

POLS 325: Congress & the Presidency (Fall 2018)

Monday, Wednesday, & Friday 9:00-9:50am

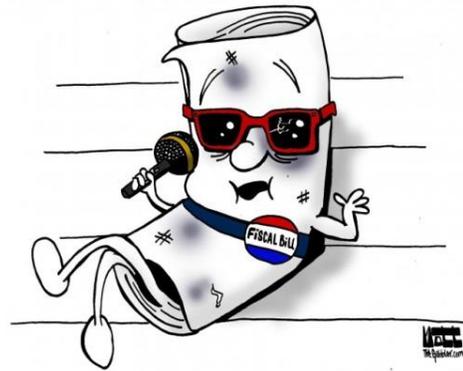
Classroom: CSB 277

Instructor: Andre P. Audette

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Andre's Office: CSB 330

Politics Party Time (Office Hours): 2:30-4 MWF, 9-10:30 Tues-Thurs, and by appointment



“Congress in a Wordle” (Pew Research Center) & “Fiscal Cliff” (The Gabbler)

Course Description

Several decades ago, political scientist Nelson Polsby referred to the U.S. Congress and the Presidency as the “two great institutions” of American government (1972). Ask nearly anyone nowadays and you are likely to hear a different story: recent public opinion suggests that both branches are too polarized, ineffective, and broken to complete even the basic tasks of governing. In spite of the many problems and challenges identified by the American public, many people have very limited knowledge about what goes on inside the halls of Congress or the White House. This course provides an introduction to the two policy-oriented branches of the U.S. government. We will separately examine the institutions and operations of both branches before assessing how they interact with one another. Ultimately, the objective of this analysis is to evaluate the quality and health of America’s political institutions and democratic government. Is Congress a “broken branch” of government? Is the Presidency damaged beyond repair? Do they truly represent the interests of the American people?

Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the basic workings of the legislative and executive branches of government
- Apply political science theories about Congress and the Presidency to the current political situation
- Evaluate whether the legislative and executive branches of government are successfully meeting the requirements of democratic government
- Think critically about politics, beyond what we hear in the news
- Better synthesize and intelligently express your own points of view, both orally and in writing

Required Texts

The following books are available in the campus bookstore or through other online retailers. Please be sure to purchase the correct edition.

- Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, & Schickler. *Congress and Its Members*, 16th ed. 2017. CQ Press.
- Redman. *The Dance of Legislation*. 2001. University of Washington Press.

Additionally, you will be responsible for obtaining a copy of one book listed under the book review assignment on this syllabus. I have placed these books on reserve in the library, but many are also available online for a low price should you prefer your own copy.

All other course materials will be made available on Moodle or by email.

Course Requirements

To help you achieve the course objectives, final grades will be assessed through the following evaluations:

- Three exams (10%, 15%, and 20%, respectively, 45% total)
- Biographies of MC, President, and a piece of legislation (5% each, 15% total)
- Book review (10%)
- Final paper (20%)
- Participation (10%)

Further information on these course requirements will be distributed in class

Exams

There will be three in-class, closed-book exams this semester. They are not cumulative and will include fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Exams will cover material from lectures, reading assignments, and discussion.

Biographies

Each full month of class (September, October, and November), you will write a short (about 4 double-spaced pages) report on a Member of Congress, a U.S. President, or a piece of legislation and present it to the class. You may complete the biography at any time during the month, but please be in touch to approve your selection and schedule the 4 minute presentation. The biography should introduce the subject and assess the contribution to theories presented in class. For example, how did Speaker Boehner change the role of the Speaker of the House? The biographies are due via email and as a paper copy in class.

Book Review

There is a wealth of political science research on Congress and the Presidency that we could not possibly cover in a single semester. Therefore, by the second week of class each student will select one additional book to read and report on, up to 2 students per book. Following the schedule outlined in this syllabus, you will write a five to seven page (double-spaced) report analyzing your chosen book. In it, you will give a very brief summary of the book and relate it to the theme of the class of whether Congress/the Presidency is meeting the requirements of democratic government. The choices, available in the library, are:

- Mayhew. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. 1974.
- Hibbing & Theiss-Morse. *Congress as Public Enemy*. 1995.
- Binder. *Stalemate*. 2003.
- Theriault. *Party Polarization in Congress*. 2008.
- Fisher. *On Appreciating Congress*. 2010.
- Sinclair. *Unorthodox Lawmaking*. 2011.
- Skowronek. *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*. 2011.
- Howell. *Thinking About the Presidency*. 2013.

