

POLI 100B: The U.S. Congress

University of California San Diego | Winter 2020 | Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00-12:20pm

Recurring zoom link: [REDACTED] (requires UCSD authentication)

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Course Description

The United States Congress is the most studied branch of U.S. Government, and it is central to our understanding of policy, elections, and representative democracy. The purpose of this course is to examine two fundamental questions: (1) what do members of Congress do and why and (2) how do the individual and collective actions of members of Congress explain national policy? We will examine the process of legislating as well as the role of political parties, leaders, and interest groups. Throughout, we will study how Congress has evolved and consider its effectiveness as an institution.

Zoom Information and Class Attendance

This course will be taught remotely and is designed to accommodate both synchronous and asynchronous students. A complete course calendar can be found at the end of this page. Class meetings will include three different types; the course calendar specifies what type each class will be:

1. **Interactive Classes (synchronously offered, ungraded and recorded).** Most classes on Thursdays are “live” classes that will be interactive. These classes will be a combination of mini-lectures, Zoom breakout room discussions and problem-solving, and class-wide discussions. The material in these interactive classes are independent of the lecture recordings; this means that *the material we cover on*

Thursdays will be in addition to the material we cover on Tuesdays. Attendance will not be taken and will not count towards your grade, but you will be responsible for the material in these classes (either attending synchronously or viewing asynchronously).

2. **Lecture Recordings (pre-recorded).** All classes on Tuesdays (besides the first class) are intended for lectures that are pre-recorded and available on Canvas. All lecture recordings and accompanying slides will be made available on Canvas to watch by the date of the lecture as specified in the course calendar. While all lectures will be “asynchronous,” you are strongly encouraged to follow the course calendar and view the lectures as scheduled, since each class will build upon previous material.

Note: The Thursday interactive classes DO NOT repeat the material presented in the Tuesday lectures. For instance, concepts covered in a Tuesday lecture will not be re-taught in Thursday classes; concepts covered in a Thursday class will not be re-taught in a Tuesday lecture. Synchronous students should plan to view Tuesday lectures and attend Thursday classes. Asynchronous students should plan to view Tuesday lectures and the recordings of the Thursday classes.

3. **Congressional Simulation (synchronously offered, graded, asynchronous paper alternative available).** Three of the Thursday classes (May 13th, May 20th, and May 27th) will cover a congressional simulation game that we will hold in class. You must choose to either be "synchronous" or "asynchronous" across all three classes; you will not be able to mix these options for your simulation grade. Synchronous students will be graded on their participation in ALL THREE synchronous classes. Asynchronous students will be offered an alternative paper assignment. More details on this are provided in the “Congressional Simulation” section below.

Course Requirements and Grading

All deadlines listed below are at 11:59PM Pacific time on the given date. Use standard formatting and proper citations (Times New Roman, 12-point font, 1-inch margins) for all written work. Late Policy: Late assignments (excluding exams) will be deducted one full letter grade each day it is late up to 50% of the assignment value; for example if submit any time after the 11:59PM deadline up to 24 hours after the deadline, you will receive a one letter grade deduction.

The graded components of the course, in order of deadline, are:

1. **Documentary Memo (10%):** Due Tuesday, April 20th. Class on Thursday, April 15 is dedicated for you to watch (on your own) the documentary *Running with Beto*, which UCSD has purchased access for all students. This assignment is to write a memo (2 double-spaced pages) based on a prompt that will be distributed prior to that week.
2. **Midterm (20%):** Held on Thursday, April 29th. The midterm will cover all class material covered through (and including) class on Thursday, April 22nd. It is a “take-home,” open-note, open-book test that will be administered on Canvas at a time of the student’s choosing on Thursday, April 29th. It will be a mix of multiple-choice questions and short answers.
3. **Member of Congress Background (10%):** Due Tuesday, May 11th. You will be assigned a member of Congress in class and research the member online in order to answer questions on the member’s background, electoral history, and legislative activity. Questions for this assignment (approximately 2 double-spaced pages) will be distributed in class.
4. **Simulation (25%):** There will be an in-class simulation game of Congress during three class meetings (May 13th, May 20th, and May 27th), where you will play a member of Congress. Students may choose to either complete this simulation synchronously or asynchronously (see section below for more details).

