BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor
Thomas S. Kahn, Esq.
Adjunct Professor
The Graduate School of Political Management
The George Washington University

Contact Information
Telephone: 202-329-4090; Email: thomaskahn56@yahoo.com
Communication
Individual meetings with the instructor must be pre-arranged appointments, ideally before or after class unless other arrangements are made. Email is almost always the best way to communicate with me although I can also be reached by phone if urgent.

Blackboard Site
A Blackboard site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructor and the students. Students can access the course 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 https://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 https://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/.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at the Irish Times in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: https://campusadvisories.gwu.edu.
Attendance Policy
Most of us have full-time jobs and these responsibilities will sometime cause students to arrive late or miss class. When this happens you must email the instructor in advance. Absences from more than two classes during the term may impact your final grade.

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation
Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

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 any/all of the following:

Dr. Steven Billet  
Director, Legislative Affairs Program  
sbillet@gwu.edu | 202-256-5153

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 oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn to work effectively with others, and to 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
This course is a requirement for the Masters of Legislative Affairs program. The goal is for the student to develop a working understanding of how the Congress functions and what motivates its Members. The course will focus on the origins, history and development of Congress as an institution. We will examine what drives legislative decision-making, and the role of committees and party leadership in the process. The course will look at procedural issues essential to understanding how Congress works such as the Rules Committee in the House, cloture in the Senate, and the Budget Act of 1974. It is impossible to look at legislative politics without discussing the issue of polarization. Finally, the President and the courts play a key role in the legislative process whether the country has united or divided government.

Discussion will be an important part of this class. Contemporary issues facing the Congress will be used to illustrate what we learn.

There will be two essays assigned by the instructor and a final take home examination.

Questions for class discussion
In order to stimulate class discussion, three questions will be provided in advance of each class based on the readings assigned for that class session. Students will be randomly called on during class to answer one or more questions. In addition, some students will be assigned in advance of class to take a side of a public debate and argue its merits. Finally, in order to stimulate class discussion, each student will submit a question based on the readings assigned for each class. That should be emailed to instructor by noon on the day of the class. We will be hearing from a number of very prominent guest lecturers who are experts on the topic of that day’s lecture. For example, Senator Chris Van Hollen and Congressman Bobby Scott (Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee) have agreed to speak to us.

Course Learning Objectives
1. The goal is for the student to develop a working understanding of how the Congress functions and what motivates its Members. Additionally, the course will introduce the student to, and increase their enthusiasm for studying other topics in the Legislative Affairs program.
2. Understand the origins, history and development of Congress as an institution.
3. Obtain an understanding of what drives legislative decision-making and the role of committees and party leadership in the process.
4. Understand why the Speaker has so much power in the House of Representatives.
5. Learn why the Senate rules are designed to protect the political minority and recent changes.
6. Gain an appreciation for the role of the President as Legislator-in-Chief and how Congress has
surrendered and delegated power to the executive branch.

7. Look at the budget and appropriation process – the one thing Congress must complete every year – and how the modern Congress makes (or doesn’t make) decisions.

8. Throughout the course we will focus on political polarization, how the modern form has developed, why it is so persistent and how it affects the legislative process. We will explore some ideas for reducing its negative effects.

9. Finally we will look at some of the internal issues Members deal with, from staff, budgets, constituent communications and ethics rules, to external issues such as campaigns, fundraising and interest group pressure

Document Citations
There will be two essays and a take home final examination. All papers and exams will be submitted by email in Microsoft Word or in .pdf format.

We will use the Chicago Style for essays, citations and bibliographies. A sample of the style can be found on the GW website at: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/. As an additional guide for a legislative course, this link is an indispensable guide for citing government documents is the "Uncle Sam: Brief Guide to Citing Government Publications, from the University of Memphis: http://www.memphis.edu/govpub/citweb.php.

PLEASE NOTE: You can lose points for failure to footnote accurately or for grammatical and spelling errors. This is a graduate course, and graduate level work requires that your work is proofread and presented in an acceptable manner. Spellcheck is not necessarily your friend – it will approve a word that is an actual word but which may be the wrong one for the context under discussion. The best policy is to have a friend or fellow classmate read through your paper for mistakes before submitting it.

Evaluation and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Learning Objectives Addressed</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Essay</td>
<td>Legislative decision making.</td>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Essay</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>Putting It all together</td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>Our graduate seminar is enlivened by the thoughtful contributions of all the students in class. You shortchange yourself and your colleagues by not being prepared or not participating in our class discussions. Organization, clarity and precision in the spoken and written word are expected of graduate level work. Thorough documentation, keen observations and critical insights demonstrate superior work.</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100%
Following is the grade score for all GSPM classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
</tr>
</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 quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93 Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89 Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation but needs some minor work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86 Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although certainly not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is viewed as unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82 You have completed the assignment but you are not meeting all of the requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79 Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76 Needs reworking, improved effort and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72 (lowest grade) Poor performance. Major errors, misspellings, problem with accuracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 70 Unacceptable performance or inability to submit the assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Please note that you may be penalized for late submissions.

