Course Credit 1.5 hours

Course description

Witness to History: Testifying Before Congress

“Just because you do not take an interest in politics, does not mean that politics will not take an interest in you.”

Pericles 500 BC

The course is designed to enable students to gain and understanding of the Congressional Hearing process. Types and purposes of hearings and descriptions of how hearings are structured and how they unfold are
explained and discussed. The place of hearings in larger Congressional agendas involving investigations, oversight, legislation and appropriations is examined.

A primer of relationships between your Department, Congress and the other key stakeholders will enable students to understand the arena and context of hearings and positions of other witnesses appearing at Congressional hearings alongside you or your Department witness. The entire hearing process from conception, through the hearing, to its aftermath with post-hearing questions for the record is profiled.

The course next shifts focus to illustrate how you and your department are positioned in relationship to the position that the Committee is holding regarding the hearing topic. This will open the discussion of the development of your goals and strategies in the role as witness.

Students will construct and edit the opening statements of members and witnesses and build questions that are structured to support or attack the position being advanced by the hearing. Students will study everyone in the hearing room and imagine their positions on the hearing topic, and how you or your witness will relate to each person in the room.

Finally, there is a simulated hearing with class members playing the role of opposing political party members, witnesses and trade press members (who must inform their organizations of what occurred at the hearing.) A final look at the hearing aftermath, how to respond to questions for the record and how to inform your Department Secretary’s office about what occurred at the hearing will be the focus of the course conclusion. The class will finish by discussing and debating aspects of Congressional hearing and their value and role in government.
**Session One** - *A History of Violence*: Reviewing Congressional Hearings

**Session Two** - *The Dangerous Politics of being Apolitical*

**Session Three** - *The Pigeon and Statue*: Respective roles of the Legislative and Executive Branches

**Session Four** - *The Life-Cycle of a Congressional Hearing*

**Session Five** - *Order of Battle*: Structuring the Opening Statement and Discussing Questions & Answers

**Session Six** - *Bracing for Impact*: Hearing Preparation

**Session Seven** - *“The Room where it happens”*: Hearing Simulation

**Session Eight** - *Aftermath*: Debating Democracy

Student Learning Outcomes: Students will learn the place of Congressional Hearings in the larger agendas and context of government oversight, legislation, appropriations and confirmation proceedings for Presidential Appointees. More narrowly students will see the hearings through the eyes of political party participants, executive branch departments and special interest groups and other key stakeholders. Finally, the students will learn how to prepare opening statements, analyze the positions and statements of other witnesses and develop strategies for achieving goals and building defenses for their positions during the proceedings through answers to questions likely to be posed.

Class Dates and times
July 7- 9am until 2:40pm
July 14-9am until 2:40 pm
July 21 and July 22-9am until 2:40pm for each day
Final Exam Portfolio Due Aug 1 by 12 noon.

Office Hours in Founders Hall 615
Wed 10am-12pm

Course Requirements

All submissions will be in paper form using double spacing and a 12 point font.

First, participate in discussions. Write a two-page summary, including your own views, following each class, which is due to the instructor at the beginning of the following class. The graded summary will be returned at the beginning of the next class.

Final Exam project. Compile all of your class summaries and conclude with a 5 page analysis of the Congressional Hearing process strengths, weaknesses, uses and misuses. Include 5-10 conclusions that you have arrived at regarding Congressional Hearings in the larger context of American Government. Final Exam Due August 1 by 12nn.

Grading system
40% Participation and submission of summary analysis of 8 class sessions 5 points per session
20% Assignment for text chapter panel

20% Assignment for hearing simulation

20% Final Portfolio submission (ten points)

10% Bonus Book Review (Make-up or plus up of Letter Grade)

Grading
90 to 100 A
80 to 90  B
70 to 80  C
60 to 70  D
50 to 60  F

Disability Statement If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Honor Code Policy  *Statement on academic integrity, for example:

Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code.

The Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence (CTFE) provides guidelines in this regard: http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-learning-outcomes/