

GVPT 473

Fall 2014

E. Uslaner

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MW 10-10:50 a.m.

Chincoteague 4121, x54151

The U.S. Congress

This course will examine politics and policy-making in the U.S. Congress. We shall focus on what motivates members of Congress, how bills become (or don't become) laws, how Congress has changed over the past two decades, the roles of committees, parties, and the President in affecting Congressional decision-making, and elections and representation.

The course requirements include: (1) a midterm examination on covering material through Topic 4 (15 percent of your grade); (2) a 10 page paper in which you analyze the fate of a bill introduced in the 113th Congress (30 percent of your grade, due on December 3 **in class**); (3) a critique of another student's outline (see below, 5 percent of your grade); (4) a take-home final examination due on Saturday December 20 at 10:00 a.m. in my office (40 percent of your grade); and (5) class participation in lectures and discussion sections (10 percent of your grade). **See the end of the syllabus for the take-home final and the requirements for the paper.** You are also required to turn in a one-page statement of your paper proposal by October 13. This paper will not be graded but if you do not turn it in on time, you will lose one-half a grade on your course paper.

We will also meet in groups to discuss paper outlines on November 25. The purpose of this class is to get feedback on your paper well before you have to turn it in. Students will critique each others' work and offer constructive suggestions for improvement. We will meet in groups of 3-4 students each (with Mr.Lovin and myself). You will also be required to turn in five copies of a three-page outline of your paper by November 12. On November 17th, we will meet in groups. You will present your paper briefly to the group and one member of the group will write a one-page constructive critique of someone else's paper. Other students are expected to have read the outlines and we shall meet in groups to help each other. The one page critique will be graded and constitutes five percent of your grade in the course.

I encourage you to set up meetings on your paper with either Mr. Lovin or myself.

All written work must be your own. Copying the work of others, whether that of fellow students or anyone else, constitutes plagiarism. You need not copy a work in its entirety to plagiarize. The university defines plagiarism as using the works of others without attribution. I also include the use of others' words with attribution **if your use of others' words are excessive**. If you have any questions about what constitutes excessive use of other people's words, please ask me. The paper is

an exercise in research, not retyping others' words. Should anyone have **any** questions, please feel free to consult me. **All cases of plagiarism will be referred to the University Honors Court.**

I expect you to take care with your writing. An excessive number of spelling and/or grammatical errors will lead to a reduction in your grade on both the paper and essay questions on examinations.

Please also note: the course paper is due *in class* on December 3, 2014 and the take home final is due in my office or Mr. Lovin's office by 10:00 a.m. on December 20, 2014. The Department of Government and Politics will not accept papers.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

- * **OCTOBER 13: ONE-PAGE STATEMENT OF YOUR PAPER TOPIC**
- * **NOVEMBER 10: MID-TERM EXAMINATION**
- * **NOVEMBER 12: PAPER OUTLINE FOR GROUP DISCUSSION ON 11/17**
- * **DECEMBER 3: COURSE PAPER DUE (IN CLASS)**
- * **DECEMBER 20: TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE (10:00 A.M. IN MY OFFICE OR MR. LOVIN'S OFFICE).**

All papers and exams must be turned in with hard copies. There are simply too many papers for us to download. And, sorry, we do not discuss grades over e-mail. I am happy to send you the final examination with comments if you give me a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The paper will be graded before the examination is due. **You may send the paper outlines to others in your group by e-mail, but please bring copies for Mr. Lovin and myself to class in hard copy.**

Do not send us papers or any assignments as e-mail attachments, not even to show that you actually have done the work. All emails with attached assignments will be deleted as if we did not receive them. There are no circumstances under which I will make an exception, so please don't ask.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM THE BSOS DEAN'S OFFICE.

