

**Poli. Sci. 367: Contemporary Issues in American Politics:
Presidential-Congressional Relations**

**Autumn 2006, M, W 9:30-11:18 a.m.; Aviation, room 107
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Office 2105 Derby Hall 292-4291; hrs: 11:18-12:00, 1-2pm M, W and by appt.
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Goals/Rationale:

This course is one of the two writing courses meeting the GEC requirement for political science and other majors. The purpose of the course is twofold: to develop the student's ability to think and write analytically, and to introduce concepts and content in relationships between the first two branches of the U. S. national government in the making of public policy. Writing courses across disciplines help develop students' skills in reading, critical thinking, writing, and oral expression. **I will help students at each stage of the process, including sources, outline, and organization.**

Structure of Course:

First we discuss how to write a course paper and its necessary components and some theories of presidential-congressional relations. Second, I will provide an overview of the literature about the two branches and discuss the concept of divided and partisan control of government. Then the class covers numerous aspects of the relationship between Congress and the president, such as the veto, budgeting, liaison, and prerogative powers. Finally, the last element delves into comparing substantive policy areas: foreign policy, domestic policy, and economic/budget policy to examine why presidential-congressional relations may vary among them.

Three books are required for this course. They are available from the publishers, from Long's (Barnes & Noble), from the SBX, and from such on-line sources as amazon.com, barnesnoble.com, half.com, and others. Used copies are available. In addition to these three books, three journal articles are required and may be downloaded easily from the web site for this course: click on poli. sci dept, faculty, me, courses, 367. The syllabus, bibliography, and other course materials are also available there.

Thurber, ed. *Rivals for Power*, 3rd ed. Roman & Littlefield 2006. ISBN 0742536831

LeLoup and Shull. *The President and Congress*, 2nd ed. Longman, 2003. ISBN 03321100417

Anson, et al. *The Longman Pocket Writer's Companion*, 2nd ed. Longman, 2006. ISBN 0321288262

Grades are based upon the following components: two 4-5 page course papers and two rewrites (15 points each or =60% total) and final essay exam (40%). I will provide sample questions, give you choice, and have a review session prior to the final exam.

Week 1		Intro. to Course W 9/20
Week 2	Nature of Research M 9/25	Constitution W 9/27, L & S. ch. 2
Week 3	Writing a Paper M 10/2 Anson, Chs. I-III	Writing a paper/tools W 10/4 Anson, Chs. IV-V
Week 4	Power M 10/9; T, chs 6-7	Political Time W 10/11; L & S. ch.1 <u>1st paper draft due</u>
Week 5	Success M 10/16 T, ch. 5	Success W 10/18 S & L, Ch. 6; [Prins & Shull article]
Week 6	Polarization/Elections M 10/23 T, chs. 2-4	W 10/25, L & S 3-4 <u>1st paper rewrite due</u>
Week 7	Veto M 10/30 T, ch. 8	Budgeting W 11/1
Week 8	Domestic Policy M 11/6 L & S ch. 6, 8	Prerogatives W 11/8[Mayer & Price article] <u>2nd paper draft due</u>
Week 9	Economic Policy M 11/13 L & S, ch. 7	Two Presidencies [Canes-Wrone et al. article] W 11/15 T, chs. 9-10
Week 10	Foreign M 11/20, L & S, ch. 5	Defense W 11/22, T, chs. 11-12 <u>2nd paper rewrite due</u>
Week 11	Reforms M 11/27 L & S, ch. 9	Review for Final W 11/29
Final Exam		Wednesday 12/6

Paper Assignment:

Students will write two 4-5 page papers and two rewrites. Use 8 ½ X11 inch paper with 1” margins all around and 12 point Times-Roman font. **Hard copies only are due in class** on the designated day and 7 points will be deducted for each day the paper is late. Each paper should answer one of the four questions or topics (two parts each) in presidential-congressional relations attached. The best papers will address the explicit research question rather than simply describe the circumstances. I do not want historical narrative. Papers need a conclusion, where you go beyond what you have read to make assessments and draw implications from your study.

Choose **one** of the first four topics: [draft due 10/11; rewrite due 10/25]

1. Why has the notion of presidential power remained such a dominant theory for nearly 50 years? What tools appear most effective for presidents to exert leadership?
2. What factors appear most and least important in explaining presidential success in Congress? Why does so much disagreement about their relative importance occur?
3. Why does presidential success in Congress seem to vary so much by sub issue area, such as trade versus defense in foreign or civil rights versus resources in domestic policy?
4. Are presidential and congressional elections closely tied together? Under what circumstances are presidents most likely to be able to influence congressional elections?

Choose **one** of the second four topics: [draft due 11/8; rewrite due 11/22]

1. What factors determine whether presidents are more successful in foreign than domestic policy? Has the impact of the two presidencies thesis been reduced?
2. How effective is the threat of and actual use of the veto in presidential relations with Congress? What limitations to its use exist and can presidents overcome them?
3. If Congress is so concerned about its constitutional prerogatives, why has it delegated authority to presidents? How have presidents used prerogatives to go around Congress?
4. Why have Congress and the president disagreed so much on domestic social issues like social security and health care? Are there any hopeful signs for policy cooperation?

