I. Course Description

This graduate seminar on legislative behavior is designed to provide advanced graduate students an opportunity to begin to explore the literature, methodology, and theories about legislative processes. The class is organized in two sections. In the first portion of the class we will learn about the primary theories for understanding congressional institutions (lawmaking, spatial models, roll call voting, parties, committees, etc.). In the second portion of the course, we will examine the electoral connections of members of congress (elections, campaigning, campaign finance, decision making, careerism, etc.). For the most part, we will use the United States Congress as a lens through which to learn about general legislative issues. We begin with the national U.S. case because most of the advanced theory and methodology in this sub-discipline originates there. Students are encouraged to think about and apply the general U.S. case to other national legislatures, parliaments, or state-level analysis. The literature in this area is vast and we cannot hope to cover it all in one semester. We will touch on the most important topics and diverge when it seems appropriate or when students’ interests demand it. This course is designed to help students prepare for advanced research in legislative process and graduate-level exams in this field.

II. Course Goals

There are two primary goals for this course. First, students should gain a working familiarity with the literature on legislative process, and the U.S. Congress. Students planning to research and teach in this field should gain a fundamental grasp of substance of research in this vast field. Second, students will practice and improve their critical thinking, writing, and research skills in this class. Students will have a heavy reading load, which is necessary to begin to dissect the voluminous literature in this field. Students will also actively engage with one another in research, presentations, and writing assignments.

III. Course Components
There are three graded components to this course.

Class Presentation (10%) Each week, one student will be responsible for presenting the required readings. The student presenter should circulate discussion questions to the rest of the class prior to the start of class (no later than Wednesdays at 5:00pm). The presenter will provide a brief oral summary of the readings and help to start discussion about the day’s topics. The presenter should note points of interest, confusion, or controversy in the readings and provide a thoughtful criticism.

Weekly Reaction Papers (40%) Each week each student must write a memo that provides a reaction to the week’s readings. There are 14 class meetings, and each student must write 10 reaction memos (meaning you get 4 optional bye-weeks, to be selected at your choosing).

MASTER’S STUDENTS: This memo must not be more than 250 words or longer than 1 page. Your goals is to summarize key research findings in a concise and expert format.

PHD STUDENTS: This memo should contain 3-5 sentences on each assigned reading, as well as a paragraph that summarizes the state of the field on the topic.

Research Paper (50%) Each student is responsible for writing one journal or conference quality research paper. Use the literature to guide a creative thought process and to help you develop a reasonable research question. These papers will be completed in three stages. First, you will complete a 1-page introduction that states a thesis, or research question, and provides a basic outline of your paper (due February 28). Second, you will write a literature review and research design (due April 11). Third, you will hand in your completed project during our assigned final examination period on Thursday, May 9 at 7:30pm. Late assignments will result in a reduced score.

IV. Logistics

A. Class Attendance and Participation. Learning is an active, rather than passive, exercise. Accordingly, every student is expected to attend class as well as be prepared to ask questions about and comment on the readings. You need to complete the daily reading assignment prior to the class meeting. You will be much more successful in this class if you attend regularly, take notes, pay attention, and participate.

B. Readings. As is the case with attendance, keeping pace with the reading is essential to succeeding in this class. It is your responsibility to obtain copies of the readings prior to the date we will discuss them in class. I will do everything I can to make this task easier for you. You will be much more successful in this course if you complete the assigned readings and take notes on them.

C. Technology Laptops, tablets, and smart phone are a considerable distraction in class. A student can become easily distracted by non-class alternatives that compete for your attention.
In addition, research shows that students tend to retain more information by taking notes by hand rather than on a computer. However, this course is technology heavy as we will be learning statistical software that is probably unfamiliar to you. It requires considerable practice and training. Therefore, I leave it to students to make their own choice about how to maximize their in-class learning. If you choose to use a laptop, make a commitment to only using content related to class.

D. Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity. Students in this course will be expected to comply with the George Mason University Honor Code (see http://honorcode.gmu.edu/). There are three simple guidelines to follow with respect to academic integrity: (1) all work you submit must be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the expectations for any assignment, ask for clarification. Any student engaged in any academic misconduct will receive an F on the offending exam or assignment. Egregious violations will result in an F grade for the course and will be reported to the appropriate Dean’s office. These violations include cheating on an exam, using someone else’s work as your own, and plagiarizing the written word. Plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without providing credit or citation) is a serious offense. If you have any questions at all about what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, or academic misconduct, please ask the instructor.

E. Students with Disabilities. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please let me (the instructor) know and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at (703) 993-2474 or http://ods.gmu.edu. All discussions with me regarding disabilities are confidential.

F. Email. Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. Email etiquette: An email is a professional correspondence; do not write it as if it is a text message, snap, tweet, or IM. Always use a salutation and sign your name. Consider creating a signature that automatically inserts your name and basic contact information at the bottom of your emails. Use proper punctuation and grammar.

G. Dropping or withdrawing. The last day to add this course is Tuesday, January 29, 2019. The last day to drop the class with no tuition penalty is February 5, 2019. Students may elect to withdrawal from the class (with 100% tuition liability) between February 6 – February 12. From February 26 – March 25 students may elect to use a Mason “selective withdrawal” to drop the course (you can only do this three times during your time as a Mason student). After March 25 there are no options for withdrawing from the course. More information on drop and withdrawal policies is here. If you have concerns about your performance in the course, or you find yourself unable to perform for any reason, you should discuss your concerns with your teaching assistant, professor, advisor, and Assistant Dean (in that order). Students seeking to drop or withdrawal are responsible for doing so on their own in Patriot Web. If you need help
or advice, please see your academic advisor. The advisors in the Schar School main office (3rd floor Research Hall) can also help.

