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 mostly in 5.**

Punchline: Expect to be very busy once we get going. Ensure that your other courses, job, family, and church responsibilities leave you plenty of time for this class.

**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 may see all these question types on exams. 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)
- 5% Critique of a classmate's final paper (Asst 7)
- 35% 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 assignment 7, 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?**

We will use several books. If you buy them all new at the bookstore, expect to spend around $150-170. If you buy them all used on Amazon, expect to spend $50-60 (before shipping) at current prices. Your choice. Make sure you buy the correct editions; see the instructions below.

- **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 ($1-5)](https://www.amazon.com/).
  - There is a copy on reserve at the library. Ask for call number JK 1067 .M3

- **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 ($3-10)](https://www.amazon.com/).
  - There is a copy on reserve at the library. Ask for call number JK 1323 1978 .F46

  - BYU bookstore. [Amazon: $8-60](https://www.amazon.com/).


  - BYU bookstore. [Amazon: $25-40](https://www.amazon.com/)

**Reading schedule**

Dates may change, of course. You can also view the reading schedule in [calendar format](#).

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**

**Mon, Feb 28th, 2011.** 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. We will meet for only 30-50 minutes.

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?

Take thorough notes on these books. You will need to cite them heavily in papers you turn in later. That's how I will know that you read them carefully.

**Wed, Mar 2nd, 2011.** No class today (read Fenno).
- Readings (100 pages):
  - Fenno's book, second third of book or more [100 pages]

**Fri, Mar 4th, 2011.** No class today (finish Fenno).
- **DUE:**
  - Finish Fenno's book
  - Watch a film (see film paper instructions). The paper is not due just yet, but start watching the films now.
- Readings (100 pages):
  - Fenno's book, remainder of book [100 pages]
  - Start Mayhew's book

**Mon, Mar 7th, 2011.** 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.

**Wed, Mar 9th, 2011.** No class today (finish Mayhew, watch films).
- **DUE:** Finish Mayhew's book
- Readings (99 pages):
  - Mayhew, pp 81-180 [99 pages]

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**Unit 2: Congress—The Basics**

**Fri, Mar 11th, 2011.** Congress in the Constitution. Why don't we like Congress? Why did the founders design Congress the way they did?
- **DUE:** Watch another film (see film paper instructions).
- Terms: Congress vs most members of Congress vs your member of Congress; tyranny vs efficiency tradeoff
- Readings (5 pages):
  - Read this entire syllabus before coming to class
  - 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 14th, 2011.** 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
Unit 3: Congressional Elections

Fri, Mar 18th, 2011. 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?

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)

FYI: I strongly suggest that you bring a complete draft of your film paper to the FHSS writing lab no later than today.

Mon, Mar 21st, 2011. 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]
- Herrnson, 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):
  - Herrnson, 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):
  - Herrnson, chs 3-4 and 7-9 [135 pages]

Mon, Mar 28th, 2011. Woohoo!
- **DUE:** Midterm (in testing center; no class)
- FYI: The midterm will be in the testing center two days only, March 28-29 (Monday and Tuesday).

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**Unit 4: Organization. Who Runs This Place?**

Wed, Mar 30th, 2011. 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?
- **DUE:** Assignment 6 (see term paper instructions)
- 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 1st, 2011. No class today (work on term paper)
- FYI: I will be away from campus today. Work on your term paper. I strongly suggest that you visit the FHSS writing lab sometime before the paper is due. Bring your draft or outline with you.

Mon, Apr 4th, 2011. 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?
- Terms: Arrow's paradox; transitivity; Powell amendment; Rules committee; open rule, closed rule, etc.; unanimous consent agreement; filibuster; 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

Wed, Apr 6th, 2011. 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 (4 pages):
  - "Relationships, expertise, and the revolving door" [2 pages]
  - McCarty et al (2010), "The price of principle" (or as PDF) [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

Mon, Apr 11th, 2011. 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 of your review—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 (65 pages):
  - Loomis and Schiller, ch 6 [15 pages]
  - Sinclair, chs 5-6 [47 pages]
  - Rudalevige (2010), "Agenda setting and the budget message" [1 page]
  - Salt Lake Tribune (2010), "Chaffetz to get oversight of TSA" (or as PDF) [2 pages]

Wed, Apr 13th, 2011. The budget and policy process. How do Congressional politics vary by policy type?

- DUE: Term paper (final draft; see term paper instructions)
- 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.