These are university policies that you need to know with amendments as noted.:

- The university permits students to present one note per semester for a medical excuse for a regular class session (not classes when assignments are due or tests are given). However, I do not require attendance. However, you can't do well in participation if you do not come to class.
- Any student with a disability should speak to me as soon as possible. I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form which has been updated for the Fall 2011 semester. Only written DSS documentation of the accommodation will be considered. This form must be presented to me no later than October 6, 2014. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who provide me with documentation which has not been reviewed and approved by UM's DSS Office after October 6, 2014.
- The university's policies on illness and religious holidays can be found at: More detail on documenting an illness of a student can be found at <http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/v100g.html>. More detail on excused absences for religious observances and participation in university activities at the request of University authorities can be found below under the "Assessment" heading at this link <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html>.
- On the date for the midterm examination:: "On exam day, students should arrive to class with no more in their hands than UM Student I.D, paper and pen. If students must bring items to class, students must deposit items in a box at the front of the class. Student will receive a zero on the exam if during the exam a student is caught with anything more than a writing implement and paper."
- "Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to demonstrate civility with one another, the teaching assistants, or me will be subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct or to the University Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct."
- Students may bring their laptops to class to take notes only. If a student is found to be using a lap top for any other reason than taking notes, then, that student will lose the privilege of bringing their computer to class. All technological devices, except a laptop computer are prohibited in this class including MP3 devices, smart phones, phones, calculators, gaming devices, etc. If these devices are seen and/or used during the class, the student will be asked to leave the class immediately. If these devices are seen and/or used during an exam, the exam will be collected from the student and the student will no longer be allowed to continue taking the exam. The exam score will be noted as 0".

- **Very critically, the university policy on missed assignments is:** “ For a major assignment/exam, I will require a Health Center or medical doctor's health excuse. If you do not inform me or if you do not present me with timely documentation, you will receive an F for the assignment/exam/paper. Note: In the case that you are unable to get a written medical excuse, you may ask your provider for a copy of your medical notes for the specific visit(s) in question.
- If you have a medical excuse for a major assignment, you need to contact me **prior to missing the assignment, paper, or examination.** If you have a legitimate excuse, you may take a make-up examination at the first date that your doctor tells me (in writing) that you are able to complete the assignment, but no later than one week after the due date (unless there are extenuating circumstances). If you miss an assignment or an examination without a certified medical excuse, I will deduct a full grade. If the assignment is not made up by the next class (or within two days for the final examination), the grade will automatically turn into an F. **Papers must be handed in by hard copy in class the day the assignment is due. Grade deductions begin at the end of the class when the assignment is due.**

Four books are required for the course. Three are available at the University Book Center and the Maryland Book Exchange. They are:

David R. Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection
L.C. Dodd and B.I. Oppenheimer, eds., Congress Reconsidered, tenth edition
Mann and Ornstein, It's Even Worse Than It Looks

You will also be reading

T.R. Reid, Congressional Odyssey. This is out-of-print and dated, but nothing better has ever been written. A scanned copy will be available on ELMS.

Other assignments are available on ELMS.

The topical outline and reading assignments are as follows:

<u>Week/Date</u>	<u>Topic/Assignments</u>
9/3	
(1)	Introduction
(2)	Policy Formation in Congress
9/6, 9/8, 9/10, 9/17	Reid, entire
9/19	Conducting research for the course paper Ms. Judy Markowitz, GVPT reference librarian, will discuss resources for the paper. The class will meet in McKeldin 6101 instead of meetings for sections.
(3)	What Motivates Members of Congress?
9/22, 9/29, 10/1, 10/6	Mayhew, entire Grimmer, "Appropriators, Not Position Takers," <u>American Journal of Political Science</u> , 57 (July 2013): 624-643 on ELMS.. This paper has some very technical parts. Skim them and focus on the findings.
10/8	NO CLASS
10/13	One-page statement of course paper due
(4)	
10/13, 10/20-22 10/27	How Congress Has Changed: Norms Dodd and Oppenheimer, chs.1(Sinclair), 2 (Dodd/Oppenheimer),

17 (Dodd/Schraufnagel)

Binder, "Elections and Congress's Governing Capacity," available at <http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/extensions/fall2005/Binder.pdf>

Caldwell, "The Antiwar, Anti-Abortion, Anti-Drug-Enforcement-Administration, Anti-Medicare Candidacy of Dr. Ron Paul," New York Times Magazine (July 22, 2007) in course packet and at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/magazine/22Paul-t.html?pagewanted=print>

Wolfensberger, "Civility, Society, and Politics: Is There a Problem?" on ELMS.

