

**PSC 221**  
**Congress and the Legislative Process,**  
**Spring 2016**  
Monday-Wednesday, 9:40 – 11:10 am  
Arts & Letters Room 308

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**Course Description**

The key objective of this class is for students to develop a better understanding of key dilemmas that surround the U.S. Congress and all complex institutions. We will study how the specific rules and procedures of the Congress attempt to cope with recurring problems. What challenges for the U.S. Congress are truly “new”? What has pretty much stayed the same? Our key case example will be the 2010 Dodd-Frank law regulating Wall Street after the 2008 global financial crash. A second class focus will be to reflect on the state of Democratic-Republican polarization on Capitol Hill, and its consequences both for the U.S. Congress and for the leadership of the Republican party. Lastly, we will have some class speakers, and one possible field trip, to help give us more insights into local Illinois legislatures.

**Required Readings**

*Government’s End: Why Washington Stopped Working.* Jonathan Rauch. PublicAffairs, 1999.

*Congress & Its Members.* Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek. Fourteenth (used) or Fifteenth (new) Edition, either one, no preference, page #s for both given in the syllabus. CQ Press.

Additional readings and lecture notes will be available online through D2L.

**Grades**

Your grade for this class will be determined as follows:

PERCENT

DUE

Attendance & Participation  
2-3 page theory paper  
Midterm  
8-10 page final paper  
Final

20%  
10% April 25  
20% April 27  
25% June 1  
25% June 8

8:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Breaking these down:

**Attendance & Participation (20%):** Different scholars disagree over what “political science” means. But a key part of the discipline includes the public discussion of key issues facing we the people. That is what political science amounts to, at one level: a bunch of people sitting around debating issues of public significance (but making careful use of definitions and evidence to support their arguments). For this reason, while I will lecture a lot, my course depends heavily on student input. I assign a high portion of your grade to how much you contribute to in-class

discussion. I will eventually learn all my attending students' names, and something about their attitudes towards Congress. I also try and tailor my presentations to the interests of my class. But this doesn't work if students do not come prepared or do not speak up.

I do not pop-quiz; I do "pop-question." I will not assign unannounced quizzes to test whether you are doing the reading. But to get a sense of everyone's preparation, I may "call out" random students with questions about the day's readings. I do recognize that students have extracurricular and other out-of-class commitments that occasionally prevent them from having a specific reading prepared in time. For that reason, up to three times this quarter, you can approach me before the start of class and indicate, "I didn't read it yet." I won't call on you that day.

*Perfect attendance "amnesty":* I have high standards for an "A" or a "B" in participation. If you attend but never speak and cannot answer direct questions about the material, that is a "D" grade. In general, I do not care if you miss a class or two, as long as you are a regular and active participant the rest of the time. *If you are a non-talker*, there are three ways to work on this part of your grade: 1) office hours visits; 2) help update the D2L website by sending the instructor links to interesting news stories that illustrate class concepts; 3) perfect attendance. If you show up to every single class, even if you never speak, I will assume some learning and effort has taken place on your part, and you will get a B. Miss a class for any reason, and you cannot get this "safe harbor" grade. This includes medical, family and all other emergencies, because there is a way to make up missed classes. For classes you have missed, you can "recover" participation by coming to office hours, and showing that you have a clear understanding of the material that you were not present for. I will ask you some questions to check that you have mastered it.

**Short Theory Paper (10%):** In the weeks leading up to the midterm, I will give you several possible topics to select from, and you must write a short essay involving Congress and the theory we have been building from *Government's End*. This 2-3 page paper is due as a hard copy in-class on April 25 (papers submitted after class will see a deduction). We will discuss your answers in class, to help prepare for the midterm on April 27.

**Midterm (20%) and Final Exam (25%):** The midterm and final will consist of terms-to-identify and essay questions (two each for the midterm and the final). I will provide you with a list of all the possible terms-to-ID in advance. On the exam, I will randomly select some of these terms for you to define. This system can be a blessing or a snare. If you pace yourself over the next months, the exams should be no problem. But this system can lull students into procrastination and then punish slackers. Try and memorize all these words the night before and you may be in some trouble. For the final exam, I will release a list of possible essay questions a week or two in advance (the midterm questions will not be released in advance).

