



UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Monmouth College, Spring 2015
Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30 – 4:45 p.m.
CSB 277

Professor Nathan P. Kalmoe

Office: CSB 332

Office hours: Monday through Friday 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., and by appointment

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Course Description & Objectives

This course introduces the U.S. Congress. We will use theories of politics, as well as historical and current events, to understand Congress in relation to other branches of federal government, to state government, and to legislatures in other countries. We'll cover what works well and what doesn't including the strategic considerations facing members of Congress, the intricate rules governing these institutions, the roles of partisanship and ideology in Congressional behavior, the process of nomination and election for office, influences on legislator behavior, issues of representation, and ways Congress checks and balances federal government. We'll also consider potential for reform.

Through lectures, readings, videos, discussion, and activities each day, this course helps you learn how Congress works, and what's happening now, all while honing analytical & advocacy skills.

Legislative Dilemmas! Discussions and debates about key issues in Congress' function.

CongressLab! Games, simulations, & activities illustrating strategic considerations in Congressional action.

What's In the News? On Tuesdays, we'll begin with a few minutes of updates on Congress, led by you.

If you're interested in politics or a career tied to politics or government, you should consider a major/minor in political science. It's great for careers in law, government agencies, political parties & interest groups, campaigns, journalism, teaching, non-profits, think tanks, grad school, & academia. Of course, it also helps you be a better, more knowledgeable citizen and a more effective advocate for your views. I'm happy to talk more about PS & career opportunities with you.

Required Reading Materials

There is a substantial amount of reading for this class – around **60-70 pages per week**. **You won't succeed in this class without carefully reading assigned material.** You are required to acquire two books:

Roger H Davidson, Walter J Oleszek & Frances E Lee. *Congress and Its Members*, 14th Edition. CQ Press.

Thomas Mann & Norman Ornstein (2008). *The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America & How to Get It Back on Track*, 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press.

We will also have several short articles to read from news and academic sources, posted on the class webpage: (<http://nkalmoe.wordpress.com/congress/>).

Study resources: Lecture slides, study guides, quizzes, readings, your notes, fellow students, me

Congress News & Analysis

I recommend you follow news about Congress during this class. Here are some options:

Best Congress News:	Roll Call	http://www.rollcall.com/
Nat'l Newspapers:	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	www.wsj.com
	<i>New York Times</i>	www.nyt.com
	<i>USA Today</i>	www.usatoday.com
	<i>Washington Post</i>	www.washingtonpost.com
Cable/Public:	NPR	www.npr.org
	CNN	www.cnn.com
	Fox News	www.foxnews.com
	MSNBC	www.msnbc.com
Politics & PS Blogs:	Monkey Cage	http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/
	Mischiefs of Faction	http://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/
	Wonkblog	http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/
	Politico	www.politico.com

Requirements

Your overall course grade will be determined by the following:

Attendance	5%
Participation	10%
3 Responses	5%
6 Assignments	5%
6 Quizzes	15%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Paper	15%

ATTENDANCE (5%)

You should attend every class meeting and play an active role in our efforts to understand the material. I will be taking attendance. Excused absences may be had by providing me **with documentation** and notification **in advance for university-sanctioned events**, or as soon as possible for illness or family emergency. Religious holidays are excused **with prior notification**. Attendance starts at 100 points. **Missing class is -5 points.**

Punctuality is crucial. **Lateness is -2 points** and may prevent you from taking any quiz that day. Arriving after 30 minutes will be absent. You may take **one unexcused absence** without penalty since life inevitably makes perfect attendance tough, excluding exam days. But I'll give you a **bonus 1%** on your **overall class grade** for **perfect attendance**. Exams can only be rescheduled for excused absences.

PARTICIPATION (10%)

Your participation grade requires respectful engagement in class discussions and activities. **Doing all required readings** and coming to class ready to discuss the material **is essential for your success**. Class sessions will involve a mixture of lecture, activities, and discussion. **Talking 3-4 times per week** would max out your participation at 100%.