Freeman, "Mitch McConnell: The Power of 41 Senators" on ELMS

11/3 Guest lecture, Alan Fleishmann, President and CEO of Laurel Strategies speaking for NoLabels (<http://www.nolabels.org/>), on seeking bipartisan solutions to gridlock.

11/10 MIDTERM EXAMINATION

11/12 Video: Diane Sawyer (ABC News) interviews with new Tea Party members

11/14 Discussion of interviews with new Tea Party members (in discussion sections)

"Tea Party Interviews with Diane Sawyer" (summary of members and their backgrounds)

Silver, "Freshman Republicans Push House Toward Right," www.fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com (July 12, 2011).

Jackman, "House Voting Under Obama"

Jackman, "Senate Voting Under Obama"

Wolfensberger. "Does Congress Care About Public Opinion?"

(5) Parties and Committees in Congress

11/5,

11/19, 24

Mann and Ornstein, Part I.

Dodd and Oppenheimer, chs. 7 (Smith/Gamm), 8 (Aldrich et al.), 9 (Koger), 10 (Volden/Weisman), 11 (Binder/Maltzman), 16 (Cooper), 18 (Dodd/Oppenheimer)

Ono, "Electoral Origins of Partisan Polarization in Congress: Debunking the Myth," available at <http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/extensions/fall2005/Ono.pdf>

Poole, "The Decline and Rise of Party Polarization During the Twentieth Century," available at <http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/extensions/fall2005/Poole.pdf>

Paper outlines due on November 13

11/17 Group Meetings on Paper Outlines (in class)

11/26 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

(6) Congressional Elections

12/3, Dodd and Oppenheimer, chs. 4 (Erikson/Wright), 5 (Jacobson), 6 (Bernhard/Sulkin)
12/11

12/8 NO CLASS

12/3 **Course paper due in class.**

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION

Fall 2014

E. Uslaner

This examination is due on in either my office, or Mr. Lovnis office by 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 20, 2014. We leave at precisely 10:00 a.m.

You have been selected as an advisor to either Jack Wolfman, a veteran Democrat who lost his seat in the Republican landslide of 2010 or to Earl Grey, the Republican who beat him in 2010 and narrowly won reelection in 2012. Wolfman is attempting to regain the seat he lost four years ago. You are only to advise one of the candidates, but you clearly need to anticipate how the other candidate will plan his strategy.

Wolfman is running for his seventh term in the 7th Congressional district in the Midwestern state of Transylvania against Grey, who will be seeking his third term.

Wolfman lost in a narrow election in 2010 as the Republicans swept the state. Grey won with 51 percent of the vote in his district. Wolfman was first elected in 2000 when voters in the district reacted strongly backed Vice President Al Gore over George W. Bush. Wolfman's electoral history is as follows:

2000	52.0
2002	58.2
2004	62.0
2006	70.3
2008	66.5
2010	49.0

Until 2010, he had been very secure in this district, with an average vote share of 61.8 percent. He has been a consistent liberal, supporting programs for the poor and establishing a strong pro-choice record on abortion. He was one of the leading critics of the war in Iraq and Bush's foreign policy more generally. He had previously served as Majority Leader in the Transylvania General Assembly and he was a strong ally of organized labor. He moved closer to the center following his loss to Grey in 2010. He now argues that deficit reduction was a top priority and charged both President Obama and Earl Grey with paying insufficient attention to how the debt is harming the middle class. "Obama is more concerned with cutting spending and Grey is not concerned with helping the middle class." And he argued that was Grey a "Romney in reverse. Romney is a moderate who is trying to be conservative and Grey is a conservative trying to be a moderate." He defends his own shift in position on the deficit by being part of a working group in the Congress of both Democrats and Republicans trying to solve the nation's economic problems together.

While continuing to work with a small group of Republicans on immigration reform, he argues: “There’s almost no one to talk to on the other side. They want to repeal the New Deal. They want to shut down the government. Their idea of a compromise is that we meet them 100 percent of the way.” As he positions himself as a centrist on economic policy, he has taken strong stands on social policy, supporting gay marriage and abortion rights. When he was in Congress, he was the Chair of the the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee. He now is using that position to argue that the Obama administration has not paid sufficient attention to veterans and was an early advocate for replacing Veterans’ Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki to resign in the wake of the problems at VA hospitals in the spring of 2014.

