

PSC 305-00:
The U.S. CONGRESS

M/W 1:30-2:45
Shankweiler 440 S

Lanethea Mathews-Gardner

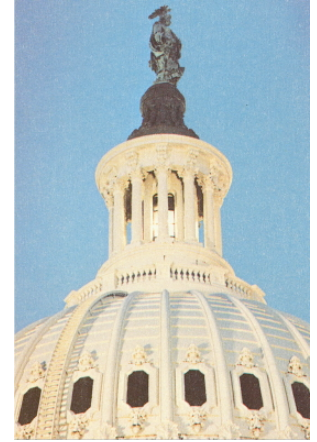
office: Ettinger 308A

office ours: Monday & Wednesday 3 - 4pm & by appointment

email: mathews@muhlenberg.edu

phone: (484) 664-3737

web: <http://www.muhlenberg.edu/depts/polisci/mathews/index.html>



Course Overview

The U.S. Congress is our most preeminent political institution. It is complex and multi-layered and is constantly changing in relation to the political environment. Congress is both a political institution, and an aggregate of individual members with different goals and motivations. This course addresses several empirical and analytical questions about Congress and the legislative process: What does Congress do? How do members of Congress get elected, and stay in office? How do legislators “represent” us? How does the institution of Congress function as a lawmaking body? What really matters in congressional decision-making processes? How has Congress and congressional lawmaking changed throughout U.S. history? In brief, this course is organized around the history, members, workings, and future of the U.S. Congress.

This class demands maximum effort and willingness to participate on the part of all members. Although some of our class meetings will consist of lectures, a large portion will depend on active participation in discussions about contemporary issues facing Congress and the American political system more generally. In addition, much of our course is built around a lawmaking simulation in which students will assume the role of a senator, lobbyist, leader of the executive branch, or journalist. Attendance and participation in all parts of the simulation, including some meetings outside of class, is mandatory.

Prerequisites: PSC 101, Introduction to American National Government (or instructor permission) is a required prerequisite for this course. This course assumes that you have an introductory background to American government and a basic knowledge of Congress.

Books

The following three books are available for purchase at the ‘Berg Bookshop.

Required:

1. Smith, Roberts, and Wielen, *The American Congress*, 6th edition (Cambridge University Press, 2009).
2. Smith, Roberts, and Wielen, Eds, *The American Congress Reader* (Cambridge University Press, 2009)
3. Panagopoulos and Schank, *All Roads Lead to Congress: the \$300 Billion Fight Over Highway Funding* (CQ Press 2008).

You are also responsible for materials that are placed on course reserve at Trexler Library and/or that may be assigned at a later time.

Requirements, Grading, Policies

Your grade for this course will be determined by five main components: 1) course engagement; 2) 4 brief response papers; 3) a midterm exam; 4) a final exam; and 5) participation in and fulfillment of the requirements of the legislative simulation.

Grade Breakdown

Course Engagement	10%
Midterm exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Legislative Simulation	25%
Paper # 1	5%
Paper # 2	5%
Simulation Portfolio	20%

Students with documented disabilities or special needs who require accommodations for this course must first contact Academic Support Services, the Counseling Center, or Student Health Services. Please do this as soon as possible and no later than the third week of classes so that we may have a dialogue as to your needs and the recommended accommodations.

Note on plagiarism: When you matriculated as a student at Muhlenberg College, you signed a pledge to uphold the Academic Behavior Code. **If you violate the ABC, you will receive an F in this course and your violation will be reported to the Dean's Office.** On all work submitted for a grade, you must write and sign the following pledge: "I pledge that I have complied with the Academic Behavior Code in this work." In the case of electronic submissions, you should include this statement along with your initials.