5. **Final Exam (35%):** The final exam will be cumulative and held on the date assigned by the university (June 8). It is a “take-home,” open-note, open-book exam that will be administered on Canvas at a time of the student’s choosing on Tuesday, June 8th. It will be a mix of multiple-choice questions, short answers, and long answers.

Congressional Simulation

On Thursday May 13th, May 20th, and May 27th, we will be holding an in-class (Zoom) congressional simulation game for students choosing the synchronous route. An asynchronous paper option is available for students choosing the asynchronous route, which will represent an equivalent substitution in terms of time dedicated and material covered. *You will need to select your option for the simulation (either asynchronous or synchronous) by April 29th in order for the teaching team to prepare the simulation.*

Synchronous Option: The three simulation classes will correspond to three different phases of the congressional process:

- May 13th: Party Caucus and Committee Stage
- May 20th: Floor Stage 1
- May 27th: Floor Stage 2

Each student will be randomly assigned a member and committee assignment for the duration of the simulation. Each day of the simulation will consist of structured activities in Zoom breakout rooms and full class sessions, where students will record their activities in a provided written template to be submitted at the end of each simulation class. Grades will be based on the completion of simulation activities, and will NOT be based on a student’s outcome in the “game.” Students who choose this synchronous route for their simulation grade will be expected to attend and participate in all three of these classes, which are each weighted 1/3 towards the overall simulation grade. (Note: If a student wishes to switch to the asynchronous option midway through the simulation, they will be required to complete the full asynchronous option regardless of any partial attendance of the synchronous sessions. Students will not be able to mix between the synchronous and asynchronous options.)

Asynchronous Option: The asynchronous option is a 9-page paper (12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) on the following prompt:

Research and document the procedural process of both of these TWO bills: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010) and the American Health Care Act of 2017. Your paper must not just summarize what the bills entailed or what the policy proposals were; you will be graded on how well you discuss the procedural process of these two bills. How did Congress treat these two bills as they advanced through the lawmaking process? What happened in the House? What happened in the Senate? What was different about the procedural situations of the two bills?

The deadline for this asynchronous option is the same day as the end of the simulation: May 27th.

Textbooks

The following book is required (print or e-book version). It is available at the campus bookstore.

- Shipan, Charles R., E. Scott Adler, and Jeffery A. Jenkins. 2019. *The United States Congress*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company

All other required readings will be available online through UCSD's academic journal access (you will need to use the university's VPN in order to access these electronically if you are off-campus).

Course Materials

My lectures and course materials, including slide presentations, notes, recordings, outlines, assignments, and similar materials, are protected by U.S. copyright law and by University policy. I am the exclusive owner of the copyright in those materials I create. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use. You may also share those materials with another student who is enrolled in or auditing this course.

You may not reproduce, distribute or display (post/upload) lecture notes or recordings or course materials in any other way – whether or not a fee is charged – without my express prior written consent. You also may not allow others to do so.

If you do so, you may be subject to student conduct proceedings under the UC San Diego Student Code of Conduct.

