

## PLS 3743 – Congress

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Spring 2019 – T/Th 2:00pm -3:15pm – Coleman 2140

Dr. Ryan Burge

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12:15pm – 2:00pm, Wednesday 4:30pm-5:00pm

### **Course Description:**

An examination of the structures and functions of legislative bodies, with an emphasis on the U.S. Congress. Focus will be placed on the topics of representation, congressional elections, rules, norms, and procedures, interaction with the executive and judicial branches, and legislative policymaking

### **Course Goals and Objectives:**

What role does Congress play in 21<sup>st</sup> century politics? Is Congress truly the “broken branch” among U.S. federal institutions? These questions frame our analysis of Congress this semester, as we reflect on the 2016 election, and look forward to the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. We will address five Political Science learning goals: 1) content knowledge of Political Science, 2) critical thinking, 3) writing, 4) speaking, and 5) responsible citizenship. To achieve these goals, you will learn to:

- Understand, analyze, synthesize, and apply Political Science methods and models used to study Congress.
- Identify, interpret, critique, and apply relevant scholarly sources, information, and data about Congress.
- Present ideas, research, and analysis using critical writing and communication skills.
- Apply content knowledge to understand ongoing congressional events, policies, and elections.
- Engage with diverse ideas, individuals, groups, and cultures related to Congress.
- Identify professional opportunities related to the study of Congress.

### **Textbook:**

*Congress and It's Members (15<sup>th</sup> Edition)* by Davidson et al. Referred to as DOLS henceforth.

### **Grading Scheme:**

- Three exams – 200 points x 3 = 600
- U.S. House Analysis Papers – 150 points x 2 = 300
- Class Participation = 100

The course is out of 1000 points total.

### **Academic Honesty:**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities- If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability

Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

**Student Success Center:**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/success](http://www.eiu.edu/success)) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

**Examination Policy:**

All examinations must be taken at their scheduled time. Exams will not be given "early" for travel convenience - NO EXCEPTIONS. Make-up exams will be granted at the instructor's discretion for exceptional circumstances only (e.g., severe illness, family emergency or family death). You must contact me before the next class period following the exam and produce documentation (e.g., a doctor's excuse, obituary, etc.) of this event. No make-up examination will be given without meeting the above conditions. Study guides will be posted on the class web page prior to each exam to help prepare students.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1 –**

**January 8**

Introduce the course

**January 10**

DOLS, Chapter 1, "The Two Congresses"

Lee, Mike. 2016. "Curing the Cancer of Congressional Dysfunction." *PS: Political Science & Politics*. July.

Titus, Dina. 2016. "Is Congress the 'Broken Branch' of Government?" *PS: Political Science & Politics*. July.

**Week 2 –**

**January 15**

DOLS, Chapter 2, "Evolution of the Modern Congress," pp. 15-28

Barrow, John. 2016. "Partisan Rules Make Congress Much Weaker Than It Has to Be." *PS: Political Science & Politics*. July.

## **January 17**

DOLS, Chapter 2, "Evolution of the Modern Congress," pp. 28-40

## **Week 3** –

## **January 22**

DOLS, Chapter 3, "Going for It: Recruitment & Candidacy," pp. 41-56

Lawless, Jennifer and Richard Fox. 2013. "Girls Just Wanna Not Run: The Gender Gap in Young Americans' Political Ambition." Women & Politics Institute. American University.

## **January 24**

DOLS, Chapter 3, "Going for It: Recruitment & Candidacy," pp. 56-65

"Democrats Recruit Veterans as Candidates in Bid to Retake the House." Wall Street Journal, October 24, 2018.

## **Week 4** –

## **January 29**

DOLS, Chapter 4, "Making It: The Electoral Game," pp. 67-84

US mid-term election results 2018: Maps, charts and analysis. BBC.

## **January 31**

DOLS, Chapter 4, "Making It: The Electoral Game," pp. 84-104

"Yes It Was a Blue Wave. No, It Doesn't Matter for 2020." FiveThirtyEight.com

## **Week 5** –

## **February 5**

Watch In Class: Can Mr. Smith Even Go to Washington?

## **February 7**

Exam 1

## **Week 6** –

## **February 12**

DOLS, Chapter 5, "Being There: Hill Styles & Home Styles," pp. 105-116

## **February 14**

DOLS, Chapter 5, "Being There: Hill Styles & Home Styles," pp. 116-132

## Week 7–

### **February 19**

DOLS, Chapter 16, “The Two Congresses & the American People”

### **February 21**

DOLS, Chapter 16, “The Two Congresses & the American People”

Huffmon, Scott, H. Gibbs Knotts, and Seth McKee. 2016. “History Made: The Rise of Republican Tim Scott.” PS: Political Science & Politics July.

## Week 8

### **February 26**

DOLS, Chapter 6, “Leaders & Parties in Congress,” pp. 133-155

McPherson, Lindsey and Rema Rahman. 2016. “The Right Holds.” In CQ’s 2016 Guide to the New Congress. pp. 9-12.

Lesniewski, Niels and Bridget Bowman. 2016. “Odds Overcome.” In CQ’s 2016 Guide to the New Congress. pp. 14-17.

### **February 28**

DOLS, Chapter 6, “Leaders & Parties in Congress,” pp. 155-162

Binder, Sarah and Frances Lee. 2013. “Making Deals in Congress.” *APSA Taskforce on Negotiating Agreement in Politics*. American Political Science Association

Paper #1 Due on D2L by 11:30pm

## Week 9

### **March 5**

DOLS, Chapter 7, “Committees: Workshops of Congress,” pp. 163-186

### **March 7**

DOLS, Chapter 7, “Committees: Workshops of Congress,” pp. 187-204

## Week 10

### **March 19**

Listen: Take the Money and Run for Office (In Class)

### **March 21**

Exam 2

**Week 11** –

**March 26**

DOLS, Chapter 8, “Congressional Rules & Procedures”

**March 28**

NO CLASS

**Week 12** –

**April 2**

DOLS, Chapter 8, “Congressional Rules & Procedures

**April 4**

NO CLASS

**Week 13** –

**April 9**

DOLS, Chapter 9, “Decision Making in Congress,” pp. 245-255

**April 11**

DOLS, Chapter 9, “Decision Making in Congress,” pp. 255-274

**Week 14** –

**April 16**

DOLS, Chapter 9, “Decision Making in Congress,” pp. 245-255

**April 18**

DOLS, Chapter 9, “Decision Making in Congress,” pp. 255-274

Paper #2 DUE

**Week 15** –

**April 23**

DOLS, Chapter 10, “Congress & the President”

**April 25**

Ornstein, Norm. 2016. “Is This the Worst Congress Ever?” *The Atlantic*. May 17.

Malone, Clare. 2016. “Americans Don’t Trust Their Institutions Anymore.” *Fivethirtyeight.com*. November 16.

Kosar, Kevin. 2015. "Why I Quit the Congressional Research Service." *Washington Monthly*.  
January/February.

**Final Exam**

Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10:15am