Learning to feel comfortable expressing yourself in class settings is an important professional skill to practice, especially if you are uncomfortable with public speaking. However, I'm open to finding alternative means for you to engage with course material if needed (e.g. weekly reading responses by email or in office hours). Please talk with me about if you wish to pursue alternate means of participation.

Please **ask questions**, challenge the assumptions in the reading and politely disagree with your classmates or me. Remember to listen to and reflect on everyone's contributions. I'm interested in hearing how your life experiences and knowledge intersect with topics we're in class. Please share your perspectives!

READING RESPONSES (5%)

All students will contribute **3 reading responses** over the course of the semester, describing the main points and the broader significance of the reading in **3-4 minutes**. You will also **pose a discussion question** for the class to consider, a

conversation you'll lead. What questions does the reading raise in your mind about Congress? What are the broader implications for democracy? I will distribute sign-up sheets at the beginning of the semester and after the first two exams.

PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS (5%)

There are six very small participation assignments prepping for in-class activities, usually just half a page or less.

READING QUIZZES (15%)

To prep you for the content and style of exams and to keep you accountable for assigned readings, we will have **6 five-minute quizzes** over the course of the semester. Each quiz will cover reading and lecture material since the previous quiz up through the readings assigned for the day. Quizzes will take place at the start of class. Like exams, they will include multiple choice and short-answer questions.

If a quiz is given when you are excused (or if it's your one free absence) it is not counted against you and will not be made up. **Lowest quiz is dropped.** Overall quiz scores will be an average of your counted quizzes. **Missed quizzes** that are neither excused nor your one unexcused absence will be **scored zero.**

EXAMS 1, 2, & 3 (15%, 15%, 15%)

We'll have three exams over the semester. Exams are in-class, closed book. Multiple choice, fill-in-blank, matching, short-answer, & short essay. Study guides will be posted. If you do at least **5% better than your previous exams**, I'll **add 5% to your score.** Exams can only be rescheduled for excused absences.

8-PAGE PAPER (15%) – Outline, Paper, 5-minute Presentation & Discussion

A **2-page outline** of the paper in PDF format is due by email. **Print & submit papers by the start of class on.** Late papers will be penalized 10 percent per day. A more detailed prompt for this paper will be posted. Students will present their papers (or their papers-in-progress) in 5 minutes to the class toward the end of the semester. We will discuss the presentations for a few minutes as a class afterwards.

The purpose of the paper and reading summaries is to encourage critical reflection on the readings & class content rather than to promote more general skills of writing style or speaking. As long as papers and presentations meet modest standards (please proofread & spell-check!), I will not base evaluations on eloquence of writing or speaking. I *will* evaluate them on evidence that you completed **all** of the readings, as well as evidence that you reflected critically upon them, the quality of those reflections, and adherence to instructions.

Grading

Grade scale: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (<60). A's are reserved for excellent and exceptional work, B's suggest your work is very good, C's range are for satisfactory work.

I am a resource for you, along with your classmates. **If you have questions** about reading material, lecture content, quizzes, quizzes, or exams, I encourage you to **talk with other students, come to office hours, and/or make an appointment with me.** I will respond to emails within 24 hours, but usually much sooner. **Please include "Congress" in the subject line so I can prioritize your email.**

This class will challenge you, but I will help you meet the challenge.

In the Classroom

I'd prefer you take old-fashioned notes in class (fewer distractions), so **no computers.** No phones (silence please). Beverages are OK if they have tops to prevent spilling. No food. Thanks! If I am unable to make it to class, I will let you know in advance. If I have not appeared after 10 minutes, you may go.

COLLEGE INFO:

Disability Services

Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should the Disability Services at tlc@monmouthcollege.edu in the Teaching and Learning Center on the 2nd floor of Poling Hall, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. Please meet with me early in the semester to discuss the

implications related to this course and bring your documentation from DS. I will work with you to make the necessary arrangements. For more information: <http://www.monmouthcollege.edu/life/disability-services>

Academic Honesty

Quizzes, exams, & papers must be the student's own work. Plagiarism, i.e., copying someone else's work without giving credit, is to be avoided. Such copying--from a book, another classmate's paper, or any other source--is dishonest.