In his two terms in the House, Grey opposed the President 90 percent of the time, including on all of the key measures (but this is still less than the mean for House Republicans). Although he was elected with Tea Party support, Grey often felt that it was more important to become a key player in Congress rather than to be a strong ideologue. He worked with Speaker John Boehner to attempt a budget compromise with the Obama administration. Some Tea Party activists have charged Grey with being too willing to support public works programs and to making his own reelection a higher priority than slashing the budget. Grey argues, “You can’t cut the budget in one year. It’s a process. We’ll get there. No one is more committed to budget discipline than I am. But it is simply unfair to expect to break the entire system so quickly.”

Tea Party activists threaten to support Transylvania school board member Sarah Righton against Grey in the Republican primary. Righton has little name recognition outside her district but may benefit from outside support from political action committees that have supported very conservative candidates for both the House and the Senate (notably Todd Akin in Missouri and Richard Mourdock in Indiana). Grey will not get much independent support in either the primary or the general election, since other Republican candidates seem “more deserving.” Speaker Boehner’s leadership PAC will support Grey, but Minority Leader Pelosi might raise even more for Wolfman.

The 7th district had been competitive in the 1980s, voting for Reagan in 1980 and 1984, but shifting toward the Democrats beginning in 1988, when Michael Dukakis carried it with 54 percent of the vote. Bill Clinton scored decisive victories in the district, as did Democratic candidates for Governor and Senator. The Republicans briefly won a majority in the state legislature in their nationwide sweep in 1994, but they lost it two years later. So many observers were stunned when the Republicans won large majorities in the state legislature and carried five of the eight House seats, as well as winning both the Governorship and a U.S. Senate seat.

Democrats came back in 2012 and won control of both houses of the state legislature with 53 percent of the seats in each chamber and took back two House seats. Party leaders tried to convince Wolfman to run in 2012 but he declined to do so, working in the financial services industry (“I need to pay the college tuition for my kids and I can’t afford to take time off to campaign”). His son and daughter now have graduated and he is keen to get back into politics. His wife has accepted a position as Executive Director of Emily’s List, a political action committee that supports pro-choice Democratic women. So she will be moving to Washington—and Wolfman says, “One way or another I will be joining her in the capital, so it would be great to do so back in my old position.”

Democrats found another candidate in 2012 at the last minute, State Senator Harry Kirchner, minority leader of the State Senate, entered the race, but was underfunded. Nevertheless, he held Grey to 52 percent of the vote. Now that he is the majority leader, he has declined to run for Congress and has strongly endorsed Wolfman, whose wife is his cousin.

Grey is hoping that 2010 and 2012 were not flukes. He is hoping to get reelected and Republicans believe that they have a chance to turn Transylvania into a red state. Grey has established a strong constituency service record with half of his staff based in the district. He also believes that Wolfman's vulnerability is clear from the precipitous drop in his vote share in 2010. Grey argues: "Wolfman is old style politics. He is out of touch with Transylvania. He has voted for every big government program he could find and now he says he is a budget cutter?"

Wolfman has the same hopes about 2014. Early polls indicated a close Presidential race in 2012, but Obama ultimately carried the state with 55 percent of the vote and 57 percent in the 7th district. Democratic Senator Phineas Fogg coasted to his third term with 68 percent of the vote against the Representative from the 6th Congressional District, Molly Hibiscus, another strong Tea Party supporter. Polls also indicate that Republican Governor Walker Scott has lost much of his popularity, so having a strong Democrat running for Governor might help Wolfman.

Wolfman's position on the Veterans Affairs Committee connected him to a powerful voting bloc in the district—one that has not always supported Democrats. He also served on the Budget Committee. Grey serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee—which gives him the opportunity to "get rid of all of those governmental regulations that lead to fewer jobs." Wolfman tells constituents that he has served on both a power committee that will help the district and on a committee that provides support for "the men and women who have kept America safe." Speaker Nancy Pelosi has promised Wolfman that he can return to his old committee positions, including service as Ranking Minority member on Veterans' Affairs.

