]

- Resources: Show resources

**Final exam:** The final will be in the testing center throughout finals week.

**Notices**

The following are notices from the political science department.

**Plagiarism:** While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. General information about the honor code can be found at honorcode.byu.edu. Details about Academic Honesty at the Honor Code site can be found by moving your mouse over "Honor Code" in the second grey bar and then move down then right and click on "Other Clarifications", then move your mouse down and click on "Academic Honesty."

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current Harbrace College Handbook, the MLA Handbook, and James D. Lester's Writing Research Papers.

**Discrimination:** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

**Disabilities:** Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB

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