BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor
R. Eric Petersen (Eric preferred)

Eric is a political scientist who works as an analyst at the Congressional Research Service in the Library of Congress. He conducts research and provides policy analysis support and training for Members of Congress and their staff. His research areas include congressional administration and staffing, constituent service management, congressional office operations, government information management, congressional-executive relations, government contingency planning, and the Smithsonian Institution. In addition to his congressional work, he has consulted with staff and parliamentarians in the national legislatures of more than 25 countries.

Prior to his work at GSPM, Eric taught undergraduate and graduate classes at The Ohio State University, Virginia Tech, The Catholic University of America, State University of New York (SUNY) Oswego, SUNY Onondaga Community College, and Syracuse University.

Eric earned doctoral and master’s degrees in political science at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, and a Master of Public Administration at the Center for Public Administration and Policy, Virginia Tech. His undergraduate degrees were earned at the University of Pennsylvania and Community College of Philadelphia.

A Word on My Other Employer
Views expressed in the course of this seminar are my own, and do not reflect the position of either the Congressional Research Service or the Library of Congress.

Contact Information
Phone Number: (240) 460-2767, text (preferred), voice
Email Address: rericpetersen@gwu.edu
Communication
I look forward to working with you, and strongly encourage you to reach out as needed. Office hours happen after class or at a time that works for both of us. If you need to communicate something time sensitive, like absence from class or unexpected technology failure an hour before an assignment is due, text me. I’m typically available for a reasonably quick response between 7 AM-11 PM during the week, less so on weekends. If you have questions that require a more detailed response from me, e-mail is best; I will try to respond within 24 hours. If you miss 20th century forms of remote communication, we can set up a time for a call, and we can talk.

Blackboard Site
A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to log in to the site before each scheduled class since Blackboard will be the primary venue for distribution of Course materials. Students can access the course site at https://blackboard.gwu.edu. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity
All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity.

University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays
- Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
- Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
- Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

Support for Students with Disabilities
GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/.

Title IX: Confidentiality and Responsible Employee Statement
The George Washington University (GWU) and its faculty are committed to helping create a safe and open learning environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of
sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. GWU strongly encourages all members of the community to take action, seek support and report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty members are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Mental Health Services through Colonial Health (counselors are available 24/7 at 202-994-5300 or you can make an appointment to see a counselor in person.). For more information about reporting options and resources at GWU and the community, please visit https://haven.gwu.edu/.

**Attendance and Participation Policy**
Attendance and participation policies are outlined below:

- You are expected to attend all class sessions. If you are unable to attend, please let me know in advance. If you have an emergency, take care of that first.
- Lectures may be recorded. Class discussions will not be recorded to ensure student confidentiality under FERPA.
- If you anticipate any issues or have concerns about these expectations, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Course Evaluation**
At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW’s online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting the instructor, or any/all of the following:

Dr. Casey Burgat  
Director, Legislative Affairs Program  
cburgat@gwu.edu | 202-994-6000

Dr. Jack Prostko  
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development  
College of Professional Studies  
jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand  
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM  
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309
THE COURSE

Legislative Affairs Program Objectives
Upon completion of the Master’s degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:
1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

Graduate School Expectations
Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:
1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

Course Description and Overview
Through focused engagement of academic and practical readings, congressional guidance documents, and practical exercises, this advanced graduate course provides a detailed understanding of the operations of a Member of Congress’s personal office. It contributes to the achievement and eventual mastery of all GSPM Legislative Affairs Master’s program goals.

Course Learning Objectives
Upon completion of the course, students will better understand and articulate how

- congressional offices are managed (Management).
- the perceived responsibilities of congressional offices interact and are implemented (Congressional Operations).
- strategic thinking and planning facilitate office operations (Strategy).
- to communicate effectively the results of their work in written and oral formats (Skills).

Course learning objectives will be addressed in each assignment and every discussion.

