

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs

Fall 2019

August 26 – December 9, 2019

Legislative Politics

LGAF 6202.LH

3 Credits

Wednesday, 6:00-8:00 PM

Hall of States

444 N. Capitol Street, NW (check with front desk
each week for room number)

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. pressure.

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

Assignment	Learning Objectives Addressed	Due Date	Weight
First Essay	Legislative decision making.	September 25	20%
Second Essay	TBD		20%
Final Paper	Putting It all together		40%
Attendance and participation	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.		20%
Total			100%

Following is the grade score for all GSPM classes:

Grade*		Grading Standard
A	94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research and writing demonstrate superior quality.
A-	90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation but needs some minor work.
B	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.
B-	80-82	You have completed the assignment but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade)	Poor performance. Major errors, misspellings, problem with accuracy.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance or inability to submit the assignment.

*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

The Federal Budget Process, Compiled by TheCapitol.Net, 2010

A People’s Guide to the Federal Budget, National Priorities Project, 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**

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Development of committees and party leadership. Czar Reed and Joe Cannon. Growth of committees. Reorganization Act of 1946. Civil Rights and the Great Society. The rebellion against committees in the 1970s. Reagan and Congress. The first Republican revolution of 1994 and the situation today.

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

Davidson: Chapter 8

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

Oleszek: Chapter 8 & 9
Davis & Frost: Chapter 15

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**

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: The perpetual campaign. How does a Member get elected to office? What does it take? Fundraising and campaign finance laws? Interest groups and lobbyists. Grassroots pressure: Moveon.org in 2006 & 2008, the Tea Party in 2010, and the emergence of Super PACS and 501(c)(4) organizations. How does "soft money" keeps finding its way into American elections?

Reading Due Today:

Davidson: Chapters 4 & 13

Strand: Chapter 15

Davis & Frost: Chapters 4, 5, 6

Select articles available on Blackboard