

# **POLS 360-15: CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENCY**

Summer 2009, Term I

Mondays & Wednesdays 6:00-9:40pm

University Center room 206 (Greenville) OR Jackson Library room 300 (main campus)

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Office Hours: Mondays, before and after class

*E-mail is the preferred way to reach me, and I will respond quickly. Students are welcome to leave messages for me on my office phone or call Lander's UCG office at (864) 250-8920. I am available immediately before and after class and am happy to make individual appointments with students.*



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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the legislative and executive branches of the American national government by examining their constitutional foundations and institutional designs. The course also looks at Congressional and presidential procedures in the lawmaking and policy-making process and assesses Congressional and presidential power over time. The course overviews how both institutions interact institutionally as well as how they interact with the American public and society in electoral processes.

*Catalog Description:* An examination of the structures and politics of the two central institutions of the American political system.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

After taking this course, the student will be able to:

- *Develop* a theoretical and practical understanding of the structure, functions, and dynamics of Congress and the presidency.
- *Explain* the institutional workings of Congress and the presidency and how both relate to other parts of the federal system as well as to the public and U.S. society.
- *Apply* skills of political analysis to these institutions and find improvement in their ability to communicate orally and in writing.
- *Assess* solutions to dominant policy-making problems.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

- Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszak and Frances E. Lee. 2007. *Congress and Its Members*. 11th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press
- Pfiffner, James P. 2008. *The Modern Presidency*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.
- All assigned articles, essays and book chapters posted on Lander Blackboard, or sent through Blackboard to student's e-mail accounts.

The textbooks are available at Lander's Bearcat Shop and online (especially as used copies). All other assigned readings are posted on Lander Blackboard.

**GRADING**

- Internet Research Assignment 5%
- 4 Quizzes 15%
- Film Review Essay (3 pages) 15%
- Mid-Term Exam 20%
- Class Participation 10%
- Final Exam 35%

Students are graded on the level of understanding they demonstrate. In all written assignments students should answer questions completely, providing facts and evidence, and constructing sound arguments that provide analysis and show critical thinking. Below is a breakdown of grades by percentage of points earned on assignments:

- **A** 90-100% excellent understanding
- **B** 80-89% good understanding
- **C** 70-79% satisfactory understanding
- **D** 60-69% poor understanding
- **F** below 60% marginal understanding

**ASSIGNMENTS**

An **Internet research assignment** asks students to answer questions using official U.S. government websites as well as those of respected think tanks in Washington, D.C. The objectives of this assignment are for students to (a) become more familiar with various functions of Congress and the presidency, (b) which persons currently serve as top-level officials, and (c) stimulate interest in using the Internet as a research tool.

**Quizzes** will be given about once a week to assess how well students are grasping major course topics. They will usually consist of five questions covering main topics from assigned readings for the day or previous class material. If a quiz is given when a student is absent, a grade of zero is given. Students with 1 absence (or less) may drop their lowest 2 quizzes.

Students will write a **film review essay** analyzing a movie that examines the presidency or Congress and evaluating how well the movie explains the governmental roles and institutional powers as well as the of the relationship of the president or Congress to society and the American public. All movies to be reviewed must be approved by the instructor. Such movies might include those listed below:

- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i> | <i>The American President</i> |
| <i>In the Line of Fire</i>          | <i>State of Play</i>          |
| <i>Air Force One</i>                | <i>Independence Day</i>       |
| <i>Dave</i>                         | <i>W.</i>                     |
| <i>All the President's Men</i>      | <i>Primary Colors</i>         |
| <i>JFK</i>                          | <i>Nixon</i>                  |
| <i>Frost/Nixon</i>                  |                               |

These essays will be graded on their coverage of substantive content and analysis as well as their structure, organization, and use of grammar. More details about this assignment—for example, writing style and citation method—will be provided in class.

I recommend using the **Lander University Writing Center** in LC 347 for assistance with the briefing paper. Visit <http://www.lander.edu/engfl/writing/writingcenter-home.html> for more information or call 388-8250 to set up an appointment. Additional help may be received by contacting Lander's **Academic Success Center** at 388-8817. The ASC is located on the third floor of the Learning Center.

A **mid-term exam and final exam** will consist of some multiple-choice questions, but primarily be composed of short answer and essay-style questions covering course material.

Exams will be cumulative and should display a mastery of information and concepts from assigned readings and class discussions. All students are required to take the Final Exam.

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION & COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

Students are expected to be present for all classes and to complete assigned readings prior to class meetings. Students should come to class prepared to discuss all assigned material and are strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions. Since this is a *seminar-style class*, it is vital that students actively engage in class discussions because it will help you (and others) better understand course material. Participation amounts to 10% of the final grade.

