

**PSCI 211: The U.S. Congress  
Spring 2022**

Location: Kauke 035

Time: T\*Th 1-2:20pm

Professor: Dr. Avi Muñoz

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Office: Kauke 101

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Office Hour: TBD

**Course Description**

In the last decade, Congress and its failings have received increased attention among the American public. From disputes over reconciliation to Supreme Court nominations to the fate of the filibuster in the Senate to legislators being permanently banned from social media, it seems Congress is always on the news for the wrong reasons. But, aside from these issues, there are other important questions to ask and answer about the legislative branch of the United States government: Who writes and passes the laws for the U.S. on a daily basis? Why do they write laws the way they do? What role do political parties play in that process, and in Congress in general? Why is it so hard for Congress to get anything done?

These are just a sampling of the questions that we will be exploring in this course, alongside understanding the contexts that lead to the more dramatic public disputes within and about Congress. To those ends, this course is intended as an introduction to the U.S. Congress and the federal legislative process in two distinct ways: 1) understanding the structures and rules of Congress, and how legislators work within those constraints to engage in policymaking; and 2) examining current political science scholarship in order to better understand why legislators engage in particular behaviors, and whom they are representing through their actions in Congress.

We begin by discussing the foundations of the U.S. Congress and the nature of political representation, touching on debates about how best to represent all U.S. citizens. We next focus on congressional organization, especially political parties and congressional committees and the roles they play in shaping congressional activities. We then turn to the details of the legislative process, including how Congress works with and against the other branches of government in order to carry out its primary law-making function.

Classes will include a combination of both lecture and discussion. As such, it is important for students to keep up with the assigned readings so that they may actively participate in class discussions. We will also use the course material to analyze current congressional politics, so it is recommended that you keep up to date on new developments in Congress. Good sources for keeping up with new developments in Congress include *Roll Call* ([www.rollcall.com](http://www.rollcall.com)) and *The Hill* ([www.thehill.com](http://www.thehill.com)).

## **Classroom Expectations**

Attendance will be taken for each class session, and you are expected to attend every class. Regular attendance will help ensure that you do not fall behind and will provide you with a regular time and place to discuss any questions you may have about the course readings and lecture material. While attendance itself is not a part of your grade, participation does count and is hard to achieve if you are not in class. That being said, I understand the attendance pressures created by the pandemic; if you need to miss class, *please communicate this to me as soon as possible* so I can make sure that your participation grade is not negatively affected.

While in class, you are expected to be an active participant. This means you are expected to have completed the assigned readings by the start of class, and that you are ready to engage in discussion about those readings or any other topics that arise during class.

As with any political science course, but especially one focused on Congress, we will likely have discussions that touch on your personal political beliefs in a variety of ways. While there is room for disagreement in our discussions of legislative politics, there is no room for hostility or disrespect. In our discussions, I expect everyone to respect that not everyone thinks or feels the same about politics, and to engage in good-faith discussion and debate when appropriate. Failure to do so—e.g. engaging in racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory speech, insulting each other, demeaning each other or one's beliefs, etc.—will not be tolerated, and may lead to dismissal from the class.

## **Required Books**

There is 1 required book for this course, available at the bookstore or online. All other readings will be made available on Moodle.

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, Eric Schickler, and James M. Curry. 2021. *Congress and Its Members, 18<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Congressional politics are constantly shifting, and *Congress and Its Members* is updated accordingly. While some of the information stays the same across editions, using the most recent edition of the book is **strongly recommended**.

## **Assignments & Grading**

The following will make up your course grade:

- Participation – 10%
- Critical Response Papers – 20% (10% each)
- Legislation Tracking Paper – 10%
- 2022 Campaign Project & Presentation – 25%
- Congress Simulation – 35%
  - o Writing/introducing legislation
  - o Sponsorship speech
  - o Participation
  - o Paper: Reflection & Assessment

*Critical Response Papers:* You are responsible for writing two short essays (3-5 pages, double-spaced, 12pt font) that critically engage with one or more of the assigned readings. The first paper must focus on readings from the weeks on representation (Week 2) and disparities in representation (Week 3). The second paper must focus on readings from the week on parties and party leaders (Week 6). Your papers should take one of two forms:

1. Identify shortcomings of theory or research design and make some practical suggestion(s) for how it could be improved.
2. Develop a counter-argument to a non-trivial theoretical claim made by one or more authors in that week's readings.

