BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor - M Robert Carr
My professional training before turning to teaching in 2012 was as an attorney. Before that, I served 18 years in the US House of Representatives from the State of Michigan. I, therefore, combine an inside and outside perspective of ethics and Congress. I have served with many who appear in the writings. I have personal knowledge of the situations included in the readings and others to be discussed in class. I hope to bring some interesting details and perspectives to my students.

Contact Information
Phone Number: +1-202-251-7755 (best to text first)
Email Address: bcarr@gwu.edu

Communication
I may be reached either by text or email. Text messages are answered quickly. Emails are answered within 24 hours. I use email sorting rules based on the gwu.edu domain name. Please do not use alternate email domain names for critical communication as I may not see them. I am available for meetings by appointment, preferably one hour before class.

Blackboard Site
A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Students are expected to check the site throughout the semester. Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications. Students can access the course site at 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 the responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community are 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 is 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 studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity.

* Class will not be held on Tuesday, Sep 23rd. The time will be made up in a to-be-determined manner.
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 www.gwu.edu/~dss.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class
If we experience some 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 [fill in proximate location] 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: www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/.

Attendance Policy
Unless otherwise excused in advance, class attendance is mandatory. I expect to be notified via text (preferable) or email at least by the day of the class session. Punctuality is important as well. Similarly I expect to be notified via text if your arrival will be delayed. Finally, I will excuse the occasional early departure, if I am alerted in advance as to the cause.

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
sbiilet@gwu.edu | 202-994-1149

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.

Course Description and Overview
The importance of ethics in life seems clear, yet opaque at the same time, like the air we breathe. We generally feel that we conduct ourselves in an ethical manner. And everyday we make ethical decisions, without much thought. Though not as charitable to others or institutions, our general self-respect concludes we are ethical. Ethics is less something we do. Rather it is more something we are.

The same is true in social organizations. Groups, whether in commerce, academia or government arrive at a common consensus of ethical behavior, mostly without conscious thought or effort. It is the felt, common need of the group or entity that motivates ethical behavior both for internal cohesion and external acceptance.

The purpose of this course is to bring ethics to the surface, to critically think about it’s role both within the United States Congress and in the external context within which it operates.

Course Learning Objectives
The course will be organized around these objectives, though not necessarily the same linear sequence. As well, the course will be geared to the practical rather than metaphysical aspects of ethics generally or ethics and Congress in particular.

1. A working familiarity with the current ethics rules and systems.
2. A heightened sense for diagnosing ethical situations and dilemmas, both formal and behavioral aspects.
3. A framework for researching and resolving ethical issues.
4. An ability to contemplate ways to improve the ethical environment.

Course Requirements
A standard rubric will be used. It will be discussed and formally set in the first class session. All students will have a clear idea about the specific requirements and acceptable performance standards to work toward targeted goals. The teaching goal will be to accomplish as much of the work to be evaluated in class as possible, readings and writing excepted.

Evaluation and Grading
Components of final evaluation and grade (each will contribute one-third) are as follows.

1. Class preparation and participation.
2. Writing. Topic selection, outline, draft submission, and final presentation will be a class exercise.
3. Final, take-home exam consisting of at least four questions that will require 300 word, analytical answers.
Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade*</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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<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>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 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’ve 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 to pass) Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 70 Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.</td>
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* Students that do superior work well above and beyond the basic assignment tend to get A’s. Students that just complete the basic assignments tend to get B’s. Grades less than a B indicate a need to dramatic improvement and the work falls short of graduate school expectations. Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Required Text and Learning Materials
The following books are to be read in their entirety. I suggest reading Ariely and Thompson first and Tolchin afterwards. Class discussions will center around the course calendar item “reading due today,” but are likely to include additional book content. In other words read beyond just the “reading due today” chapters as quickly as possible.

2. *Ethics in Congress* by Dennis Thompson (Brookings, 1995) paperback
4. Other materials to be distributed via Blackboard or otherwise available online

Tentative Course Calendar
I reserve 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. When I make changes, I will notify the class via Blackboard announcements. I will also update this syllabus by posting the most current version on Blackboard. Pay attention to version numbers starting with version 3.0. As the course progresses, you will likely see versions such as 3.0.1 to versions 3.2 etc. Part of the reason is that occasionally guest speakers are able to attend and highlight aspects of the course not previously scheduled. Additionally, and somewhat
sadly, there are topical current events that beg to be discussed. And unfortunately members of Congress are unlikely to commit transgressions to suit the timing of this syllabus!