The district is a mixture of urban and suburban neighborhoods, with a per capita income close to the nation's average. The urban areas have substantial black and Hispanic populations. The suburban areas are almost all white, with a small but growing Asian minority. Unemployment in the city of Amityville has been much higher than the nation's average, since the Amityville economy is based strongly on manufacturing. "Where are the jobs?" Grey asks. Wolfman defends the President for saving the automobile industry (the second largest employer in the district) through federal aid and argues that if Grey's economic program (he has endorsed the plan of House Budget Committee Chair and former Vice Presidential nominee Paul Ryan that would drastically cut government spending) were in effect, the local unemployment rate would be double the current level.

You can choose to be an advisor to either Wolfman or to Grey. For either choice, you must put aside any partisanship you might have and give him the best advice you can. Again, you can only advise one of the two candidates.

Your chosen candidate would want your advice on the following questions: (1) Should he drift to the center, or should he veer more toward his party's base? (2) Should he maintain his current committee positions or seek assignment to a different committee? (3) Which issues should

he stress and which should he avoid? (4) Should he try to paint his opponent as too ideologically extreme or might this strategy backfire? and (5) How would you design his reelection strategy in 2014?

A strong answer must draw upon both course reading and lectures. *An answer that does not draw heavily upon both reading and lectures can receive a grade no higher than C. To receive a C, your answer must have at least 3 citations from the reading. To receive a grade higher than a C, your answer must have substantially more citations from the reading. The key to getting a good grade is to write a strong essay that relies upon a very wide range of readings; the more citations you have, the better your chances of a good grade are. Three citations does not guarantee a C or any other grade. The quality of your answer is key, but a good answer must rely heavily upon course readings.*

COURSE PAPER REQUIREMENTS

Each student will prepare a paper of approximately 10 pages (typed and double-spaced) about a bill considered in a recent Congress. You must select a bill considered in the 113th Congress (2013), but if you can make a good case for a bill considered in an earlier Congress, that will be acceptable providing you clear it with me or Mr. Lovin first.

You must hand in a one-page statement of the bill you intend to investigate by October 3. This paper will not be graded, but failure to turn in this short paper will lower your grade on the full paper by one-third of a grade for each day late. The full paper is due **in class** on December 3.

The bill need not have passed. The focus of your paper should be why the bill passed *or did not pass*. You should consider:

- the subject matter of the legislation—is this a bill with a lot of popular support or is it highly controversial? What can you find about public opinion on this bill (or the more general idea behind the legislation)? (If you can't find public attitudes about a specific bill on gun control, for example, what can you find about gun control in general?)
- who was in favor of the bill and who opposed it? What stand, if any, did the President take? What stand, if any, did the majority party leadership take in each House? Were the supporters or opponents “big players” in Congress?
- to which committee(s) was the bill referred? What happened in committee and subcommittee? Were the committee and subcommittee leaders favorable to the bill? What happened at the hearings for the bill? Who testified in favor of the bill and who testified against it? What was the balance of the testimony? Is there any evidence that the hearings made a difference in the outcome of the bill?
- for the House: did the bill make it out of committee and to the floor? If not, why not? Did the bill go to the House Rules Committee? If so, what happened (what type of rule did the bill get) and why? Was there a fight over the rule on the House floor? for the Senate: why was the procedure under which the bill was brought up (explain any unusual procedure).
- what were the coalitions in favor of and opposed to the bill? Can you find evidence of deals made between different factions that might help pass the bill?
- are there clear-cut electoral implications for how members might vote on the bill? Might these implications differ for Republicans and Democrats?
- finally, why do you think that the bill passed or failed? If the bill only passed one house, why did it pass that house?

Good places to begin are Congressional Quarterly Weekly, the National Journal, the Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Congressional Publications (Proquest), and the web site for the Congress, www.thomas.gov. We will discuss other resources when the Government and Politics librarian, Judy Markowitz, talks to the class on September 20.

A key requirement of the paper is that it follow our class discussion. The paper, like the take-home final, must have references to the lectures and especially to the readings. As with the take-home final, a paper with three or fewer references to the reading cannot receive a grade higher than a C. Three references do not guarantee a C.