The goal of these papers is not to summarize the readings. You will be graded on how well you articulate a thesis that makes a defensible claim regarding the reading(s) with which you choose to engage, and synthesize across readings in order to defend your argument and explore its implications. More information on each paper will be provided in class.

*Legislation Tracking Paper:* In this paper, you must pick a piece of legislation that is being considered in the current session of either the House or the Senate, i.e. the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2020-2022), and track its progress through the legislative process. You must report on all relevant actions taken on the bill and, using the concepts and information discussed in the course, analyze why that particular piece of legislation did or did not make it to the end of the legislative process, i.e. pass in the House and/or Senate. For legislation that is still pending, you should offer a reasoned prediction on how that bill will fare in the remaining stages of the legislative process. More information on this paper will be provided later in the semester.

*2022 Campaign Project:* This year is a midterm election year, and the elections in November will decide the balance of power in the House. For this project, you and your fellow group members will be assigned a competitive race in the House and develop a campaign strategy for one of the candidates. This will culminate with each group presenting their campaign strategy during our assigned final exam period. More information on this project will be provided later in the semester.

*Congress Simulation:* In the second half of the semester, we will carry out an extended simulation of the U.S. Senate. Each person will be assigned an actual Senator as their “character”, with the expectation that you will engage in legislative behaviors consistent with that Senator’s behavior in reality. During the simulation, everyone will be expected to draft and introduce an original piece of legislation and attempt to successfully shepherd it through the legislative process. We will have committee meetings, markups and votes, party caucus meetings, and floor debates and votes throughout the simulation that mirror the daily activities in the U.S. Senate. You will be expected to write a reflection and assessment of the simulation and the role you played in light of our conversations throughout the semester.

### **Grading Scale**

100-93 A	76-73 C
92-90 A-	72-70 C-
89-87 B+	69-67 D+

86-83 B          66-63 D-  
82-80 B-        62-60 D-  
79-77 C+        Below 60 F

## Course Schedule

### **Week 1: Introduction & Foundations**

- Tuesday 1/18
  - o Introductions & syllabus review
- Thursday 1/20
  - o Constitution of the United States, Article 1  
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>
  - o Davidson et al. – Chapter 2

### **Week 2: Representation in Congress**

- Tuesday 1/25
  - o Federalist Papers 10, 55, 57
  - o Davidson et al. – Chapter 1
- Thursday 1/27
  - o \*\*\*Critical Response Paper #1 ASSIGNED\*\*\*
  - o Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes.’” *The Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-657.

### **Week 3: Disparities in Congressional Representation**

- Tuesday 2/1
  - o Carnes, Nicholas. 2013. *White-Collar Government: The Hidden Role of Class in Economic Policy Making*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1
- Thursday 2/3
  - o Hawkesworth, Mary. 2003. “Congressional Enactments of Race-Gender: Toward a Theory of Raced-Gendered Institutions.” *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 529-550.
  - o Wineinger, Catherine. 2021. “House Republicans kept a woman in their third-highest post. What stops GOP women from climbing higher?” *The Washington Post*. May 20.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/05/20/house-republicans-kept-woman-their-third-highest-post-what-stops-gop-women-climbing-higher/>

### **Week 4: Congressional Campaigns & Elections**

- Tuesday 2/8
  - o Davidson et al. – Chapter 3 & Chapter 4
  - o Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Yale University Press. Pp. 13-17, 49-77
- Thursday 2/10
  - o \*\*\*Critical Response Paper #1 DUE\*\*\*
  - o Davidson et al. – Chapter 5

- Fenno, Jr., Richard F. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *American Political Science Review* 71(3): 883-917.
- Meyers, Ellen. 2021. “More companies disclose political spending after Jan. 6 attack.” *Roll Call*. December 2. <  
<https://rollcall.com/2021/12/02/more-companies-disclose-political-spending-after-jan-6-attack/>>

### **Week 5: Rules, Procedures, and Policymaking in Congress**

- Tuesday 2/15
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 8, Chapter 9
- Thursday 2/17
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 14 (pp. 405-416)
  - Oleszek, Mark J., and Walter J. Oleszek. 2012. “Legislative Sausage-Making: Health Care Reform in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.” In *Party and Procedure in the United States Congress*, ed. Jacob R. Straus. Rowman & Littlefield. Pp. 253-281.