You are expected to stay abreast of changes to our course schedule, by checking email and the course webpage: <http://www.muhlenberg.edu/depts/polisci/mathews/index.html>

Course Outline & Schedule

Introduction & Overview

Monday, August 31: Welcome: Introductions & Overview of Course

**** (Pre) Assignment # 1 for Monday, September 7:** Who are your Senators and your Member of Congress? What party (parties) do they belong to? What issues do they care about? Are they members and/or leaders of important committees in Congress? How well have they represented your state/congressional district; who (i.e., what kinds of people and interests) do they seem to represent most effectively? How long have they served in this capacity? Maximum length: 3 WELL-WRITTEN pages.

Wednesday, September 2: Thinking about the Modern Congress

- *The American Congress*, Chapter 1, “The American Congress: Modern Trends”
- *The American Congress Reader*:
 - Chapter 1, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, “What is Wrong with the American Political System?”
 - Chapter 2, Brady and Theriault, “A Reassessment of Who’s to Blame: A Positive Case for the Public Evaluation of Congress”
 - Chapter 3, Stimson, “Between the Campaigns: Public Approval and Disapproval of Government”

Part I. Congress in Historical Perspective

Monday September 7 & Wednesday, September 9: Theory & Origins of Congress

- U.S. Constitution
- Virginia Plan, widely available
- New Jersey Plan widely available
- *Federalist Papers*, Nos. 52-57, 62, & 63. Widely available.
- Selections from the *Anti-Federalist Papers*, Brutus IV, Brutus XVI, Melancton Smith. See webpage.
- *The American Congress*, Chapter 2

**** Simulation character preferences due Friday, September 7.**

Monday, September 14: Historical Change in the House & Senate

- Dodd and Oppenheimer, “The Politics of the Contemporary House: From Gingrich to Pelosi” RESERVE
- Thomas Mann, “Assessing the 110th Congress, Anticipating the 111th,” at http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/0108_broken_branch_binder_mann.aspx.

Part II. Elections & Representation

Campaigns & Elections:

Wednesday, September 16: Running for and Winning Elections.

- *The American Congress*, Chapter 3
- *The American Congress Reader*, Chapter 9, Jacobson “Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of US House Elections, 1946-1986”

Monday, September 21: A Closer Look at Apportionment and the Politics of Redistricting

- **BEFORE CLASS:** Play the redistricting game: <http://www.redistrictinggame.org/>
- *American Congress Reader*, Chapter 8, Cox and Katz, “Elbridge Gerry’s Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution”
- Readings on Congressional Redistricting from *Extensions*, the Journal of the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Study Center, at: <http://www.ou.edu/carlalbertcenter/extensions/>

Wednesday, September 23: Constituencies & Their Elected Representatives

- *The American Congress Reader*, Chapter 7, Weissberg, “Collective vs. Dyadic Representation in Congress,”
- Susan Carroll, Representing Women: Congresswomen’s Perceptions of Their Representational Roles,” from *Women Transforming Congress*, Reserve.

Monday, September 28 No Class Fall Break!

Part III. Congressional Organization & Life

Wednesday, September 30: Old ways and New Ways on the Hill

- *The American Congress*, Chapter 4
- *The American Congress Reader*:
 - Chapter 6, Fenno, “US House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration,”
 - Chapter 10, Mayhew, “Congress: The Electoral Connection”

Monday, October 5: Parties: Capturing the Congress

- *The American Congress*, Chapter 5
- *The American Congress Reader*:
 - Chapter 14, Cooper and Brady “Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn”;
 - Chapter 15, Cox and McCubbins, “Setting the Agenda”;
 - Chapter 16, Smith, “Party Influence in Congress”

Wednesday, October 7: Congressional Committees

- *The American Congress*, Chapter 6
- *The American Congress Reader*:
 - Chapter 18, Maltzman and Smith, “Principals, Goals, Dimensionality, and Congressional Committees,”; and
 - Chapter 19, Talbert, Jones, and Baumgartner, “Nonlegislative Hearings and Policy Change in Congress”

Monday, October 12: Rules and Procedures in the Legislative Process

- *The American Congress*, Chapters 7 and 8

Wednesday, October 14: How and Why do Rules Matter?

