

PO 406 – Introduction to Congressional Policymaking
Summer 2005 – MW 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Brett Crawford

brett.crawford@gmail.com

(202) 408-9238 (work); (301) 987-9227 (home)

Purpose: This course will introduce students to the U.S. Congress and provide them with a working knowledge of the Congressional policymaking process. The course will combine theoretical and practical knowledge to introduce students to the legislative and political process. Students will have the opportunity to learn from a variety of sources, including assigned readings, lectures, guest speakers, in-class discussions, and at least one assignment designed to encourage students to apply the concepts they are learning in a mock environment. Students will also be encouraged to think critically about the current legislative process and to evaluate the various factors that impede or facilitate policymaking by Congress.

Expectations: Students are expected to do the readings ahead of time and to attend class. Students will also be expected to participate in class in a fashion that demonstrates familiarity with the course materials. Because the ability to advocate clearly and effectively is essential to Congressional policymaking, students will be given opportunities to hone their written and oral advocacy skills through class discussion and graded assignments. Students are also expected to become Congressional news junkies for the duration of this course. If you do not currently consume a national or Congressional news source on a daily or weekly basis, you will need to pick up the habit. References to current events will be made in the lectures and the final exam. Examples of good sources include: *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *L.A. Times*, *CQ Weekly*, *CQ Daily*, and *Roll Call*.

Textbook: *Congress & Its Members*, Roger H. Davidson and Walter J. Oleszek (9th edition, CQ Press, 2003).

I will also occasionally distribute relevant news articles and other materials to be discussed in class.

Coursework and Assignments: There will be two graded assignments and one final exam. The in-class final exam, scheduled for July 20, will be a traditional blue book exam consisting of a mixture of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The exam will cover material spanning the entire course. In addition, each student is expected to write two 6-8 page papers on topics to be assigned. The students will also be expected to make in-class presentations accompanying their papers. The first paper will ask each student to respond to a hotly debated procedural issue currently confronting the Congress. For this assignment, the class will also be divided into groups who will take opposing sides in an in-class policy debate related to the assigned paper topic. The second assignment will require students to apply the concepts taught in the course to formulate a Congressional advocacy strategy for a policy issue and interest group of their choosing. More information will be provided about the assignments as the time approaches.

All assignments must be turned in on time. Failure to turn in an assignment in class on the due date will result in a reduction of half a letter grade for each day it is late. Similarly, failure to attend class on the date of the final exam will result in the student receiving a zero for the exam.

Grading: Your grades will be computed using the following formula:

Final exam	30%
Assignment #1	25%
Assignment #2	25%
Class participation	20%

Grades will be scaled as follows:

A+	97.5 - 100
A	92.5 - 97.5
A-	90 - 92.5
B+	87.5 - 90
B	82.5 - 87.5
B-	80 - 82.5
C+	77.5 - 80
C	72.5 - 77.5
C-	70 - 72.5
D+	67.5 - 70
D	62.5 - 67.5
D-	60 - 62.5
F	Below 60

Schedule of Readings and Lectures:

Monday, June 6	Course Overview & Introduction to Congress (Chapters 1 & 2)
Wed., June 8	Congressional Elections (Chapters 3 & 4)
Monday, June 13	Member-Constituent Relations (Chapter 5)
Wed., June 15	Political Parties in Congress (Chapter 6)
Monday, June 20	The Committee Structure (Chapter 7)
Wed., June 22	The Legislative Process (or How a Bill becomes a Law) (Chapters 8 & 9)
Monday, June 27	The Role of Interest Groups and Lobbyists (Chapter 13)
Wed., June 29	The Culture and Ethics of Congressional Policymaking (Chapter 16)
Monday, July 4	No class
Wed., July 6	Budgeting and Policymaking (Chapter 14) <u>Assignment # 1 due; in-class debates</u>
Monday, July 11	Congress and the Executive Branch (Chapter 10 & 11)
Wed., July 13	Congress and the Judiciary (Chapter 12)
Monday, July 18	<u>Assignment # 2 due; in-class presentations</u>
Wed., July 20	Final exam