Book reviews should be turned in via email and as a hard copy. Additionally, all students signed up for the report will jointly present on the book to the class on the date assigned. You will be asked to overview the arguments of the book and lead a short discussion of how the book fits in with the other readings for class, the current political environment, and with the theme of the class.

Final Paper

The final paper asks you to draw from our course materials and your own outside research to answer the main questions of class: Is Congress a “broken” branch of government? Is the Presidency damaged beyond repair? Do they truly represent the interests of the American people? The paper should be about 8 double-spaced pages and cover both sides of the arguments before making your own informed assessment. We will discuss components of the paper throughout the semester. Final papers should be turned in via email and as a hard copy on the last day of class.

Participation

A large part of our class will be based on discussion; therefore, it is essential that you come to class ready to actively participate. This includes (but is not limited to): attending class regularly, carefully reading the assigned texts, sharing your thoughts, opinions, and insights in discussion, considering and raising opposing viewpoints, engaging in respectful dialogue with others, listening attentively to others’ perspectives, and following the discussion policies listed in this syllabus. Additionally, there may be short daily homework or participation quizzes. You will receive an advisory midterm participation grade to help you assess where you are at halfway through the course.

Course Engagement Expectations

- Classroom activities (2.5 hours/week)
- Reading and class prep (7.5 hours/week)
- Papers (2 hours/week)
- Exam prep (1 hour/week)

Total: 13 hours/week

Grade Scale

A (93-100), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), C+ (77-79.9), C (73-76.9), C- (70-72.9), D+ (67-69.9), D (63-66.9), D- (60-62.9), F (<60)

Course Policies and Additional Resources

Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to be familiar with and uphold the academic honesty policy of MC, as defined in the Scots Guide (<http://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/life/residence-life/scots-guide/academic-regulations.aspx>). Any student found to have violated these policies of academic integrity will receive a failing grade on the assignment and may be subject to further penalties by the College, including suspension or expulsion. If you have any questions about avoiding plagiarism or any of the other policies, please come talk to me.

Late Work/Extra Credit

An important part of academic and career preparation is the ability to meet deadlines and fulfill the requirements of your work. Therefore, late assignments will be subject to a half-letter grade reduction for every 0-24 hour period that the assignment is late. Additionally, there will be no extra credit given on an individual basis.

Laptops and Electronic Devices

Unless instructed otherwise, you are permitted to use laptops in class for note-taking purposes only. Cell phones and other electronics should be put away during class. To do otherwise detracts not only from your learning, but from other students' as well.

Attendance

Class attendance is expected, but not required, in this course. Beware that it is difficult to pass this course if you have a number of unexcused absences, as it is impossible to participate if you do not attend class or make other arrangements with me. Furthermore, you are responsible for all of the material covered in class, and it is thus in your best interest to attend every class. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student and to contact me about any makeup work.

Discussion Policies

The goal of discussion is to understand and learn from the viewpoints and experiences of others in order to better understand our own opinions and the functioning of the world around us. Specifically, our goal in this course is to consider various components of and to think critically about American democracy. Just as multiple voices are necessary for a healthy democracy, your participation is important for the learning experiences of your fellow classmates and your instructor. Therefore, participation will be graded on the quality, and not just quantity, of your contribution to this endeavor. To create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to participate, respect for individual differences and viewpoints will be maintained at all times. In sum, you are allowed and encouraged to disagree with other students, the professor, or the texts, but disagreement should always be expressed in a respectful manner inside and outside of the classroom.

Exceptions, Extensions, and Exemptions

Exceptions to the policies and schedule on this syllabus are granted only in the cases of a true emergency. Please make arrangements with me if an emergency arises.

Disabilities and Learning Differences

Any student who feels they may need support or accommodation for a disability should visit the Teaching and Learning Center on the 2nd floor of Poling Hall to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. I am happy to work with you and Disability Services to provide those accommodations. For more information, visit:

<http://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/life/disability-services/default.aspx>.

Writing Center and Tutoring – take advantage of these resources!!

