Dr. Joshua Semat  
Office Hours: Tues 3:00-6:00 pm in the Johnson Center

Location: Robinson B 122 and by appointment

email: TBA

Course Description: This course is an intensive, graduate level seminar on the U.S. Congress and legislative behavior. Specific topics to be explored include: Congressional elections, representation, the dynamics of decision making in legislative bodies, the nature and processes of legislative organization, Congressional oversight of the bureaucracy, and the implications of Congressional dynamics on US foreign policy.

Course Structure: The course will be conducted as a graduate seminar. Its success will depend on active and informed participation by everyone in the course. All participants will be expected to read and contemplate each week’s readings. Students will also be expected to periodically demonstrate their grasp of the theoretical perspectives discussed in class via a series of written assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to evaluate both the formal and informal structure of any modern Congress in order to begin to understand the challenges and opportunities of lawmaking. They will attain general knowledge of the kinds of questions which legislative research in the American context asks, as well as the answers which have been most influential in modern understandings of the US Congress. They will be able to elaborate on general theories of how Congress functions and the sorts of outcomes it tends to produce.

Required Texts: The legislative literature occupies a central place in the canon of modern American political science. The readings for this course have been selected first with the intent of giving students an introduction to the classic texts of this corpus, and second with the intent of giving students some idea of the more contemporary work which engages with and/or challenges these foundational works. We will be reading nine books (which have been selected with an eye for things that show up on comprehensive exam reading lists), as well as a series of articles which students should be able to access through the Library’s e-reserves. With the exception of the first week of class, it is expected that students will come to the seminar already familiar with the readings. It is recommended that students also bring the readings with them to class, so that

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1 Alongside political behavior research.
2 If any of the articles listed are not available through the library, they will be provided to the class via Blackboard.
we can work through passages in seminar (as well as to utilize them for their own reference while participating in class discussion.)

Written Assignments: The written requirements for this seminar include three short response papers, a midterm paper, and a final paper.

-Response papers should be roughly 2/5 double-spaced pages in length for master’s/doctoral students, and should address the weeks’ readings, discussing the general themes and the implied trajectory of the research included therein. In order to ensure that at least some portion of the class has been able to set aside time for written reflection of the material every week, students will be required to sign up for slots ahead of time for the 3 weeks in which they will be writing response papers.

-The midterm will cover the first portion of the class leading up to Capitol Day. Students will be tasked with completing a written exercise (~10 pages for master’s, ~20 pages for doctoral) wherein they will prepare a brief on archetypal legislative behavior according to the literature. Details will be circulated in class, and the assignment will be due Nov. 3rd at 11:59 pm.

-The final paper will cover the second portion of the class. The written exercise will resemble the midterm in scale, but this time students will be tasked with demonstrating knowledge of how any particular interest or “faction” might succeed or fail in mobilizing Congress to achieve their desired policies according to the literature. Details will be circulated in class, and the assignment will be due Dec. 15th at 11:59 pm.

Course evaluation: Final grades for this course will be based on [general class participation including attendance at GMU’s Capitol Day (Oct. 27th)](3) (15%); [response papers (25%)](4), the [midterm paper (30%)](5) and the [final paper (30%)](6).

Required Texts

Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy
Peter Trebowitz, 1998, University of Chicago Press

The New Politics of the Budgetary Process

Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the US Senate
Frances E. Lee, 2009, University of Chicago Press

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3 If for some reason this is impossible, contact the professor for a make-up assignment.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug 29th Introduction to Congress (readings to be completed after class)

Federalist Papers 10, 51

Constitution, Article 1

History of Congress piece

Sept 5th Representation 1


**Sept 12th Representation 2**

Fenno. *Homestyles* (Book)


**Sept 19th Congressional Elections**

Federalist Papers 57

Mayhew. *The Electoral Connection* (Book)

Gary Jacobson, “Republican Resurgence in 2010,” Political Science Quarterly (Spring 2011)


**Sept 26th Lobbying and Interest Groups**

Kay, Schlozman, and Verba. *Unheavenly Chorus* (Book)


**Voting Patterns**

Hare, Christopher and Keith T. Poole. 2014. “The Polarization of Contemporary American Politics”. *Polity* 46(3).

Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics* (Book)

**MONDAY CLASSES MEET-NO CLASS**

**DAY AFTER CAPITOL DAY-NO CLASS**

**MIDTERM PAPERS DUE** Nov 3rd at 11:59PM

**Deal-making 1**


**Deal-making 2**


Lee, Francis. *Beyond Ideology* (Book)

**Organization 1: Do Parties Matter?**

Cox and McCubbins. *Legislative Party Leviathan* (Book)


**Organization 2: The Power of Information**

Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization* (Book)


**Congress and Bureaucracy**


**Congress and Foreign Policy**

Trebowitz, *Defining the National Interest* (Book).


**Writing Day-NO CLASS**

**FINAL PAPER DUE Dec 15th at 11:59PM**

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**Disability Accommodations**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations,
please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

University Honor Code

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

PIA HONOR CODE POLICY

The Honor Code policy endorsed by the members of the Department of Public and International Affairs relative to the types of academic work indicated below is set out in the appropriate paragraphs:

1. Quizzes, tests and examinations. No help may be given or received by students when taking quizzes, tests, or examinations, whatever the type or wherever taken, unless the instructor specifically permits deviation from this standard.

2. Course Requirements: All work submitted to fulfill course requirements is to be solely the product of the individual(s) whose name(s) appears on it. Except with permission of the instructor, no recourse is to be had to projects, papers, lab reports or any other written work previously prepared by another student, and except with permission of the instructor, no paper or work of any type submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of another course may be used a second time to satisfy a requirement of any course in the Department of Public and International Affairs. No assistance is to be obtained from commercial organizations which sell or lease research help or written papers. With respect to all written work as appropriate, proper footnotes and attribution are required.