POL 108: U.S. Congress
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Office Hours: MWF 11:30-12:30

Introduction: This course will examine the United States Congress, including the creation and evolution of the legislative branch, elections, the role of committees and political parties, the relationship between Congress and other branches of government, the influence of interest groups, and policy-making. The central feature of the course is SIMGOV, a simulation of the U.S. House of Representatives. SIMGOV will teach you how Congress works by allowing you to act as a miniature legislature. As in the real world, the participants will seek goals related to their positions. To do well in SIMGOV, participants must formulate policy proposals, actively participate in committee and floor debates, and take steps to ensure their reelection.

Required Texts:

- Davidson, Roger H. et al., *Congress and Its Members*, 18th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc. ISBN: 9781071836835
- I-Clickers Online

General Education: This course fulfills the general education requirement under *Writing or Speech-Intensive:*

> Such writing-intensive or speech-intensive courses encourage students to develop their abilities to articulate information, ideas, and convictions both in written and oral discourse. Students are expected to be able to communicate effectively to a wide range of audiences, within the academy, the church, and the public. The Writer's Corner enables students at all levels to discuss writing strategies individually with peer consultants. (Source: http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/registrar/documents/Catalog.pdf).

Learning Outcomes: *U.S. Congress*, students will…

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Requirements: Grades are based on the following:

1. **SIMGOV.** SIMGOV will teach you how Congress works by allowing you to act as a miniature House of Representatives. You will select a member of Congress to play and seek the goals related to the position, including…

a. **Writing Four Bills, Editorials, and Press Releases.** Students will write four bills and corresponding press releases and editorials on topics of their choosing. While the bills are technical in nature, press releases and editorials are written for a general audience. The length of the bills will differ depending on the subject, but students will submit at least 16 pages of bills, editorials, and press releases by the end of the term. (10% of SIMGOV grade)

b. **Writing one "Pet Project" Bill.** Your "pet project" is a lengthy (over ten pages) bill on an issue of great concern to you and your constituents. Your "pet project" bill should include, but greatly expand upon, each section you would find in a typical bill. In particular, you should pay greater attention to spelling out policy in the "Statement of Policy" section (see HR 3590: The Affordable Care Act as an extreme example). Unlike an average bill, however, your "pet project" bill will include a "Statement of Purpose" section. This section, written in standard academic prose, will contain background information and summarize the academic scholarship on your issue (include at least eight scholarly sources). Your "Statement of Purpose" section can include charts and graphs. Additionally, you should use numerous background sources, such as newspapers, magazine articles, or reputable websites. (20% of SIMGOV grade)

c. **Website.** Students will create a website that lists their accomplishments, issue positions, press releases, editorials, and committee work. (20% of SIMGOV grade)

d. **Participation.** Active members of this simulation attend and participate in party caucuses, committee meetings, and floor sessions. For better or worse, most politicians are skilled public speakers. Likewise, you will be graded on your oratory skills in caucus, committee, and floor presentations. (50% of SIMGOV grade)

2. **Final Session.** The Final Session will take place during Finals Week, April 30th, 12-2 pm. During the Final Session, you are expected to demonstrate a mastery of parliamentary procedure. Each member is expected to talk and participate, so it is incumbent upon party leaders to ensure that happens.

3. **Exam.** A multiple choice exam will test your knowledge of process and procedure.

4. **Quizzes.** Students should expect quizzes on those class sessions where there is reading assigned. These quizzes will test your comprehension of the readings and lectures. Most will be taken via the clickers. You are allowed to use any notes you have taken but cannot use the books, articles, or photocopies of the readings. The structure of the quizzes encourages copious note-taking as opposed to the faster but less valuable "highlighter" method. There will also be several short homework assignments. *No make-up quizzes will be given except in documented emergencies. Make-up quizzes are a three-page, double-spaced summary and analysis of the day's reading.*

Course Grades:

SIMGOV	70%
Exam #1	10
Quizzes	10
Final Session	10
Total	100%

Note: The grades on Canvas are an approximation of your total grade and may be inaccurate.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. It should be noted that I am vigilant about checking the authenticity of students' work and have no qualms about prosecuting violators. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me or refer to Westmont's policy at http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/registrar/academic_policies/academic-dishonesty.html.