**Required Text and Learning Materials**
Congress and Its Members, by Roger Davidson, Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee and Eric Schickler (15th Ed. 2016)
The House, by Robert Remini
Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process, Walter Oleszek (9th Ed. 2014)
The Partisan Divide: Congress in Crisis, Tom Davis, Martin Frost and Richard Cohen
Surviving Inside Congress, by Mark Strand, Michael Johnson and Jerome Climer (4th Ed. 2015)
The American Senate, MacNeill and Baker, 2013
Red Ink, Inside the Politics of the Budget, Wessell, 2012

**Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials**
Other readings available online at the GWU Library or on the class website
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&2.
August 28 and September 4
Topic and Content Covered: Introduction and Syllabus Review and The Origins of Congress

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Introductions and class overview. Review course expectations, assignments and final project. Introduce the subject matter. Discuss questions supplied in advance.

Why the Constitutional Convention design our system as they did? What were the great compromises? What are the enumerated powers of Congress? The early Congress—no committees, no parties.

Reading Due:
Remini: Introduction through Chapter 5.
Federalist Papers 10 and 51
Davis & Frost: Chapter 3

Week 3. September 11
Topic and Content Covered: The Institutionalization of Congress

Reading Due Today: Remini: Chapters 11-12, 15, 16-18
Davidson: Chapter 2
Strand: Chapter 1

Week 4. September 18
Topic and Content Covered: Party Leadership

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Who are the party leaders in the House and Senate? How do they control the process and direction of their chambers? What is conditional party government, the pivotal vote theory and agenda control? How do they compare?
Reading Due Today: Davidson: Chapter 6
First essay assigned: You are a third-term Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and are speaking to a group of high school students in your Congressional District. One of the students asks you the following question: “What do you do when your district feels one way about a controversial issue and you personally feel the opposite way? How do you vote?”

**Week 5. September 25**

First essay due.

**Topic and Content Covered:** Legislative Decision-Making

**Learning Objective(s) Addressed:** The two-Congresses. Classic political theory. The classic views. Rational decision-making with a political twist.

Senator Chris Van Hollen will lecture to our class at 5:30 pm in his office which is 110 Hart. I realize the start time is 30 minutes earlier than our regularly scheduled classes. While I ask each of you make your best effort to attend, no one will be penalized for arriving late.

Reading Due Today:

Davidson: Chapter 1, 5, 16

Strand: Chapter 2

Davis & Frost: Chapter 7

**Week 6. October 2**

**Topic and Content Covered:** Overview of the Senate

**Learning Objective(s) Addressed:** The Majority Leader and control of the Floor. Unanimous consent and exhaustion. Not your father’s filibuster: cloture – why the Senate requires 60 votes to do anything important. What is meant by “the Majority determines what comes to the Floor and the Minority determines what leaves it?” Why are Committees weaker in the Senate than in the House? What is the difference between the Minority in the House and the Senate? Majority obstructionism? What have Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell done to the Senate?

Reading Due Today:

Oleszek: Chapters 6-7

MacNeil and Baker: Intro, and Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10-12

Strand: Chapter 5
Week 7. Oct 9

Topic and Content Covered: **Critical Legislative Procedures in the House**

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: House Rules Committee and Control of the Floor. The House as a majoritarian institution. Conflict between committees and party leaders. How does the Majority accomplish its agenda? What is the role of the Minority in the House?

Reading Due Today: Oleszek: Chapters 4-5

Davidson: Chapter 8

Week 8. October 16

Topic and Content Covered: **Committees**

Our guest lecturer will be the Honorable Bobby Scott (D-Va) who is the Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: What are committees and what function do they serve? Why do Members select different committees?

Reading Due Today: Davidson: Chapter 7 Oleszek: Chapter 3
Strand: Chapter 4-6
Davis & Frost: Chapter 14

Week 9. October 23

Topic and Content Covered: **The President and Congress**

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: The President as Legislator-in-Chief. What is the President’s Constitutional role in the legislative process? What is his role in the budget process? United vs. Divided government. Vetoes and veto strategies. Other tools: Signing Statements and Executive Orders. Powers Congress cedes to the Executive. Oversight by the Congress over the Executive branch.

Reading Due Today:

Davidson: Chapter 10
Week 10-11. October 30 and November 6

Topic and Content Covered: The Budget Act of 1974

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: The origins of the budget law. How it works. The use and abuse of the act. What is the role of the Budget Committee, Authorizers and Appropriators? Reconciliation. Does the budget act still work? Are there better ideas? Is the current process adequate to control the budget deficits we face in 2019? How hard is it to cut the deficit?

Reading Due Today: Strand: Chapter 8

Oleszek: Chapter 2
Davidson: Chapter 14
Federal Budget Process, Chapters 4-7, Chapter 9

Red Ink, ch.2-ch.5
People’s Guide to Federal Budget, Chapters 2, 4-7

Week 12. November 13

Topic and Content Covered: Polarization

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Review the results of the 2014 mid-term election. Discuss polarization: its’ causes, the problems it is causing for governing, the solutions.

Reading Due Today:

Strand: Chapter 17
Davis & Frost: Chapters 8, 9, 10

Week 13-14. November 20 and December 4

Topic and Content Covered: Elections, Lobbying and Other Outside Pressures/Class Wrap up


Reading Due Today:

Davidson: Chapters 4 & 13
Strand: Chapter 15
Davis & Frost: Chapters 4, 5, 6
Select articles available on Blackboard