The Writing Center offers unlimited, free peer tutoring sessions for MC students. Peer writing tutors are trained to work with writers from any major of any writing ability, on any type of writing assignment, and at any stage of their writing processes, from planning to drafting to revising to editing. The Writing Center is located on the 3rd floor of the Mellinger Teaching and Learning Center, and is open Sunday-Thursday 7-10pm and Monday-Thursday 3-5pm on a first-come, first-served basis. No appointment necessary!

All students can also make a free appointment with a Teaching and Learning Center tutor or stop by during drop-in hours. Information about tutoring services is available at:

<http://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/academics/teaching-learning-center/tutoring.aspx>.

Counseling Services

Counseling Services assists students in addressing personal, social, career, and study problems that can interfere with your academic progress and success. All services are free and can include individual and group counseling, crisis consultations, and wellness groups. The Counseling Center is located in the lower level of Poling Hall, and appointments can be made by calling Student Affairs at x2114 or by email to hfisher@monmouthcollege.edu or cbeadles@monmouthcollege.edu. You can find more info online at:

<https://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/life/counseling-services/appointments.aspx>.

Syllabus Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus or the course schedule if it will benefit all students. Advance notice will be provided for any changes.

Questions, Concerns, Comments

If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me! I encourage you to come to my office hours even if you just want to discuss politics or some other subject, and I can set up appointments if you are unable to meet during the scheduled times. (Please try to give me at least 24 hours notice if you'd like to make an appointment.)

Course Outline and Schedule

*Reading assignments are to be completed before the date they are listed.

*Please bring all assigned readings to class (paper or electronic).

Wednesday, Aug. 22nd – Things We Like Better Than Our Institutions

Friday, Aug. 24th – New on CBS: 2 Broke Branches?

- Excerpts from Mann & Ornstein *The Broken Branch*
- Excerpts from Mayhew “Is Congress ‘the Broken Branch’”
- Suri “We Must Restore the Presidency to What the Founding Fathers Intended”
- Klein “The President Doesn’t Matter”

Monday, Aug. 27th – The 2 Biggest Upsets in the History of the American Republic

- **Have book review options selected**
- Davidson et al. chap. 1
- McCalmont “Pollsters: ‘Everything is Terrible.’”
- Prepare a short summary presentation on your assigned Federalist paper

Wednesday, Aug. 29th – Baby Congress All Grown Up

- Davidson et al. chap. 2

Friday, Aug. 31st – NO CLASS (Andre will be in Boston for a conference)

Monday, Sept. 3rd – Finding People to Run this Place

- Davidson et al. chap. 3
- Chinni & Bronston “2018 Candidate Diversity Goes Beyond Gender”

Wednesday, Sept. 5th – Campaign Strategies, Resources, and Techniques

- Davidson et al. chap. 4 (pgs. 73-90)

Friday, Sept. 7th – Voters, Winners, and Losers

- Davidson et al. chap. 4 (pgs. 90-109)
- Jacobson “How the Economy and Partisanship Shaped the 2012 Presidential and Congressional Elections” (pgs. 21-37 only)

Monday, Sept. 10th – Hill Styles, Home Styles, and Bad Styles

- **Report: Congress: The Electoral Connection (Mayhew)**
- Davidson et al. chap. 5
- Tang “Worst Congressional Style Ever? Yeah, Probably”

Wednesday, Sept. 12th – Swamp People: C-SPAN Edition

- Davidson et al. chap. 6

Friday, Sept. 14th – Everything You Could Possibly Want to Know About Committees (Maybe)

- Start Davidson et al. chap. 7

Monday, Sept. 17th – Stuff for Congress Nerds

- Finish Davidson et al. chap. 7
- Start Davidson et al. chap. 8

Wednesday, Sept. 19th – The Legislative Process

- Finish Davidson et al. chap. 8

Friday, Sept. 21st – Isn’t This Fun?