### **Week 6: Parties & Party Leaders in Congress**

- Tuesday 2/22
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 6
  - Lee, Frances E. 2015. *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3
- Thursday 2/24
  - \*\*\*Critical Response Paper #2 ASSIGNED\*\*\*
  - Curry, James M., and Frances E. Lee. 2020. *The Limits of Party: Congress and Lawmaking in a Polarized Era*. University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 & 2

### **Week 7: Committees in Congress**

- Tuesday 3/1
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 7
  - Shepsle, Kenneth A., and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. “The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power.” *American Political Science Review* 81(1): 85-104.
- Thursday 3/3
  - Minta, Michael D. 2021. *No Longer Outsiders: Black and Latino Interest Group Advocacy on Capitol Hill*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4

### **Week 8: Caucuses & Intraparty Organizations**

- Tuesday 3/8
  - Hammond, Susan Webb. 2001. *Congressional Caucuses in National Policymaking*. Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter 2
  - Minta, Michael D., and Valeria Sinclair-Chapman. 2013. “Diversity in Political Institutions and Congressional Responsiveness to Minority Interests.” *Political Research Quarterly* 66(1): 127-140.
- Thursday 3/10
  - \*\*\*Critical Response Paper #2 DUE\*\*\*

- Muñoz, Avram. “The Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Legislative Effectiveness in Congress: Representation Beyond Bill Passage.” (Working Paper)
- Peay, Periloux C., and John D. Rackey. 2021. “From Complexity to Clarity: A Network Approach to Better Understanding Issues on a Black-Interest Agenda.” *National Review of Black Politics* 2(3-4): 145-170.

## **SPRING BREAK: March 14-27**

### **Week 9: The Individualistic Senate**

- **\*\*BEGINNING OF SENATE SIMULATION\*\***
- Tuesday 3/29
  - Davidson et al. – review Chapter 8 (pp. 247-262)
  - Sinclair, Barbara. 2009. “The New World of U.S. Senators.” In *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. CQ Press – pp. 1-22
  - Millhiser, Ian. 2020. “America’s anti-democratic Senate, by the numbers.” Vox. November 6. <  
<https://www.vox.com/2020/11/6/21550979/senate-malapportionment-20-million-democrats-republicans-supreme-court>>
- Thursday 3/31
  - Senate Session

### **Week 10: The Budget Process**

- Tuesday 4/5
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 14 (pp. 409-425)
  - Scott, Dylan. 2021. “9 questions about budget reconciliation you were too afraid to ask.” *Vox*. January 25. <  
<https://www.vox.com/22242476/senate-filibuster-budget-reconciliation-process>>
- Thursday 4/7
  - Senate Session

### **Week 11: Congress & The Executive Branch**

- Tuesday 4/12
  - Davidson et al.– Chapter 10
  - McCubbins, Mathew D., and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms.” *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1): 165-179.
- Thursday 4/14
  - Senate Session

### **Week 12: Congress & The Courts**

- Tuesday 4/19
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 12
  - Clark, Tom S. 2011. *The Limits of Judicial Independence*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3
- Thursday 4/21

- \*\*\*Deadline to introduce legislation in simulation\*\*\*
- Senate Session

### **Week 13: Congress & Organized Interests**

- Tuesday 4/26
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 13
  - Hojnacki, Marie, and David C. Kimball. 1998. “Organized Interests and the Decision of Whom to Lobby in Congress.” *American Political Science Review* 92(4): 775-790.
- Thursday 4/28
  - Senate Session

### **Week 15: The State of Congress – Evaluations and Reflections**

- Tuesday 5/3
  - Davidson et al. – Chapter 16
- Thursday 5/5
  - \*\*\*Legislation Tracking Paper DUE\*\*\*
  - Final Senate Session

### **FINAL EXAM PERIOD:** Tuesday, May 10, 4-6:30pm

- Simulation Reflection DUE
- Campaign presentations

### **Academic Honesty & Code of Academic Integrity**

The academic program at the College seeks to promote the intellectual development of each student and the realization of that individual’s potential for creative thinking, learning, and understanding. In achieving this, each student must learn to act rigorously, independently, and imaginatively.

