

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs

Fall 2021

2 September-9 December 2021

Managing a Congressional Office

LGAF 6247

3 Credits

Wednesday, 6:00-8:00 PM, Eastern
Hall of the States, In Person!
Office Hours immediately after class and
by appointment

Just in case

<https://gwu.webex.com/meet/ericpetersen>

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: ericpetersen@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

Assignment	Details	Due Date	Value
Select a Member	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.	Wednesday, 9 Sep. Noon, POST TO BLACKBOARD	
The District	Assess the constituency: demographics, media, industries, strengths, challenges, and other important features a congressional office would want to know.	Wednesday, 16 Sep. Noon	10%
Office Goals	Aside from the obvious, what does the office want to achieve?	Wednesday, 30 Sep. Noon	10%
Office Budget & Structure	Prepare an office budget and staffing plan, with an accompanying justification for your choices and how those choices support office goals.	Wednesday, 14 Oct. Noon	15%
Legislation/ Outreach Project	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	Sunday, 25 Oct. Noon	20%
Legislation/ Outreach Project Media	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	Sunday, 15 Nov. Noon	20%
Project Presentation	Five minutes with the Member to explain Your Project, and its utility	Wednesday, 2, 9 Dec.	15%
Participation & Attendance	Show up. Engage.	Ongoing	10%

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

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>

Loudermilk, Myths About Congress, <https://loudermilk.house.gov/legislation/myths-about-congress.htm>

Monday, 6 September, Member Selection Due, Noon

Week 2 The Institution and the Member

8 September 2021

Readings

Polsby, 1968, “The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives,” <https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/1953331>

Salisbury & Shepsle, 1981, U.S. Congressman as Enterprise, <https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/439385>

Goldschmidt & Sinkhaus, 2018. Job Description for a Member of Congress, https://www.congressfoundation.org/storage/documents/CMF_Pubs/cmf-member-job-description.pdf

Petersen, 2012. Roles and Duties of a Member of Congress

Langhorne, 2018a. Campaign cash trumps work in Congress, ex-members say, <https://www.courierpress.com/story/news/2018/10/12/campaign-cash-trumps-work-congress-ex-members-say-secrets-hill/1457433002/>

Langhorne, 2018b. Congress doesn't live here anymore,
<https://www.courierpress.com/story/news/2018/10/14/congress-doesnt-live-here-anymore-secrets-hill/1265733002/>

Langhorne, 2018c. Scramble for office space in Congress is about status,
<https://www.courierpress.com/story/news/2018/10/16/office-space-congress-impacts-status-secrets-hill/1408904002/>

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

Congressional Management Foundation, Society for Human Resources Management, 2013. Life in Congress: The Member Perspective,

https://www.congressfoundation.org/storage/documents/CMF_Pubs/life-in-congress-the-member-perspective.pdf

Grim & Siddiqui, 2017 “Call Time For Congress Shows How Fundraising Dominates Bleak Work Life,” https://www.huffpost.com/entry/call-time-congressional-fundraising_n_2427291

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=hHetbk4LjIE>

Byron Dorgan in the Halls of Congress, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEUhtOs3VKM>

Indivisible, “How Your Member of Congress Thinks, and How to Use That to Save Democracy,”

<https://indivisible.org/resource/how-your-member-congress-thinks-and-how-use-save-democracy>

Pascrell, 2019. “Why is Congress So Dumb?,”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2019/01/11/feature/why-is-congress-so-dumb/?utm_term=.0d8c88875ea4

Cioffi 2020. “Should lawmakers be sleeping in their offices during a pandemic?,”

<https://rollcall.com/2020/08/07/should-lers-be-sleeping-in-their-offices-during-a-pandemic/>

Sunday, 26 September, Office Goals Due, Noon

Week 5 Office Rules and Resources

29 September 2021

Readings

U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on House Administration, Members' Congressional Handbook, <https://cha.house.gov/member-services/handbooks/members-congressional-handbook>

U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on House Administration, Guide to Outfitting and Maintaining an Office,

https://cha.house.gov/sites/democrats.cha.house.gov/files/documents/member_services_docs/115th%20Guide%20to%20Outfitting.pdf

