

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs
Spring 2021

Congressional Committees
LGAF 6240.LH3
3 Credits

Wednesday/6-8 p.m.

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

John C. Angell

Contact Information

Phone Number: (571) 255-0901

Email Address: johnangell@email.gwu.edu

Communication

By e-mail, students can expect a response within 6 hours. I am available before class by appointment.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course 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 instructors and the students. 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/>.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at the Hall of States location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet at the fountain west of the Senate Russell building 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: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes. If a student cannot attend a class the instructor should be emailed.

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:

Casey Burgat

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

The course will cover:

1. A brief history of committees in the U.S. Congress
2. Understanding House and Senate committee jurisdictions
3. Membership on committees and the selection of committee chairman
4. Committee staff
5. The basic legislative process followed by committees:
 - Hearings
 - Subcommittee action
 - Full committee action on legislation - the markup process

- House and Senate floor and committee conference procedure
- 6. Two case studies: a review of major committee action on taxes (the “Bush tax cuts” of 2001 and “tax reform” in 2017); and health care (passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2009-2010 and efforts to “repeal and replace” in 2017)
- 7. Monitoring of House and Senate committee activity during the spring 2021 semester
- 8. Relationships between committees and House and Senate leadership and the White House
- 9. The congressional budget process: the Budget and Appropriations Committees
- 10. Oversight activities of committees and the nomination process

Course Learning Objectives

The objective of the course will be to prepare the student to analyze basic elements of House and Senate committee procedure in order to anticipate the outcome of committee action, including:

- information gathering prior to committee action
- identifying and understanding the motivations of committee members, the chairman and the ranking member
- the influence of party leadership in the House and Senate on committee action
- the influence of the political parties on committee action
- involvement of the White House and the executive branch in committee action

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Midterm			25%
Paper			35%
Oral Presentation of Paper			20%
Completion of Course Outline			10%
Attendance and Participation			10%
Total			100%

Following is the grade scale 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 work.
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 not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is viewed as unacceptable.
B- 80-82	You’ve 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 to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

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

Required Text and Learning Materials

Committees in Congress, Christopher J. Deering and Steven S. Smith

Competing Principals: Committees, Parties, and the Organization of Congress, Forrest Maltzman

Staffer: 1980 – 2015, John C. Angell (a copy of the book will be provided)

Additional Reading

Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process, Walter J. Oleszek

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.

January

Week 1

Topic and Content Covered: Introduction and discussion of topics to be covered during the semester, history of committees and committee jurisdiction

Reading due: Deering and Smith, Chapter 2

January

Week 2

Topic and Content Covered: How membership on committees is determined, how committee chairman are selected, committee staff

Reading Due: Maltzman, Chapter 3 and Deering and Smith, pages 96-108, 162-168

Topic and Content Covered: Agenda setting – the influence of committee chairman, committee members, House and Senate leadership and the White House (including negotiations outside the committee process)

February

Week 3

Topic and Content Covered: Committee hearings

February

Week 4

Topic and Content Covered: Committee markup of legislation

February

Week 5

Topic and Content Covered: House and Senate floor consideration of committee legislation

March

Week 6

Topic and Content Covered: House and Senate committee conferences

March

Week 7

Topic and Content Covered: the congressional budget process – budget committees/appropriations committees/authorizing committees

SPRING BREAK

March

Week

Topic and Content Covered: Tax and health legislation, two case studies: the 2001 “Bush Tax Cuts” and tax reform efforts in 2017; passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010 and attempts to “repeal and replace” the law in 2017.

April

Week 9

Topic and Content Covered: Committee oversight activities, the nominations process, review

April

Week 10

Topic and Content Covered: oral presentations

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.