The design of this course assumes students have some basic understanding of American government. If you have not taken *POLS 101: American National Government*, please see me immediately to get recommendations for catching up with supplementary reading.

Students are also expected to keep up with major current events in American politics. Learn about national politics by reading *The New York Times* and/or *The Washington Post*. Other sources of news are encouraged such as (a) watching an evening news program, (b) reading news magazines in print or online, and (c) listening to National Public Radio (NPR). Other resources are available online and in the Jackson Library. I will occasionally send e-mails to students' Lander e-mail accounts with reminders about assignments. Therefore, students should check their Lander e-mail accounts *regularly*.

### **STUDENT CONDUCT:**

- Students who engage in behavior disruptive to the learning process will be asked to leave the classroom. This includes (but is not limited to) talking at inappropriate times, sleeping, use of tobacco products, eating food, failure to turn off a cell phone, discourtesy to faculty or fellow students, and obscene language or gestures.
- Depending upon the nature of the offense, students may be required to see a member of the University student affairs staff before returning to class.
- Any absence due to the obstruction of academic instruction (whether asked to leave the class or meeting with student affairs) results in a student being counted *absent*.

### **ATTENDANCE**

- Class begins promptly at **6:00pm** and students are accountable for all learning that takes place. Students are expected to attend all classes and are responsible for all coursework, lectures, announcements, and assignments whether present or not.
- After missing 20% of classes (**2 classes**), a student's final grade will be lowered three points per subsequent absence.

### **LATE POLICY & MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS:**

- Students will be allowed to take make-up exams or turn in assignments late without penalty *only* in cases of extraordinary circumstances such as an illness or family emergency. Students should make every effort to inform the professor about such circumstances *before* the day of the scheduled exam or when assignment deadline.
- In these causes, the burden of proof rests with the student, and the decision to give a make-up exam is within the professor's discretion.
- Written assignments will be collected in class, typically after the role is called.
- Assignments turned in after the deadline (without a prior approved excuse from the instructor) will receive a zero (0).
- Assignments must be submitted directly to the professor unless otherwise directed.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:** Lander University is reliant upon all members of its academic community to maintain proper standards of honesty. Therefore, I will strongly uphold the Academic Honor Code and any evidence of academic dishonesty or

plagiarism will result in my pursuit of the strongest punishment—i.e. failing the course—under the guidelines explained in the *Lander University Student Handbook*.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** If you have now or develop during this semester a physical or learning disability and you want me to make reasonable accommodations for that, you must contact the Lander University **Student Wellness Center** at 388-8885 or [studentwellness@lander.edu](mailto:studentwellness@lander.edu). Once the Wellness Center has received appropriate documentation, they will inform your instructors.

**INCLEMENT WEATHER:** In case of adverse weather, refer to the University's adverse weather policy. Realize that in the case of inclement weather, I do not expect you to risk your personal safety to get to class.

NOTE: *With reference to the Academic Honor Code, attendance regulations, disability services, inclement weather, and any other university guidelines, please refer to the procedures and rules outlined in the Student Handbook, available at <http://www.lander.edu/calendar/handbook.pdf>.*

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### **MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**

American politics and our political institutions are a fascinating subject constantly in the news, but not always adequately understood. An appreciation for American history and knowledge about the actors and processes involved in American politics will build a greater understanding. We will discuss the constitutional origins of both the Congress and presidency and as well as discuss the challenges that confront these institutions today. Some views that you have at the beginning of the semester may be challenged. I seek to create an environment in which students rigorously examine the readings and apply current events to course topics.

While reading assigned material, students should constantly ask themselves these questions:

- *What is the major theme or purpose of this writing?*
- *What is the argument and how compelling is it?*
- *What relevant historical events, concepts and information apply?*
- *How can the readings be related together?*

Lectures will be used to explain complex material and raise questions to consider, but I hope students will generously participate in discussions to provide new insights about how international politics works and why various decisions are reached. Active learning can increase our general interest and understanding. With class discussions, I hope students will leave the course with the ability to think critically about the challenges faced by policymakers and apply the concepts we learn to make policy assessments and recommendations.