I can almost guarantee that the schedule will change, particularly toward the final weeks. So be warned to stay on top of it by reading announcements and looking at subsequent versions of the syllabus.

**Week 1 - September 1, 2015 - Survey, course administration and course content overview.**

Learning objectives: Lay the foundation for the conduct of the course and to begin familiarization of the topic and the course of study.

Readings: None.

**Week 2 - September 8, 2015 - Members of Congress and their ethical contexts.**

Learning Objectives: to begin the investigation of the institution through the eyes of its members; to understand the institution’s role in society through the practical everyday world of those who make it work.


Paper: Begin topic selection for paper.

**Week 3 - September 15, 2015 - Modes of thinking: theoretical and behavioral. Some history.**

Learning Objectives: Grasp the different frameworks for addressing ethical dilemmas and how the Congress came to address them.


**Week 4 - September 22, 2015 - More history. The mechanics: Legislation, rules and decisions.**

Learning objectives: appreciating why and how ethical standards and codes of conduct came into being and what they are.


Paper: Preliminary topic selection for paper.

**Week 5 - Sep 29, 2015 - The standards and the rules.**

Learning objectives: Gain a working familiarity with the House and Senate codes of conduct and the black-letter rules as they are currently applied.


Paper: Final topic selection for paper.
Week 5 - October 6, 2015 - Situation: constituent service.

Learning objectives: Identifying the role of a member of Congress in the arena of service to individual constituents (including corporate entities) and the special difficulties it poses to ethical considerations.

Readings: Tolchin, Glass Houses, Chapter 4. Thompson, Ethics in Congress, Chapters 4 & 5. Fred Bernstein, "A Congress for the Many, or the Few?" (New York Times, Sep. 8, 2012) [http://nyti.ms/1vJqDZ9](http://nyti.ms/1vJqDZ9) and the letters to the editor on this piece Sep. 14, 2014 [http://nyti.ms/1uulwMa](http://nyti.ms/1uulwMa).

Paper: Submit outline/synopsis of paper.

Week 6 - October 13, 2015 - Situation: campaigns, politics of ethics (ethics as a political weapon).

Learning objectives: to understand how institutional ethics become embroiled in campaigns and political battles for power and control; to gain a sense of the appropriateness of such use.

Readings: Tolchin, Glass Houses, Chapters 5 to 7.

Paper: Expect to report on progress of papers.

Week 7 - October 20, 2015 - Enforcement: the formal structure.

Learning objectives: Identify the functions that the committees of Congress, including the Office of Congressional Ethics play in the enforcement of Congressional ethics standards and rules.


Week 8 - October 27, 2015 - Enforcement: The media and the watchdogs.

Learning objectives: to understand the roles that the media and government watchdog groups play in the enforcement of Congressional ethics.

Readings: CREW's “Most Corrupt” for 2012 and 2013. Other readings to be assigned.

Paper: Expect to report on progress of papers.

Week 9 - November 3, 2015 - Situation: hospitality, travel and gifts.

Learning objectives: to understand the individual and institutional dilemmas posed when the ordinary relational transactions between people becomes inappropriate and to understand the role these play in the education of a member of Congress.

Readings: TBD. Additional material will be posted to Blackboard.
Week 10 - November 10, 2015 - Situation:

Learning objectives: Gain a working familiarity with the House and Senate codes of conduct and the black-letter rules as they are currently applied.

Readings: House and Senate ethics “highlights” and the respective ethics manuals.

Week 11 - November 17, 2015 - Review of course content and discussion of papers in progress.

Learning objectives: Tie the various elements of the course together and to give an opportunity for discussion of papers before they go to final. Assignments will be made for reading and critiquing papers.

Readings: TBD (but suggest reviewing previously assigned readings).

Week 12 - November 24, 2015 - Presentation of papers and discussion.

Each assigned class member will give an 5 minute oral summary of their paper to be followed by 10 minutes for questions and discussion to be lead by another assigned class member. Note: it will be difficult to keep strictly within these time limits and as a result this session will likely go longer than the usual two hours.

Week 13 - December 1, 2015 - Presentation of papers and discussion.

Each assigned class member will give an 5 minute oral summary of their paper to be followed by 10 minutes for questions and discussion to be lead by another assigned class member. Note: it will be difficult to keep strictly within these time limits and as a result this session will likely go longer than the usual two hours.
Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, guest presentations, 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.