Similarly, you own the copyright in your original papers and exam essays. If I am interested in posting your answers or papers on the course web site, I will ask for your written permission.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with University rules and regulations. Note that this applies to exams, simulation activities, written papers, and any other form of class assignment. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Course Calendar

Readings that will be discussed during an interactive class are specifically highlighted below:

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONGRESS

Readings for this week:

- **Complete before Thursday's class:** Polsby, Nelson W. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review* 62 (1): 144-168. Access the full PDF using the UCSD VPN here: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1953331>
- Adler et al. Chapter 2: "The Historical Development of Congress"

Tuesday March 30 Introduction and Course Logistics

Thursday April 1 **Interactive Class:** Origins and Development of Congress

WEEK 2 – CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS I

Readings for this week:

- **Complete before Thursday's class:** Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102 (1). Pages 33-35 only, until (but not including) the section "The Calculus of Voting." Access the full PDF using the UCSD VPN here: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540808009X>
- Adler et al. Chapter 4: "Elections"

Tuesday April 6 **Recorded Lecture:** Congressional Candidates

Thursday April 8 **Interactive Class:** Representation and Constituents

WEEK 3 – CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS II

Readings for this week:

- Ansolabehere, Stephen, John M. De Figueiredo, and James M. Snyder. 2003. "Why Is There so Little Money in U.S. Politics?" *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17 (1): 105-130. Access the full PDF using the UCSD VPN here: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3216842>
- Draper, Robert. 2012. "The League of Dangerous Mapmakers." *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/2012/10/the-league-of/309084>.

Tuesday April 13 **Recorded Lecture:** Election Regulation and Redistricting

Thursday April 15 Watch Documentary: *Running with Beto*

WEEK 4 – COMMITTEES; OVERSIGHT

Readings for this week:

- **Complete before Thursday's class:** McCubbins, Mathew D., and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (1): 165–179. Access the full PDF using the UCSD VPN here: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2110792>
- Adler et al., Chapter 5: "Committees"

Tuesday April 20 **Recorded Lecture:** Committees
+ *Documentary Memo due*

Thursday April 22 **Interactive Class:** Congressional Oversight

WEEK 5 – PARTIES AND LEADERSHIP

Readings for this week:

- Adler et al. Chapter 6: "Parties"

Tuesday April 27 **Recorded Lecture:** Parties and Leadership

Thursday April 29 **MIDTERM**

WEEK 6 – RULES AND PROCESS

Readings for this week:

- **Complete before Thursday's class:** Adler et al., Chapter 7: "Policy Making"
- TBD

Tuesday May 4 **Recorded Lecture:** Rules and Process I
Thursday May 6 **Interactive Class:** Rules and Process II

WEEK 7 – POLICYMAKING I

Readings for this week:

- Adler et al., Chapter 8: "The Legislative Effectiveness of Congress and Its Members"
- TBD

Tuesday May 11 **Recorded Lecture:** Policymaking I
+ *Member of Congress Background due*
Thursday May 13 **Simulation Class:** Simulation Day I

WEEK 8 – POLICYMAKING II

Readings for this week:

- Rappoport, Alan, and Jim Tankersley. "Atop the Powerful Budget Committee at Last, Bernie Sanders Wants to Go Big." *The New York Times*, 12 January 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/12/us/politics/bernie-sanders-budget-committee.html>.
- TBD

Tuesday May 18 **Recorded Lecture:** Policymaking II
Thursday May 20 **Simulation Class:** Simulation Day II

WEEK 9 – SIMULATION WRAP-UP; LOBBYING

Readings for this week:

- Moore, Ryan T, Eleanor Neff Powell, and Andrew Reeves. 2013. "Driving support: workers, PACs, and congressional support of the auto industry." *Business and Politics* 15(2): 137-162. Access the full PDF using the UCSD VPN here: <https://doi.org/10.1515/bap-2013-0005>.
- Adler et al., Chapter 12: "Interest Groups"

Tuesday May 25 **Recorded Lecture:** Lobbying and Interest Groups
Thursday May 27 **Simulation Class:** Simulation Day III
+ *Asynchronous Paper due, for students taking the asynchronous simulation option*

WEEK 10 – POLARIZATION; REVIEW

Readings for this week:

- TBD

Tuesday June 1 **Recorded Lecture:** Polarization
Thursday June 3 **Interactive Class:** Final Review Q&A