- **EXAM 1**

Monday, Sept. 24th – So Much Winning

- Davidson et al. chap. 9
- Redman Preface and chap. 1

Wednesday, Sept. 26th – This Could Be You

- Redman chaps. 2-4

Friday, Sept. 28th – ...JK, Some More Committee Stuff

- **(Biography on Member of Congress Due Before Today)**
- Redman chaps. 5-6

Monday, Oct. 1st – Tango and Twist

- **Report: On Appreciating Congress (Fisher)**
- Redman chaps. 7-9

Wednesday, Oct. 3rd – Anxiety and Drama

- Redman chaps. 10-11

Friday, Oct. 5th – The Final Bow

- Redman chap. 12, Epilogue, Postscript, Foreword to the 2001 Edition
- Skim Warren “Help, We’re in a Living Hell and Don’t Know How to Get Out”

Monday, Oct. 8th – Congress for Sale?

- **Report: *Congress As Public Enemy* (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse)**
- Davidson et al. chap. 13

Wednesday, Oct. 10th – The Congress(es) and You

- Davidson et al. chap. 16

Friday, Oct. 12th – Monday, Oct. 15th – NO CLASSES (FALL BREAK)

Wednesday, Oct. 17th – Presidents and Presidencies, Good and Bad

- Dickerson “The Hardest Job in the World”
- Schlesinger “Rating the Presidents: Washington to Clinton”

Friday, Oct. 19th – Theories of the Presidency

- Pika et al. “The Changing Presidency”

Monday, Oct. 22nd – Good and Bad, then Good and Bad Again

- **Report: *Presidential Leadership in Political Time* (Skowronek)**
- Chapters 1-3 from *The Politics Presidents Make* (focus esp. on chapter 3)

Wednesday, Oct. 24th – What Presidents Do...

- Pika et al. “Executive Politics” (pgs. 267-296)

Friday, Oct. 26th – ...And How They Do It

- Pika et al. “Executive Politics” (pgs. 296-320)

Monday, Oct. 29th – I Have the POWER!

- **Report: *Thinking About the Presidency* (Howell)**
- Neustadt “Reappraising Power”

Wednesday, Oct. 31st – Hatred, Witch-hunts, and Saturday Night Massacres

- **(Biography on a President Due Before Today)**
- Intro and chap. 1 from *Hatred of America's Presidents*
- Farrell "With the Saturday Night Massacre, Nixon Miscalculated. Will Trump?"
- Horne "Monsters in the White House: The Best Presidential Halloween Costumes"

Friday, Nov. 2nd – Presidency Debates

- 3 debates from *Debating the Presidency*

Monday, Nov. 5th – So Much Learning

- **EXAM 2**

Wednesday, Nov. 7th – Congressional and Presidential Elections

- Come prepared to discuss your assigned chapter from *Trumped* book and the results of last night's elections

Friday, Nov. 9th – Congress and the Presidency or Congress vs. the Presidency

- Davidson et al. chap. 10

Monday, Nov. 12th – Presidency and the Congress or Presidency vs. the Congress

- **Report: Unorthodox Lawmaking (Sinclair)**
- Pika et al. "Legislative Politics"

Wednesday, Nov. 14th – Power Grabs and Gifts

- Davidson et al. chap. 15
- War Powers Resolution

Friday, Nov. 16th – Bringing in the Bureaucrats

- Davidson et al. chap. 11

Monday, Nov. 19th – Partisanship and Polarization (AKA, Prep for Thanksgiving)

- **Report: Party Polarization in Congress (Theriault)**
- Snowe "The Effect of Modern Partisanship on the Legislative Effectiveness in the 112th Congress"
- Read for ½ hour about partisanship in the current era

Wednesday, Nov. 21st – Friday, Nov. 23rd – NO CLASSES (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

Monday, Nov. 26th – *How Bad Are Things Really?*

- Introduction, Chapters 1-2 of *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*

Wednesday, Nov. 28th – *...Really?*

- **Report: *Stalemate* (Binder)**
- Chapters 3-4 of *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*

Friday, Nov. 30th – *This is Fine*

- **(Biography on a Piece of Legislation Due Before Today)**
- Chapter 6 of *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*
- Greenblatt “Congress May Not Be As Bad As All That”

Monday, Dec. 3rd – *Taking Stock: Are Our Institutions Broken?*

- Cass “Toward a Bipartisan Compromise to Rein in Executive Power”
- Hinkle “Please, Congress, Do Much Less”
- Yglesias “American Democracy is Doomed”

Wednesday, Dec. 5th – *The last day ☺*

- **DUE: Final Paper**

Saturday, Dec. 8th – *Final Exam*

- **EXAM 3 at 8am (sorry!) in our normal classroom**