Research Tips:

You may use another author's basic ideas but put them in your own words. Paraphrase when you can; over-quoting is lazy and does not show me that you can integrate the ideas of others with your own thoughts and words. Cite works whose ideas

you incorporated even if the wording is your own, using specific page numbers whenever possible. Due to the short time frame, the first paper can use a variety of sources (including newspapers and magazines) while the second one must use more scholarly sources. We will have a lecture on library sources and how to access them by Political Science Librarian David Lincolve early in the semester. Exhaust the literature on your topic and express your own opinions only in your conclusion about what policy action or reforms should be taken based upon your research. Most internet sources are not acceptable for analytical writing. Because not enough reliable scholarly materials are available at this time, students should avoid writing on the George W. Bush administration, certainly for the second paper.

For the second paper, use as many scholarly sources as possible (journals are preferable and found in search engines and indexes—*JSTOR*, *EBSCO*, *Social Science Index* and *P.A.I.S.*). Abstracts (like *USPSD*) usually give a paragraph describing the article or book and are time and money savers, letting you know whether the source is helpful without actually having to track it down first. Begin with the most recent indexes and work your way back in time. You cannot be certain when a scholarly article will appear on a particular topic. Biographies and popular magazines should be kept to a bare minimum. Even *CQ Weekly Reports* and *National Journal* are weekly news magazines and thus are insufficient. Scholarly books should also be used but don't depend upon the card catalog; check *Books in Print* first, and if it is not in the Library, it can usually be obtained quickly from interlibrary loan and sent to your campus mail box.

Grading elements for papers:

1. Evaluation

Your papers will be graded on the basis of both form and content. Form and content are of course related: if your paper is poorly organized and/or has grammatical errors, it will be hard for the reader to understand what you are trying to say. You want the reader to understand your argument and interpret your essay in the manner you intended.

Content is the substance of your argument. Do you answer the questions? Do you substantiate your claims with scholarly evidence? Do you use course and other materials to address the question? Is your argument persuasive? Interesting? Original?

The form of your writing encompasses both technical aspects and style. Is your writing free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors? Is your writing clear and concise? Is the paper organized in a logical manner?

Thus your grade will be based on comprehension of the course materials, originality, organization of the essay, writing style, and basic writing mechanics.

2. Thesis

Your paper must use the questions and make a cohesive argument to answer them. Before you begin writing, think about the questions (**one of four presented for each paper**). Good writing reflects good ideas. Spend time thinking about what you want to

argue. You should know the conclusion of your paper before you start to write the first paragraph. What evidence will you use to support your claims? What are the possible counterarguments to yours? How will you refute these counterarguments? What are examples of the points you want to make?

3. Organization

Once you have decided on a thesis and a plan for your argument, draft an outline. Think about the best way to organize your paper so that it proceeds logically. The first paragraph of the paper ought to be an introductory paragraph. Introduce the ideas of your paper and state your thesis. The second paragraph should be a “roadmap” paragraph: explain how the rest of the paper is organized (e.g., “First, I will demonstrate X. Second, I will argue Y...”). The last paragraph of the paper should be the conclusion: summarize your argument. You should not introduce any new information in the conclusion.

4. Purposive Paragraphs and Sentences

Every paragraph should be related to your thesis; if it is not, then it probably does not belong in the paper. In addition, every paragraph should have a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph. Limit each paragraph to a single idea. If you have more than one idea in a paragraph, you probably need more than one paragraph.

Likewise, every sentence in every paragraph should further the main idea of the paragraph. If a sentence does not, it probably does not belong in that paragraph.

5. Proofread

Be sure to proofread your paper and check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. I will pay particular attention to these elements on the rewrites.

6. Common Pitfalls

The purpose of this essay is to allow you to integrate the course materials but not to restate the readings or lectures. This essay is an opportunity for you to develop your own insights and analysis and to synthesize the course material. A good paper will advance an argument, provide support for the argument, and refute counterarguments. Avoid the temptation of making your paper a series of unrelated paragraphs, each with a new point or summary of a different reading.

A little stylistic advice: Avoid beginning sentences with “And,” “But,” and “Because.” (Occasional use is fine). Avoid the phrase “I think”; you are writing an analytical essay, not an opinion piece. Avoid introducing extraneous information: include only ideas and materials that are relevant to your argument.

7. Citations

Attribute any ideas that are not your own to the appropriate source. Provide the source (document) even if you are summarizing an author’s ideas rather than using a direct quotation. You must cite course and other readings by listing the author, date, and page numbers when ever possible. Students are expected to use parenthetical citations (APA or APSA format). A good paper will have no more than one direct quotation. Be sure to

include the page number on which it appears.

Examples:

- Rosenthal et al. (2003: 17) argue that public criticism of our legislative institutions is misguided.
- LeLoup and Shull (2003: chap.9) doubt that structural reforms are likely in presidential-congressional relations.

You may cite lecture and discussion in the same way.

Example:

- (Discussion 10/25/06)

Example:

- Rosenthal et al. find that on most issues “constituencies have little or no interest” (2003: 108).

Grading Scale: Grades are based on the OSU +/- scale (93-100=A, 90-92=A-, 87-89=B+, 83-86=B, 80-82=B-, 77-79=C+, 73-76=C, 72-70=C-, 67-69=D+, 60-66=D, below 60=E). However, I am willing to curve grades upwards but will not curve them downwards to the detriment of any student.

Academic Honesty : All of the work done in this course by each student must be his or her own. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper citation) will be reported to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Disability: If you require an accommodation because of a disability please contact the Office for Disability Services [150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue, 292-3307].