At Monmouth College we view academic dishonesty as a threat to the integrity and intellectual mission of our institution. Any breach of the academic honesty policy – either intentionally or unintentionally - will be taken seriously and may result not only in failure in the course, but in suspension or expulsion from the college. It is each student's responsibility to read, understand and comply with the general academic honesty policy at Monmouth College, as defined in the Scots Guide (<http://department.monm.edu/stuserv/student-handbook/academic.htm>) and to the specific guidelines for each course, as elaborated on the professor's syllabus.

The following areas are examples of violations of the academic honesty policy (not intended to be exhaustive):

1. Cheating on tests, labs, etc;
2. Plagiarism, i.e., using the words, ideas, writing, or work of another without giving appropriate credit;
3. Improper collaboration between students, i.e., not doing one's own work on outside assignments unspecified as group projects by the instructor;
4. Submitting work previously submitted in another course, without previous authorization by the instructor.

It is my policy to enforce the College's academic regulations concerning plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. If you have any questions on this, please see me.

College Counseling Services

Monmouth College Counseling Services assists students in addressing personal, social, career, and study problems that can interfere with your academic progress and success. All services are free and can include individual and group counseling, crisis consultations, and wellness groups. The Counseling Center is in the lower level of Poling Hall, and you can schedule an appointment there, by calling Student Affairs at x2114, or by email hfisher@monmouthcollege.edu or cbeadles@monmouthcollege.edu. The website is: <http://www.monmouthcollege.edu/life/residence-life/counseling-services> In an emergency, please immediately call 911 and campus security at 309-337-5708.

Writing Center

The Monmouth College Writing Center offers unlimited, free peer tutoring sessions for students at MC. Peer writing tutors work with writers from any major, of any writing ability, on any type of writing assignment, and at any stage of their writing processes, from planning to drafting to revising to editing. We are located on the 3rd floor of the Mellinger Teaching and Learning Center, and we are open Sunday-Thursday 7-10pm and Monday-Thursday 3-5pm on a first-come, first-served basis. No appointment necessary! Learn more about the Writing Center at our website: <http://blogs.monm.edu/writingatmc/writing-center/>

A Personal Note

Many of you have been here a few years and so know how college works. Nonetheless, don't forget to take care of yourself and your friends, and always be respectful and considerate toward others. By supporting each other and looking out for one another, we can make this a greater time for everyone.

Outline of the Course

1. Setting the Stage: Intro & History
2. Candidates & Elections
3. Organizing Congress
4. Relations with Other Branches
5. Policy-making
6. A Need for Reform?

Syllabus Revisions

This syllabus is subject to revision by the instructor with written or verbal notice given in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Setting the Stage

Introduction to Congress

1/13 Tuesday

1/15 Thursday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 1: The Two Congresses (p. 3-13)

Broken Branch – Preface, Ch. 1 Introduction (p. ix-xiii, 1-13)

U.S. Constitution, esp. Article I

Binder (Nov 4, 2014). Would a GOP Senate make a difference? *Washington Post*.

Congress through History

Questions: How has Congress changed over time? Why was it designed & reformed this way?

1/20 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 2: Evolution of the Modern Congress (p. 15-42)

Jenkins & Stewart III (Jan 6, 2015). The revolt against Boehner in historical perspective. *Washington Post*.

Jenkins & Stewart III (Jan 8, 2015). Boehner's dissidents: More historical context about speakership revolts. *Washington Post*.

1/22 Thursday *Broken Branch* – Chapter 2: First Branch in Theory & Practice (p. 14-46)

2. Candidates, Elections, & Legislator Styles

Finding Candidates & Winning Elections

Questions: How do people become candidates for Congress? What does it take to win?

1/27 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 3: Going for It: Recruitment & Candidacy (p. 43-68)

1/29 Thursday *****Quiz 1*** CongressLab! Senator-elect! (Turn in your choice of party & top-3 state requests)**

Congress & Its Members – Chapter 4: Making It: The Electoral Game (p. 69-108)

Optional for Thursday:

Hopkins (Oct 29, 2014). "Being an Incumbent Isn't As Fun As It Used To Be." *FiveThirtyEight*.