Course Requirements
Students are required to participate in weekly classes, including lectures, discussions, and at least two one on one tutorials with the instructor (tutorials may be conducted by videoconference). In addition, a series of deliverables as described below are required.
### Evaluation and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select a Member</td>
<td>Pick a Member of the House to work for this semester. If you already work for a Member, that’s your person. If you work in the Senate, try to remember there is another chamber and pick some from there. Staff don’t have to like their Member or their policies. Think about stretching beyond your comfort zone.</td>
<td>Wednesday, 9 Sep. Noon, POST TO BLACKBOARD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The District</td>
<td>Assess the constituency: demographics, media, industries, strengths, challenges, and other important features a congressional office would want to know.</td>
<td>Wednesday, 16 Sep. Noon</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Goals</td>
<td>Aside from the obvious, what does the office want to achieve?</td>
<td>Wednesday, 30 Sep. Noon</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Budget &amp; Structure</td>
<td>Prepare an office budget and staffing plan, with an accompanying justification for your choices and how those choices support office goals.</td>
<td>Wednesday, 14 Oct. Noon</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation/Outreach Project</td>
<td>Choose from 1 of the two options: An idea for a bill and how you plan to get it passed OR An idea to enhance constituent outreach and engagement, and how to implement it For each, an explanation why it is necessary, what good it will do, how it will advance office goals, and an action plan</td>
<td>Sunday, 25 Oct. Noon</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation/Outreach Project</td>
<td>Write a 500-700-word op-ed on your project for a news outlet in your district, Compose three Tweets to promote the article and the project</td>
<td>Sunday, 15 Nov. Noon</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>Five minutes with the Member to explain Your Project, and its utility</td>
<td>Wednesday, 2, 9 Dec.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Attendance</td>
<td>Show up. Engage.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade*</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100 Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93 Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Grade Range</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72 (lowest grade to pass)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).*

**Required Text and Learning Materials**
As described below. All readings are provided, and required, unless otherwise noted. Readings for which no link is available are provided on the Blackboard site.

**Tentative Course Calendar***
*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

**Week 1 Introductions and Conversation**
1 September 2021
Readings
Walberg, How Congress Works, [https://walberg.house.gov/about/how-congress-works](https://walberg.house.gov/about/how-congress-works)

*Monday, 6 September, Member Selection Due, Noon*

**Week 2 The Institution and the Member**
8 September 2021
Readings
Petersen, 2012. Roles and Duties of a Member of Congress


Sunday, 12 September, District Assessment Due, Noon

Week 3 No Class
15 September 2021
No Readings

Week 4 Members of Congress, Elected Officials, Representatives, Products, Misunderstood
22 September 2021
No Readings
15 Departing Congress Members Tell The Newbies What To Expect | VICE News Tonight Special (HBO) – YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gQbt0h5UQk
A Day In The Life Of Congress – YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=derdkR10Vgc
A Day in the Life of Senator James Lankford, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHetbk4LjlE
Byron Dorgan in the Halls of Congress, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEUhtOs3VKM

Sunday, 26 September, Office Goals Due, Noon

Week 5 Office Rules and Resources
29 September 2021
Readings
Brudnick, 2019. Congressional Salaries and Allowances: In Brief
Brudnick, 2020. Members' Representational Allowance: History and Usage
Week 6 Staff: Academic Perspectives and the Real World
6 October 2021
Readings

Petersen, 2021. Congressional Staff: Duties, Qualifications, and Skills Identified by Members of Congress for Selected Positions
Petersen & Williams, 2019a. Staff Pay Levels for Selected Positions in Senators’ Offices, FY2001-FY2018
Petersen & Williams, 2019b. Staff Pay Levels for Selected Positions in House Member Offices, 2001-2018
Petersen & Eckman, 2016b. Staff Tenure in Selected Positions in House Member Offices, 2006-2016
Petersen & Eckman, 2016a. Staff Tenure in Selected Positions in Senators’ Offices, 2006-2016

Want more? Are you really curious about academic efforts to understand congressional staff? Caught up with other work? At a loss for more entertaining distractions? These are optional.

Sunday, 10 October, Office Budget & Structure Due, Noon

Week 7 Individual meeting
13 October 2021
No Readings, schedule 10-15-minute meetings

Week 8 Constituent Service
20 October 2021
Readings
Eckman, 2018. Constituent Services: Overview and Resources
Petersen & Eckman, 2017. Casework in a Congressional Office: Background, Rules, Laws, and Resources
Petersen & Eckman, 2019. Congressional Nominations to U.S. Service Academies: An Overview and Resources for Outreach and Management
Sidor, 2019. The Congressional Arts Caucus and the Congressional Art Competition: History and Current Practice

Sunday, 24 October Your Legislation/Outreach Project Due, Noon

Week 9 Your Project-Discuss Projects
27 October 2021
No Readings

Week 10 Feeding the Media Machines
3 November 2021
Readings
Rep Bush Tweet: https://mobile.twitter.com/coribush/status/1421338539124568067
Full Report available on Blackboard

Sunday, 12 November Your Legislation/Outreach Project Media Due, Noon

Week 11 Rest
10 November 2021
Veterans’ Day Eve
No Class, no readings
For those who are veterans and those who will be, thank you for all you do.

Week 12 Reform?, and Wrap Up—Discuss Project Media, Unanswered Questions, Next Steps
18 November 2021
Readings

Week 13 Thanksgiving Recess
24 November 2021
No class, no readings

Week 14 Project Presentations
1 December 2021
Week 15 Project Presentations
8 December 2021

Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.