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**IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER**

- Internet research assignment due Monday, May 25
- Mid-Term Exam Wednesday, June 3
- Film Review Essay due Wednesday, June 17
- Final Exam Thursday, June 25

*Please always feel free to ask me questions about assignments and expectations. Students should bring the syllabus and the day's required readings to each class.*

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**COURSE SCHEDULE\***

*\*Subject to change with prior notice by the professor.*

(BB) = posted on Lander Blackboard

(DOL) = Davidson, Oleszek and Lee (authors of *Congress and Its Members*)

*The following Course Schedule gives an overview of main topics we will consider each week. and all assigned readings. Students are expected to have read assigned material and bring questions and examples of how current events relate to the course.*

**PART I: THE PRESIDENCY**

**Week 1: Origins & Powers of the Presidency**

- May 18 Course Introduction & Syllabus Overview  
 Constitutional Origins  
 The U.S. Constitution, Article II and Amendments XII, XX, XXII, and XXV (pp. 296-301 of the Pfiffner book)  
*Federalist No. 69* [excerpted] (BB)  
*Federalist No. 70* [excerpted] (BB)  
 Presidential Power and Roles of the President  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 1 – The Presidency: Origins and Powers, pp. 1-16
- May 20 The Electorate, the News Media, and “Going Public”  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 2 – The President and the Public, pp. 19-54  
 Running the White House: The President’s Personal Staff  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 3 – The White House Staff and Organization, pp. 58-95

**Week 2: The White House and the Institutional Presidency**

- May 25 The Institutional Presidency: Executive Office of the President and Cabinet  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 4 – The Institutional Presidency, pp. 100-117  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 5 – The Cabinet and the Executive Branch, pp. 120-146  
**\*\*\*Internet Research Assignment due**
- May 27 Analyzing Presidential Power  
**\*\*\*Students will be assigned ONE of the following groups of readings**  
 (1) The Power of the Presidency (and Vice Presidency)  
 Barton Gellman and Jo Becker, “ANGLER: The Cheney Vice Presidency.” *The Washington Post*, June 24-27, 2007. A1.  
 (BB) [read the series introduction, part 1 & part 2]  
 \*see <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/cheney/> for more info.  
 Garry Wills, “Two Presidents Are Worse Than One.” *The New York Times*, January 26, 2008. (BB)  
 (2) The Debate Over Wiretapping  
 Bob Barr, “Presidential Snooping Damages the Nation.” *Time*, Jan. 9,

2006. p. 34 (BB)  
 Charles Krauthammer, "How do You Think we Catch the Bad Guys?"  
*Time*, Jan. 9, 2006. p. 35. (BB)  
 U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, "The Need to Roll Back Presidential Power  
 Grabs." *The New York Review of Books*, May 14, 2009. (BB)  
 (3) Presidential Signing Statements  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 6 – The President and Congress, pp. 157-161  
 ABA Task Force Report on Presidential Signing Statements  
<http://www.abanet.org/op/signingstatements/>

**Week 3: Working with the Other End of Pennsylvania Avenue**

- June 1 Presidential-Congressional Relations and Presidential Leadership  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 6 – The President and Congress, pp. 150-197
- June 3 **Mid-Term Exam**
- American National Security Policy: A White House-Centered System  
 Pfiffner, Chapter 7 –The President and National Security, pp. 203-  
 212; 217-222; 243-248

**PART II: THE CONGRESS**  
**THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND U.S. SENATE**

**Week 4: The Evolution of the Modern Congress and Congressional Elections**

- June 8 The Constitutional Basis for Congress and Evolution of Congress  
 DOL, Chapter 1 – The Two Congresses, pp. 3-11  
 DOL, Chapter 2 – Evolution of the Modern Congress, pp. 13-38  
 Congressional Campaigns and Elections  
 DOL, Chapter 4 – Making It: The Electoral Game, pp. 92-115
- June 10 "The Electoral Connection" and the Lawmaking Process  
 DOL, Chapter 3 – Going for It: Recruitment and Candidacy, pp. 58-80  
 David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven:  
 Yale University Press, 1974. Excerpted from pages 5-8; 25-28;  
 49-62; 75-77. (BB)  
 Congressional Rules & Procedures  
 DOL, Chapter 8 – Congressional Rules and Procedures, pp. 237-264

**Week 5: Congressional Leadership and the Committee System**

- June 15 Congressional Leadership  
 DOL, Chapter 6 – Leaders and Parties in Congress, pp. 155-157 and  
 170-184  
 Congressional Committees and Subcommittees  
 DOL, Chapter 7 – Committees: Workshops of Congress, pp. 197-211  
 and 216-225
- June 17 Congressional Representation  
 DOL, Chapter 5 –Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles, pp. 117-  
 136  
 DOL, Chapter 16 – The Two Congresses and the American People,  
 pp. 488-491  
 \*\*\***Film Review Essay due**

**Week 6: Presidential-Congressional Relations**

June 22      Policymaking and Legislative-Executive Cooperation  
Which branch has more power? How do they cooperate and conflict?  
DOL, Chapter 10 – Congress and the President, pp. 325-331  
DOL, Chapter 14 – Congress, Budgets, and Domestic Policymaking,  
pp. 417-436

June 25      **Final Exam** [at the same time in the usual location]