

PSC 213W – The U.S. Congress

Instructor: Michael Peress (mperess@mail.rochester.edu, OH: M 3-4:30 or by appointment)

Time: Tuesday, 2:00-4:40, Morey 502

Course Description:

This course offers an overview of the legislative branch of the United States government. We will discuss the electoral process, the nature of representation, legislative organization, the committee system, floor procedure, congressional parties, and inter-branch relations. We will examine theories of lawmaking and the impact of institutional and electoral rules on legislative behavior and outcomes.

Course Requirements:

There will be three major requirements for this course. First, attendance and class participation are mandatory. You are expected to attend each class, and you should let me

know when you will not be attending. In addition, you are expected to have read the required material. The reading list (subject to modification at my discretion) can be viewed at, http://www.rochester.edu/College/faculty/mperess/usc2011/Course_Readings.htm. Each week, I will designate some students as discussion leaders. I will allow students to volunteer for particular readings, but in the absence of volunteers, I will rotate through the students alphabetically by first name. Each student should lead discussion at least once during the semester. Participation counts for 40% of your final grade.

Two short papers (3-4 pages in length), related to the course readings, will be assigned throughout the class. They will be due in class. Combined, these short papers will count for 20% of your final grade.

You will be required to write one research paper (10-15 pages in length).¹ I will make some suggestions for research topics later in the course. You must gain my approval for your topic before you begin. The main requirement is that you go beyond the class readings and perform some amount of original research. Some useful resources can be found at http://www.rochester.edu/College/faculty/mperess/usc2011/Web_Resources.htm. A 2-4 page proposal will be due on March 15th. In addition, you will discuss your research paper with the class for 5-7 minutes, on April 26th. The final paper will be due on April 26th. I would highly recommend that you visit the writing center with a draft of your paper. The research paper will count for 40% of your final grade.

¹ This is based on 12 point font and double spacing.

Please note that you must complete all of these requirements in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

Readings:

I recommend that you purchase (or at least have access to) the following books,
Stewart, Charles III (2001). *Analyzing Congress*.
Oleszek, Walter J. (2007). *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. 7th Edition.
If you choose not to purchase these books, they will be available on course reserve in the library. I will assign some readings from these books throughout the semester, and these books will also serve as useful references for the remaining readings. I will provide web links to all other readings on the syllabus.

Course Schedule:

The course schedule can be found on the main course web site (<http://www.rochester.edu/College/faculty/mperess/usc2011.html>). I will update the course schedule throughout the semester, so make sure you check the course schedule online before preparing for class.