- *The American Congress Reader*:
 - Chapter 22, Cox, “On the Effects of Legislative Rules”; and
 - Chapter 23, Binder, “The Partisan Bias of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990”

Monday, October 19: Players in & Playing with Legislative Process

- *The American Congress Reader*
 - Chapter 25, Evans, “Greasing the Wheels: Using Pork Barrel Projects to Build Majority Coalitions in Congress”
 - *The American Congress*, Chapter 11
 - Chapter 36, Hall and Wayman, “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees”

Wednesday, October 21: Congress & The President

- *The American Congress*, Chapter 9
- *The American Congress Reader*:
 - Chapter 30, Cameron, “Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power”
 - Chapter 32, Fisher, “The Politics of Shared Power: Congress and the Executive”

Monday, October 26: **MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS TODAY**

Wednesday, October 28: Prepare for Committee Hearings

Monday, November 2 : Committee Hearing

- **Simulation Paper # 1 due today**

Wednesday, November 4: Committee Hearing

**** Wednesday, November 4:**

7pm Panel: “Geo-Politicized Space: Race, Representation and the 2010 Census”**

**** Friday, November 6th: Extra Credit Opportunity: Senator for a Day Program ****

Monday, November 9: Committee Hearing

Wednesday, November 11: Committee Markups

- *All Roads Lead to Congress*: Chapters 1 & 2

Monday, November 16: Committee Markups

Wednesday, November 18: Floor Debate

- *All Roads Lead to Congress*: Chapters 3 & 4

Monday, November 23: Floor Debate

Wednesday, November 25st: No class Happy Thanksgiving!

Monday, November 30: Floor Debate

Wednesday, December 2: Floor Debate

Monday, December 7: Is Congress Broken and, if so, How Can We Fix It?

- *All Roads Lead to Congress*: Chapters 5 & 6

Wednesday, December 9: Last day of class. Assessing the 111th Congress & Beyond

- Readings TBA

Simulation Paper # 2 due by noon, Friday, December 11th.

Final simulation portfolio due by noon, Wednesday, December 16th.

Final Exam details to follow.

Helpful Websites & Resources

- *CQ Weekly*, to which subscribes Trexler Library in print. The current issue is located in reference browsing area.
- *Roll Call*, the daily newspaper of Congress, available online at www.rollcall.com.
- *Lexis-Nexis Congressional Universe*. An essential database for the purposes of this course, you will become intimately familiar with this.
- *Almanac of American Politics*. The 2004 Edition is available in the reference collection in Trexler Library, [328.73 A445o](#) 2004. Arranged by Congressional District, the *Almanac* provides an analysis and description of the political and demographic make-up of congressional districts.
- *National Journal*, a weekly magazine on politics and government, online at: <http://nationaljournal.com>.
- *Project Vote Smart*, or www.vote-smart.org contains a ton of useful information on Members of Congress, their biographical information, campaign finance information, voting records, public statements, and more.
- *OpenSecrets.org*, or www.opensecrets.org, an essential starting place for anyone interested in the role of money and campaign finance in politics.
- There are a number of general Congressional resources that you will find helpful, including:

- <http://thomas.loc.gov/>: Legislative information from the Library of Congress.
- <http://www.house.gov/> : The official webpage of the House of Representatives.
- <http://www.senate.gov/>: The office webpage of the U.S. Senate.

- The Center on Congress at Indiana University: <http://congress.indiana.edu/>.

- Carl Albert Center for Congressional Research & Studies:
<http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/archives/>.

- Association of Centers for the Study of Congress:
<http://www.congresscenters.org/index.htm>

- American Political Science Association Organized Section on Legislative Studies,
<http://www.apsanet.org/~lss/links.html>: a wealth of web links to sites related to legislative studies and Congress.