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools
Westmont's academic integrity policy prohibits us from "present[ing] someone else's work as our own." Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing (and even thinking) for their users. Therefore, **students should NOT substitute AI-generated text for original academic work**. Westmont professors design assignments for students' incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic writing process in which a student does the work of critical thinking and message construction.
It is possible for original academic work (e.g., a student-authored essay) that has been grammar-checked or proofread by AI editing tools (including ChatGPT and Grammarly) to be flagged by AI detection tools on Turnitin.com, etc. Our academic integrity policy does not prohibit students from using AI editing tools unless the extent of usage meets the threshold for minimal plagiarism. However, **a student should seek permission from an instructor before an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task**. Failing to do so may result in that student's work being flagged for disciplinary action.

Academic Accommodations
Students who have been diagnosed with a disability (learning, physical/medical, or psychological) are strongly encouraged to contact the Disability Services office as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Disability Services office. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. For more information, contact Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services (565-6186, snoble@westmont.edu) or visit the website

Westmont's expectation regarding honor and respect in the classroom.
Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Further, our Diversity Matters document indicates that as we abide by these commandments, we learn to honor and respect one another. In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. If you experience or witness something that does not honor these commitments, please talk with me as soon as possible. Please review the following webpage https://my.westmont.edu/s/classroom-honor-respect. You may also find it helpful to access the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

Canvas: Several assignments and resources are posted on the Canvas

Schedule: This schedule is subject to change with prior notification.

Jan 7. Introduction

Jan 9. The Two Congresses
Congress & Its Members, ch. 1 & 2

Jan 11. Representation
Congress & Its Members, ch. 5 & 9.

SIMGOV: Parties Assigned

Jan 14. Structure of Lawmaking I
Congress & Its Members, ch. 8

SIMGOV: Member Assignment

Jan 16. The Structure of Lawmaking II
SIMGOV Manual [Canvas]

SIMGOV: New Member Reception at Prof Knecht's House, 952 Westmont Road, RSVP requested.

Jan 18. The Structure of Lawmaking III
SIMGOV Manual [Canvas]

SIMGOV: Elections for Leadership and Committee Assignments

Jan 22. The Structure of Lawmaking IV/ Domestic Policy-Making [MLK Day on Monday, observe class on Tuesday]
Congress & Its Members, ch. 14

Center on Budget and Policy "Policy Basics"

Jan 23. Parties
Congress & Its Members, ch. 6

SIMGOV: Mock Committee

Jan 25. Congressional Committees
Congress & Its Members, ch. 7

SIMGOV: Mock Committee;
Initial Website Due

Jan 28. Exam
SIMGOV: First Bill Due

Jan 30. SIMGOV: Committee

Feb 1. SIMGOV: Committee

Feb 4. Primary Elections, Districts, and Recruitment,
Congress & Its Members, ch. 3

Feb 6. SIMGOV: Committee
SIMGOV: Second Bill Due

Feb 8. SIMGOV: Committee

Feb 11. Elections
Congress & Its Members, ch. 4

Feb 13. SIMGOV: Committee

Feb 15. SIMGOV: Floor

Feb 18. President's Holiday, No Class

Feb 20. SIMGOV: Committee
SIMGOV: Third Bill Due

Feb 22. SIMGOV: Floor

Feb 25. Congress and the President
Congress & Its Members, ch. 10

Feb 27. SIMGOV: Committee
Pet Bill Due

Mar 1. SIMGOV: Floor
Midterm Portfolio Due

Mar 4. SIMGOV: Congress and the Bureaucracy
Congress & Its Members, ch. 11

Mar 6. SIMGOV: Committee

Mar 8. SIMGOV: Floor

Mar 11-15. Spring Break

Mar 18. Congress and the Courts
Congress & Its Members, ch. 12

Mar 20. SIMGOV: Committee

Mar 22. SIMGOV: Floor

Mar 25. Congress and Interest Groups
Congress & Its Members, ch. 13

Mar 27. SIMGOV: Committee

Mar 29. SIMGOV: Floor

Apr 1. Congress and Foreign Policy
Congress & Its Members, ch. 15
Final Bill Due

Apr 3. SIMGOV: Committee

Apr 5. SIMGOV: Floor

Apr 8. SIMGOV: Committee

Apr 10. SIMGOV: Committee

Apr 12. SIMGOV: Floor

Apr 15. SIMGOV: Committee

Apr 17. SIMGOV: Floor

Apr 19 & 22. Easter Break

Apr 24. Concluding Remarks
Final Website/Portfolio

Apr 30 12-2pm. Final Session