**Grading.** In this course, I will use a grading scale that is typical of Ph.D.-level courses that includes a four-part scale. You can think of the scale as being: high-pass, pass, low-pass, or fail. The grade scale and its interpretation is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent work; high pass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Good work; pass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Work needs some improvement; low-pass. If you plan to take Ph.D.-level exams in American politics, you need to do some additional review of the material presented in this course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B or lower</td>
<td>Your work has not demonstrated mastery of the material that would be appropriate for a career in academia as a professor. Alternative career paths may be a better option for you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**V. Required Texts**

The reading load for this course is intense and dense. It is vital that you keep up with the readings. One of the most important skills you will learn as a graduate student (most important in terms of being successful in graduate school) is how to efficiently digest a large volume of readings. I know that you will not be able to read every word that is assigned; but you will need to learn how to quickly glean the most important points from each reading. While I cannot require it, I strongly encourage you to take notes on everything you read. Good organization and careful note taking will increase your retention of the material, improve your ability to recall information, lead to superior classroom discussions, and reduce your research and study time at later points. Taking notes may mean it takes longer to get through some material, but the (long term) benefits of doing so, far exceed the (short term) costs.

For each article or book you read, as a minor guide to digesting volumes of information in an efficient way, use the following questions to help focus your attention about each piece of research:

1.) What is the main question the author is asking?  
2.) What motivates the question, or why is the author asking the question?  
3.) What is the primary expectation, hypothesis, or claim the author seeks to test?  
4.) On what theory or logic is the expectation based?  
5.) What methods of investigation has the author used to evaluate the claim?  
6.) What are the primary findings? Were the expectations met?  
7.) How does this research advance, or contribute to, our knowledge of this topic?

In addition to the following required texts, a series of articles are listed in the detailed weekly description below. I strongly recommend that students use bibliographic software to access, document, and catalog the items they read. While there are many such software options
around, I recommend using Zotero, a free add-in for your web-browser. Information and tutorials on Zotero are available here (https://infoguides.gmu.edu/politics/cite). As a first assignment, I ask that students explore this software and download all the readings into Zotero. All the articles are available through web access at Mason’s library, and most of the books are available in the library. This guide has resources about finding articles. You can also search for the title or journal from the library homepage, or use Political Science Complete or Google Scholar to find the articles listed below (you’ll need to use your GMU login and the Duo Mobile two factor authentication to access these). We will go over these strategies in class. Using bibliographic software will make your life easier—never fret about formatting a bibliography ever again! For graduate students who expect to take field exams, this approach is essential.

Required:


Recommended:


*Using the Gender Balance Assessment Tool (GBAT) developed by Jane Lawrence Sumner, the required BOOKS for this class are comprised of 13 authors who are 39% women. On the complete syllabus of required readings there are 181 authors who are 20% women, 5.5% Asian, 11% Black, 4% Hispanic, and 77% White authors.

VI. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Thursday, January 24

Introduction to the Study of Congress

Required Readings:


PART I: Congressional Institutions

Thursday, January 31

Legislative Process

Required Readings:


*Recommended Readings:*


Thursday, February 7

**Modeling Legislators**

*Required Readings:*


**Recommended Readings**
(See Symposium on Pivotal Politics in *JOP* 80(3), July 2018)


**Thursday, February 14**

**Roll Call Voting**

**Required Readings**


Poole, Keith. Website: [http://voteview.com](http://voteview.com)


**Recommended Readings:**

**Thursday, February 21**

**Strategies in Legislative Voting**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings**


**Thursday, February 28**

**CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES**

**Required Readings**


Recommended Readings:


Thursday, March 7

Social Networks in Congress


Recommended Readings:


Thursday, March 14 SPRING BREAK
**Thursday, March 21**

**PARTIES IN CONGRESS: PART I**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


PARTIES IN CONGRESS: PART II

Thursday, March 28

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


PART II: ELECTIONS AND CANDIDATES

14
Thursday, April 4

**CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS**

*Required Readings:*


*Recommended Readings:*


Thursday, April 11

Research paper literature review and research design DUE today

Electoral Ramifications

Required Readings


Recommended Readings:


Thursday, April 18

POLARIZATION IN CONGRESS

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


**PART III: REPRESENTATION AND CONSTITUENTS**

**Thursday, April 25**

**REPRESENTATION ISSUES: RACE, GENDER, AND...**

**Required Readings:**


Recommended Readings:


Thursday, May 2

**LOBBYING**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Thursday, May 9  In-class presentations of research projects. Final paper DUE today.

VIII.  Important Online Resources

**CONGRESS**
U.S. Senate  [http://www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)
Federal Digital System (congressional hearings, Federal Register, Congressional Record, etc.)  [http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/)
| Congressional ProQuest (formerly Lexis-Nexis) | http://congressional.proquest.com/profiles/gis/search/basic/basicsearcharch |
| Legistorm | http://www.legistorm.com/index/about.html |
| Lobbying Disclosure | http://sopr.senate.gov/ |
| MoneyLine | http://moneyline.cq.com/pml/home.do |
| Center for Responsive Politics | http://www.opensecrets.org/ |
| The Redistricting Game | http://www.redistrictinggame.com/index.php |

**REFERENCE/RESEARCH**

| APSA Citation Guide | http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPSA.html |
| Vote View (Poole & Rosenthal scores) | http://www.voteview.com |
| Congressional Bills Project | http://www.congressionalbills.org/ |

**NEWS**

| Roll Call | http://www.rollcall.com/ |
| The Hill | http://www.thehill.com/ |
| Politico | http://www.politico.com/ |
| C-SPAN | http://www.c-span.org/ |
| NPR | http://www.npr.org/ |