Arbour (Dec 9, 2014). "All politics is local"? Not anymore. *Washington Post*.

Patty (Aug 15, 2014). Gerrymandering is Like Beauty. *Mischiefs of Faction*.

Working in DC & Back Home

Questions: What styles of action do MCs adopt in their districts and on the Hill?

2/3 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 5: Being There: Hill Styles & Home Styles (p. 109-138)

Volden & Wiseman (Jan 6, 2015). The 5 habits of highly effective legislators. *Washington Post*.

Decision Making in Congress

Questions: What factors influence how MCs vote?

2/5 Thursday *****Quiz 2*** CongressLab! Representation (Turn in your representation priorities)**

Congress & Its Members – Chapter 9: Decision Making in Congress (p. 253-280)

Zelizer (Jan 11, 2015). The power of Lyndon Johnson is a myth. *Washington Post*.

3. Organizing Congress

Leaders & Parties in Congress

Questions: What roles do leaders & parties play in structuring Congressional action?

2/10 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 6: Leaders & Parties in Congress (p. 139-174)

2/12 Thursday **CongressLab! Electing Leadership (Turn in your ½ page leadership proposal)**

Hulse & Peters (Nov 30, 2014). Boehner Uses New Mandate to Muffle Talk of a Shutdown. *NYT*.

Bump (Dec 15, 2014). What would happen if Congress split into four parties? This. *Washington Post*.

2/12 Thursday CONTINUED

Masket (Jan 13, 2015). Don't Take Party Discipline for Granite. *Mischiefs of Faction*.

Patty (Jan 13, 2015). If It's Gonna Be That Kind of Party... *Mischiefs of Faction*.

Masket (Jan 13, 2015). You Come At the King, You Best Not Miss. *Mischiefs of Faction*.

2/17 Tuesday ***Exam 1***

Committees in Congress

Questions: What functions do committees serve? Information, partisanship, or pork (distribution)?

2/19 Thursday CongressLab! Committee Seats (Turn in your ½ page Senate committee assignment request)

Congress & Its Members – Chapter 7: Committees: Workshops of Congress (p. 175-214)

Congressional Rules & Procedures

Questions: How do rules differ in the two chambers? How do rules affect outcomes?

2/24 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 8: Congressional Rules & Procedures (p. 215-252)

2/26 Thursday CongressLab! Agenda-Setting in House & Senate

Fuller (Sept 15, 2014). 20 insane rules the Senate has for its members. *Washington Post*.

Koger (Jan 6, 2015). Senate flashback: The opening day filibuster over a racist senator in 1947. *Washington Post*.

Binder (Nov 12, 2014). Can Mitch McConnell repair the Senate? *Washington Post*.

Hanson (Dec 14, 2014). Four Lessons from the CRomnibus. *Mischiefs of Faction*.

4. Relations with Other Branches

Congress & the President

Questions: What is veto bargaining? How do shared legislative & appointment powers work?

3/3 Tuesday ***Quiz 3*** *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 10: Congress & the President (p. 281-314)

3/5 Thursday CongressLab! Veto-bargaining

Lynch & Surminsky (Nov 20, 2014). When Congress sues the president, it's likely to fail. *Washington Post*.

Landler (Aug 28, 2014). Asking Congress to Back ISIS Strikes in Syria is Tricky for Obama. *New York Times*.

Sullivan (Dec 14, 2014). With nominations, Harry Reid lands a late punch before bowing out as majority leader. *Washington Post*.

*** Spring Break! March 6th-15th ***

Congress & the Courts

Questions: What role does Congress play in shaping the Judiciary?

3/17 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 12: Congress & the Courts (p. 345-370)

Peters (Sept 13, 2014). Building Legacy, Obama Reshapes Appellate Bench. *New York Times*.

Nolette (Nov 7, 2014). The Outlook for Judicial Appointments After the 2014 Midterms. *Mischiefs of Faction*.

Congress & Lobbyists

Questions: How do lobbyists try to influence MCs? Does it work?

3/19 Thursday ***Quiz 4*** *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 13: Congress & Organized Interests (p. 371-400)

Overby (Nov 17, 2014). Top Spenders on Capitol Hill Pay Billions, Receive Trillions. *NPR*.