Lastly, for the midterm and the final alike, you may bring to the examination one hand-written 8 ½ x 11 , double-sided sheet with notes to help you with the essay portion only. This sheet must be your own work, and will be collected along with the examination.

I allow for makeup exams only in the case of documented hardships (a medical emergency, a sports trip you notified me about during the first week, a loss in the family, etc). If you have any doubts about what constitutes a "hardship," contact me in advance about it. Without a documented exemption, you cannot make up the final without a significant deduction.

**Final Paper (25%):** Due last day in class. One of the central themes of Jonathan Rauch's *Government's End* is a complicated argument why United States government has reached its "end," or why government will cease to be as innovative and creative at problem-solving in the

future as it has been in the past, save for a process Rauch calls “radical incrementalism.” Rauch’s central focus is on the increasing power of the Washington D.C. interest group community to block all major changes to the status quo. On the other hand, this book predates the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the Dodd-Frank law. Is Rauch’s argument outdated, or does it still seem accurate, or is too early to say, and why? Or what about other developments (which are, to be sure, anticipated in Rauch’s account) - what does the growing partisanship we have observed during the Obama years mean for Rauch’s argument? Or, something else entirely. Your evaluation of Rauch must be based on the U. S. Congress during the Obama administration (so 2009 – present). You must investigate some law that has been passed, or the early stages of a piece of legislation, or an analysis of the interest group community, or the leadership of either party – the *exact* way you want to tie in Rauch to your research, is up to you, and wholly depends on your own interests. The paper must involve original research outside of the assigned class readings. Three websites I recommend are *CQ Weekly*, *Politico* and *The Hill*.

### **Additional Course Policies**

*Special needs:* Any student who has special needs should contact the instructor immediately so that arrangements can be made as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to accommodate such needs.

### **Academic Honesty**

Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the Student Handbook or by visiting Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>). DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution.

## Principal Readings Schedule

*Jonathan Rauch text is RAUCH; Congress and Its Members by Davidson / Oleszek and others is DO. There are additional D2L readings online, not all highlighted below and more will be added as the class proceeds, so make sure to check D2L. I will reference these in class for you.*

	Basic Topic of Class	Readings
Mar 28	Class Introduction	None
Mar 30	Congress as an Institution	RAUCH ch. 1, DO ch. 1, Lizza, "A House Divided" (D2L)
Apr 4	<b>Guest Speaker: Cook County Commissioner John Fritchey</b>	Start RAUCH chs. 2-3
Apr 6	Dilemmas of Self-Interested Behavior	Mayer and Canon ch. 1 (D2L)
Apr 11	Case Example: the U.S. Economic Crisis  <i>* 2-3 page paper topics assigned *</i>	<i>This American Life</i> radio episode, "The Giant Pool of Money" (link on D2L)
Apr 13	Defining Key Values of Congress <i>(* possible field trip to City Hall *)</i>	RAUCH ch. 4-5
Apr 18	Modern Dilemmas of Congress	RAUCH ch. 6; <i>CQ Researcher</i> , Dodd-Frank Primer (D2L)
Apr 20	Other Modern Dilemmas of Congress	RAUCH ch. 7-8
Apr 25	Midterm Review; Review Short Papers <i>* 2-3 page paper due start of class *</i>	RAUCH ch. 9-10
Apr 27	<b>MIDTERM</b>	
May 2	<b>Guest Speaker: Illinois State Representative Robert Martwick</b>	None
May 4	Constitutional Origins	DO ch. 1-2 ; <i>*more readings below TBD*</i>
May 9	Constitutional Origins II	Article I of U.S. Constitution
May 11	Congressional Committees I	DO ch. 7
May 16	Congressional Committees II	Review DO ch. 7
May 18	Rules and Procedures I	DO ch. 8
May 23	Rules and Procedures II	Review DO ch. 8 ; CRS report, "Filibusters and Cloture in the Senate" (BB)
May 25	Congressional Leadership I	DO ch. 6
May 30	<b>** class canceled, Memorial Day **</b>	
June 1	Wrap Up Class Themes; Discuss Final Papers <i>* final paper due *</i>	None, work on final paper
June 8	<b>FINAL EXAM ,</b> 8:30 – 10:45 am	

## SPELLING / GRAMMAR MANDATES FOR THE FINAL PAPER

Students are often unsure just what particular instructors are looking for, when they stress good writing standards. My primary mandate is that students must leave time to review and do basic proofreading / formatting on their final papers, if they wish to avoid a deduction. So here are my automatic red flags, or “Zachary Cook’s Unforgiveable Errors,” any of which, each time they are committed, will see an automatic half-letter deduction, up to a total of a full grade. (In other words, if you turn in an A paper but commit three of the errors below, or any one of them three times, your grade will fall from an A to an A- to a B+ to a B. I’ll stop after one full letter.)