The College’s understanding and expectations in regard to issues of academic honesty are fully articulated in the Code of Academic Integrity as published in The Scot’s Key and form an essential part of the implicit contract between the student and the College. The Code provides framework at Wooster to help students develop and exhibit honesty in their academic work. You are expected to know and abide by these rules.

Dishonesty in any of your academic work is a serious breach of the Code of Academic Integrity and is ground for serious penalties. Such violations include turning in another person’s work as your own, copying from any source without proper citation, violating expectations for a group project, submitting an assignment produced for a course to a second course without the authorization of all the instructors, and dishonesty in connection with your academic work. You will be held responsible for your actions. Particular attention should be directed to the appropriate use of materials available online. Whether intentional or not, improper use of materials is a violation of academic honesty. If you are unsure as to what is permissible, please contact your course instructor.

### **The Academic Resource Center**

Academic Support, Disabilities, and English Language Learning  
 Contact: Amber Larson, [alarson@wooster.edu](mailto:alarson@wooster.edu), (330)263-2595, [ARC Website](#)

The Academic Resource Center, which is in APEX (Gault library) offers a variety of academic support services, programs and 1:1 meetings available to all students. Popular areas of support include time management techniques, class preparation tips and test taking strategies. In addition, the Academic Resource Center coordinates peer-tutoring for several academic departments. Students are encouraged to schedule an appointment.

The Academic Resource Center also coordinates accommodations for students with diagnosed disabilities. At the beginning of the semester, students should contact the Academic Resource Center to make arrangements for securing appropriate accommodations. Although the Academic Resource Center will notify professors of students with documented disabilities and the approved accommodations, students are encouraged to speak with professors during the first week of each semester. If a student does not request accommodations or does not provide documentation to the Academic Resource Center, faculty are under no obligation to provide accommodations.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please visit the Academic Resource Center's webpage: <https://inside.wooster.edu/arc/>

### **Inclusive Learning Statement**

Your success in this course is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your academic performance or impact your learning in particular portions of the class, please let me know as soon as possible. You do not need to share specifics, but together we can develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I encourage you to visit the Academic Resource Center to determine how you could improve your learning as well. If you need official accommodations, the ARC can work with you to make sure your needs are met. There are also a range of resources on campus, including the Writing Center, Math Center, STEM Success Initiative, and APEX.

It is also important that we all be respectful of everyone's privacy around health concerns, vaccination status, and any accommodations that are necessary in the classroom. It is not appropriate to question why someone requests physical distancing, chooses to wear a mask, or requires any other accommodations. As part of our participation together in this class, we commit to showing respect to each other as individuals, to working together to create a learning environment that fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion to all members, and to understanding that our differences are also strengths. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated, and please contact me—via email, office hours, or after class—if you have any concerns or questions.

### **Names, Pronouns, and Pronunciations**

All people have the right to be addressed and referred to as they prefer. I will do my best to address and refer to all students by the names and pronouns that they share in class, regardless of what is listed on the roster, and I support classmates in doing so as well. Please share the name you prefer to be called and pronouns you wish to use in this class with me via classroom introductions or privately.

If you are interested in changing your chosen name and/or including your pronoun(s) in The College of Wooster system, [you can find additional information here](#). What appears in The

College of Wooster system is what will display in all platforms across Microsoft Teams. At present, there is no alternative way to change your name or to add pronouns in Teams, but you can add a background that includes these for any video platform (see [instructions for Microsoft Teams here](#)).

I encourage everyone in this classroom to create a space of mutual respect and support by also giving each other some grace around pronouns, pronunciation of names, etc., if or when we make mistakes. This is not at all to absolve anyone of responsibility for using correct pronouns, names, and pronunciations. But I find it useful to acknowledge that even with the best of intentions, sometimes we can all still make mistakes.