Brudnick, 2019. Congressional Salaries and Allowances: In Brief

Brudnick, 2020. Members’ Representational Allowance: History and Usage

Brudnick, 2016. Senators’ Official Personnel and Office Expense Account (SOPOEA): History and Usage

Petersen, 2016a. Senate Staff Levels in Member, Committee, Leadership, and Other Offices, 1977-2016

Petersen, 2016b. House of Representatives Staff Levels in Member, Committee, Leadership, and Other Offices, 1977-2016

Week 6 Staff: Academic Perspectives and the Real World

6 October 2021

Readings

Romzek & Utter, 1997. “Congressional Legislative Staff: Political Professionals or Clerks?,” <https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/2960489>

Romzek, 2000, “Accountability of Congressional Staff,” <https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/3525650>

Crosson, Burgat, et al, 2020. Partisan Competition and the Decline in Legislative Capacity among Congressional Offices,

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jesse_Crosson2/publication/327605528_Partisan_Competition_and_the_Decline_in_Legislative_Capacity_among_Congressional_Offices/links/5e31b4c592851c7f7f0c1278/Partisan-Competition-and-the-Divide-in-Legislative-Capacity-among-Congressional-Offices.pdf

Petersen, 2021. Congressional Staff: Duties, Qualifications, and Skills Identified by Members of Congress for Selected Positions

Sherman & Palmer, 2020, “POLITICO Playbook: A peek inside the Playbook inbox: Boiling over with rage,” <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/playbook/2020/07/30/a-peek-inside-the-playbook-inbox-boiling-over-with-rage-489926>, material about House staff reacting to COVID and working on the Hill

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

Burgat, 2019, “Congressional diversity and pay: The Speaker’s data vs. Legistorm’s,”

<https://www.legbranch.org/congressional-diversity-and-pay-the-speakers-data-vs-legistorms/>

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.

Bell & Rosenthal, 2003. “From Passive to Active Representation: The Case of Women Congressional Staff,”

<https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/3525617>

Romzek & Utter, 1996. “Career Dynamics of Congressional Legislative Staff: Preliminary Profile and Research Questions,” <https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/1181667>

Hammond, 1984. “Legislative Staffs,” <https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/439394>

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

Johannes, 1983. “Congressional Casework Styles,” <https://www-jstor-org.proxygw.wrlc.org/stable/2110983>

Ognanovich, 2020. “Slam of Pleas for Help Forces Congress Members, Staff to Adjust,”

<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-tax-report/slam-of-pleas-for-help-forces-congress-members-staff-to-adjust>

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

Why Fergie and Megan Thee Stallion were brought up in Congress - CNN Video,

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2021/07/30/congressman-uses-fergalicious-fergie-in-speech-mh-orig.cnn>

House Democrat slams lawmakers 'on vacations' as eviction moratorium set to end – CNN Politics,

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/31/politics/cori-bush-eviction-moratorium-cnntv/index.html>

Cori Bush: Freshman congresswoman in national spotlight over activism to fight eviction – CNN

Politics, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/04/politics/cori-bush-eviction-protest/index.html>

Rep Bush Tweet: <https://mobile.twitter.com/coribush/status/1421338539124568067>

Congressional Management Foundation, 2021, The Future of Citizen Engagement: What Americans Want from Congress & How Members Can Build Trust, Summary,

<https://www.congressfoundation.org/projects/communicating-with-congress/public-opinion-trust-2021>

Full Report available on Blackboard

Successful Communication Strategy: Five Elements, <https://glasscock.rice.edu/blog/successful-communication-strategy-five-elements>

Social Media Etiquette for Business Owners: 25 Do's & Don'ts,

<https://www.outboundengine.com/blog/social-media-etiquette-for-business-25-dos-donts/>

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

American Political Science Association, 2019. Congressional Reform Task Force Report,

<https://www.legbranch.org/app/uploads/2021/01/APSA-Congressional-Reform-Report.pdf>, pp.1-23, 31-35, 42-47

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.