Administrative Unit: History and Social Sciences Department

Course Prefix and Number: POSC 350

Course Title: Legislative Process

Number of: Credit Hours: 3 Lecture Hours: 3 Laboratory Hours: 0

Catalog Description: Study of Congress, its structure, procedures, role, and impact in American Government. Prerequisite: POSC 111. Offered even Fall.

Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s): POSC 111.

Text(s): Most current editions of the following:

Dodd and Oppenheimer, Congress Reconsidered. C Q Press.


Any text appropriate for a course in legislative process.

Course Objectives:

• To understand the impact of Congress in the American policy-making process.
• To assess the impact of external and internal factors on the American legislative process.
• To understand how Congress interacts with the other branches of government.
• To understand the basic legislative structures and processes.

Measurable Learning Outcomes

• Understand the historical development of Congressional power and responsibilities.
• Explain the system of elections for members of Congress.
• Understand the essential Congressional structures
  • Committees and subcommittees
  • Leadership
  • Norms of behavior
• Understand the basic legislative process (how a bill becomes a law)
  • Budgetary process
• Explain outside influences on Congress
  • Interest Groups
  • Parties
  • Other branches of government (executive, judiciary, bureaucracy)
• Understand why Congress is often reactive rather than proactive.

Topical Outline (major areas of coverage):

Note: A significant writing component is required for this course. The requirement may be satisfied by requiring students to write a single type-written paper of twelve or more pages, properly cited, or by multiple assignments of similar length.

- The Development of the American Legislatures
  - Development of structures
  - Development of rules
  - Development of parties
- The Election of Legislators
  - Typical winners
  - Districting and apportionment
  - Primaries and general election rules
  - Campaigning and fund-raising
- Organization and Power
  - Leadership
  - Parties and other factions
  - Committees (structures, membership, responsibilities)
  - Legislative bureaucracy (Congressional Budget Office, Library of Congress, etc.)
  - Rules and norms of behavior
- Congress and the President
  - President as legislator
  - Veto
  - Executive/Legislative cooperation and competition
- Congress and the Courts
  - Judicial review
  - Courts as referee between executive and legislative branches
- Congress and organized interests (lobbying, etc)
- The Legislative “game” (how a bill becomes a law)
- The major criticism of Congress

Material from this course may be tested on the Major Field Test (MFT) administered during the Culminating Experience course for the degree.

Recommended maximum class size for this course: 30

Library Resources: Online databases are available at http://www.ccis.edu/offices/library/resources.asp. You may access them from off-campus using your eServices login and password when prompted.
NOTE: The intention of the master syllabus is to provide an outline of the contents of this course, as specified by the faculty of Columbia College, regardless of who teaches the course, when it is taught or where it is taught. Faculty members teaching this course for Columbia College are expected to facilitate learning pursuant to the course objectives and cover the subjects listed in the topical outline. However, instructors are also encouraged to cover additional topics of interest so long as those topics are relevant to the course’s subject. The master syllabus is, therefore, prescriptive in nature but also allows for a diversity of individual approaches to course material.

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