### **Title IX Reporting Policy Regarding Sexual Misconduct, Harassment, Relationship Violence, and Stalking**

Contact: Lori Makin-Byrd, [lmakin-byrd@wooster.edu](mailto:lmakin-byrd@wooster.edu), (330) 263-2017, [Title IX website](#)

The College of Wooster is committed to fostering a campus community based on respect and nonviolence. To this end, we recognize that all Wooster community members are responsible for ensuring that our community is free from discrimination, gender bias, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. In accordance with Title IX, Wooster is legally obligated to provide supportive options for all reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault that occur on our campus. Faculty who become aware of an incident of sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual assault, relationship violence, or stalking, are mandated reporters at the College and are required to notify Wooster's Title IX Coordinator. The purpose of this disclosure is to ensure that students are made aware of their reporting options and resources for support. For more information about your rights and reporting options at Wooster, including confidential and anonymous reporting options, please visit <https://inside.wooster.edu/title-ix/>

### **Discriminatory or Bias-Related Harassment Reporting Policy**

Contact: Kayla Campbell, [kcampbell@wooster.edu](mailto:kcampbell@wooster.edu); or visit the [Bias Reporting website](#)

The College of Wooster is committed to promoting its mission of inclusivity and equity in all aspects of the educational enterprise. This commitment extends to all rights, privileges, programs and activities, including housing, employment, admissions, financial assistance, and educational and athletic programs at the College. The College's Bias Incident Reporting Process is designed to effectively respond to bias concerns raised by faculty, students, staff, alumni and visitors to the College. If you or someone you know are the victims of bias, you can:

- [File a report online](#) (where you may choose to identify yourself or not)
- Contact Campus Safety: 2590 (from campus phone) or 330-263-2590
- Call the Anonymous Tip Line: 2337 (from campus phone) or 330-263-2337
- Contact the Dean of Students Office: 2545 (from a campus phone) or 330-263-2545
- Contact the Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer representative for students: Kayla Campbell, [kcampbell@wooster.edu](mailto:kcampbell@wooster.edu), 330-263-2607

### **Well-Being at Wooster**

Contact (24/7): (330) 263-2319, or visit the [Wellness Center website](#)

The College of Wooster is committed to supporting the wellbeing of our students. During the course of their academic careers, students experience challenges that may interfere with their learning & health (both physical and mental), including but not limited to: strained relationships, adjusting to a new environment, chronic worrying, persistent sadness or loss of interest in enjoyable activities, family conflict, grief and loss, domestic violence, unwanted sexual experiences, difficulty concentrating, drug/alcohol problems, significant changes in eating and sleeping patterns, microaggressions, challenges with organization, procrastination and/or lack of motivation. Counseling Services at the Longbrake Student Wellness Center is a free and confidential resource providing short-term counseling and connections to community agencies for students needing longer term or specialized resources. You can make an appointment by calling 330.263.2319 between 8:30am-4:30pm during weekdays or by emailing Lori Stine ([lstine@wooster.edu](mailto:lstine@wooster.edu)). You can also find helpful resources on the Counseling Services website at <https://inside.wooster.edu/health/counseling/>.

Students also have free access to TimelyCare, a telehealth service providing scheduled medical and counseling appointments as well as 24/7 crisis consultation with licensed professionals. Students use their Wooster email to establish an account at [TimelyCare: Telehealth for Scots](#). TimelyCare also provides students access to nutritionists and health coaches about issues of sleep and exercise, and psychiatry (with a referral from doctor or counselor).

**If you or a friend is in crisis**, please call Campus Safety at 330-287-3333 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) or connect with the Crisis Text Line by Texting “4HOPE” to 741-741.

**For financial concerns:** Dean of Students Office, [dos@wooster.edu](mailto:dos@wooster.edu), (330) 263-2545, [DoS website](#)

**For safety concerns:** Campus Safety 330-263-2590 or [cow-security@wooster.edu](mailto:cow-security@wooster.edu), [Campus Safety website](#). In the care of an emergency, call: 330-287-3333