Weisman (Sept 24, 2014). GOP Error Reveals Donors and the Price of Access. *New York Times*.

Congress & the Bureaucracy

Questions: How does Congress oversee actions by the executive branch?

3/24 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 11: Congress & the Bureaucracy (p. 315-344)

3/26 Thursday **CongressLab! Oversight**

Fahrenheit (Dec 15, 2014). NASA's \$349 million monument to its drift. *Washington Post*.
U.S. Army. Testifying Before Congress. (p. 1-7, 20, 25-26, 28, 32-33, skim the rest)

3/31 Tuesday ***EXAM 2***

5. Policy-making

National Security Policy

Questions: How does foreign policy get made in Congress?

4/2 Thursday **Paper Outline Due**

Congress & Its Members – Chapter 15: Congress & National Security Policies (p. 437-472)
Ignatius (Dec 10, 2014). The torture report's one glaring weakness. *Washington Post*.
Myre (Sept 20, 2014). When The U.S. Backs Rebels, It Doesn't Often Go As Planned. *NPR*.

Domestic Policy

Questions: How does domestic policy get made in Congress?

4/7 Tuesday *Congress & Its Members* – Chapter 14: Congress, Budgets, & Domestic Policy Making (p. 401-436)

Tumulty (May 27, 2014). The Great Society at 50. *Washington Post*. (10 pages)

Weisman (Jan 6, 2015). House Republicans Change Rules on Calculating Economic Impact of Bills. *New York Times*.

Optional: Eckholm (Jan 13, 2015). In a Safer Age, US Rethinks Its 'Tough on Crime' System. *NYT*

4/9 Thursday ***Quiz 5*** **CongressLab! Balancing the Budget (Turn in your balanced budget proposal)**

Parker & Weisman (Dec 9, 2014). Congressional Leaders Reach Deal on Spending. *New York Times*.

6. A Need for Reform?

4/14 Tuesday *Broken Branch* – Chapter 3: Seeds of the Contemporary Problem (p. 47-95)

Broken Branch – Chapter 4, Decade of Republican Control (p. 96-140)

4/16 Thursday **NO CLASS (Political Science conference in Chicago)**

4/21 Tuesday **2 paper presentations** *Broken Branch* – Chapter 5, Institutional Decline (p. 141-191)

4/23 Thursday **CongressLab! Remaking the Legislative Branch (turn in 1 page Constitution proposal)**

2 paper presentations

Mayhew (2009). Is Congress 'The Broken Branch'? *Boston University Law Review*, 89, 357-369.

Eisinger (May 10, 2013). 'Act of Congress: How America's Essential Institution Works, and How it Doesn't' by Robert G. Kaiser. *Washington Post*.

Azari (July 2, 2014). James Madison, Woodrow Wilson, and New Gingrich: Institutional Design & Polarization. *Mischiefs of Faction*.

4/28 Tuesday **Founders Day, No Class**

4/30 Thursday ***Quiz 6*** **CongressLab! Reforming Congressional Rules (turn in 1/2 page rule proposal)**

2 paper presentations

Broken Branch – Chapter 6: The Case for Continuity (p. 192-210)

Broken Branch – Chapter 7: Conclusion (p. 211-243)

Fiorina (Feb 25, 2014). Gridlock is bad. The alternative is worse. *Washington Post*.

McCarty, N. (Dec 12, 2014). Grading the Cronnibus. *Washington Post*.

Washington Post Editorial Board (Oct 29, 2014). Can voters look forward to a Congress that actually governs? *Washington Post*.

Conclusions & Exam Review

Questions: What have we learned?

5/5 Tuesday *Research Paper Due*** 2 paper presentations**

Broken Branch – Chapter 8: Epilogue - Is the Broken Branch on the Mend? (p. 244-268)

Congress & Its Members – Chapter 16: Two Congresses & the American People (p. 473-497)

Mann (May 27, 2014). Politics Is More Broken Than Ever—Political Scientists Need to Admit It. *The Atlantic*.

***** Exam 3: Wednesday, May 11, 11:30 a.m. *****