No matter how good your underlying ideas are, a well-argued but poorly-written paper is like showing up at a job talk with a glowing resume but with hair unwashed and in a ripped tee. People are not going to look beneath, and will usually assume you haven’t put sufficient thought into your ideas, if it looks like you skipped the presentation.

- 1) If it comes up, the President’s name is Barack Obama. Not “Barrack Obama.” Not “Barak Obama.” Every year I have poli sci majors who can’t spell his name. Also, my name is Zachary Cook, not “Zachery Cook.” Last, don’t misspell your own name.
- 2) Don’t misspell the names of any of our authors assigned for the course, or any of the class reading titles. Rauch, Davidson, Oleszek, etc.
- 3) Don’t misspell any word that could have been caught by the quick use of a spellchecker. A widespread pattern of using the wrong word in the wrong place (*their* for *there*, *the Untied States of America*, *the pubic interest*, *loosing* for *losing* – my favorite was the student who once submitted *Silicone Valley*) may see a deduction, but you can get that back with a re-write. Any flat misspellings, on the other hand, are worth an irreversible deduction. Make sure you finish your paper in time to use a spellchecker (but remember it won’t always save you from misspelling a text or an author’s name – see #2 above).
- 4) Apostrophes only are used for possession (“Joe’s paper”); they never mean the plural. Many students use them to signify the plural, like *American’s from all over the world have gathered*. This is never right. It is *Americans from all over the world have gathered*. A clear ongoing attempt to avoid committing Error #4 by omitting all apostrophes, from anywhere in your paper, will also get a deduction.
- 5) I don’t have any requirements about margin size, double vs. single-spacing, page numbering, etc., but I do deduct if the **SIZE** or the **style of your font changes** during the paper. This always signals cutting-and-pasting that the student didn’t bother taking the time to correct (and it’s always an easy tell, for me to look for signs of plagiarism!) I have no problem with you quoting long passages from other texts or articles if it is appropriate, but if you leave a “fill” over any of your paper, including the Works Cited, that is an automatic deduction. Finally, [random hyperlinks in the main body of the paper \(usually again bad cutting and pasting\) are unacceptable and merit a deduction.](#)
- 6) Do include a professionally-formatted Works Cited / References page at the end of your 8-10 page paper. I accept multiple styles – AP, Chicago, just make sure it looks good. (Again, careful with hyperlinks here. Website pages have to be referenced properly. It is never adequate to simply cut-and-paste a URL for a paper citation. DePaul’s Writing Center website has good models for how to properly cite a website).

### **TERMS TO ID (MIDTERM ONLY)**

1. empirical theory
2. normative theory
3. politics
4. public good
5. collective action dilemma
6. rational choice theory
7. institution
8. Mancur Olson
9. information costs
10. describe, in three sentences, some of the root causes of the U.S. mortgage crisis (see “Giant Pool of Money”)
11. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
12. proprietary trading
13. the Dodd-Frank act
14. congressional responsibility (see notes)
15. congressional responsiveness (notes)
16. congressional civility (notes)
17. congressional efficiency (notes)
18. hyperpluralism
19. Rauch’s “radical incrementalism” (see ch. 10)
20. One or two possible terms TBD

### **FINAL TERMS TO ID (INCLUDES ALL OF MIDTERM ABOVE, PLUS THE FOLLOWING):**

21. Speaker of the House
22. Senate majority leader
23. conference committee
24. Appropriations Committee
25. seniority system
26. Rules Committee
27. describe three different types of legislation (see Box 8-1)
28. unanimous consent agreement
29. budget reconciliation
30. cloture
31. Majority Whip
32. standing committee
33. markup
34. suspension-of-the-rules
35. discharge petition
36. Budget Committee
37. Committee of the Whole
38. Filibuster
39. One or two possible terms TBD