

## **UCDC Winter Quarter 2010**

### **DRAFT SYLLABUS – US CONGRESS**

**Instructor:** Laura Capps. Laura is Communications Director for Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection. She was Communications Director for Senator Edward M. Kennedy, a speechwriter for President Clinton and a graduate of the University of California, and the London School of Economics.

#### **Course Description**

This course will explore contemporary politics, processes and policies on the Hill, with an emphasis on California. We will begin with a review the structure of how congress works including external factors such as constituent pressures, the role of the media and consultants and the influence of campaigns. We will then delve into the issues that Congress is debating, such as climate change, health care, foreign policy and the economy. Among the topics to be discussed are the polarization of the caucus, how money is raised and from whom, the importance of committee chairmanships and leadership posts, media relations as well as a number of policy areas such as homeland security, science policy and funding, homeland security, defense and base closures, water and transportation and immigration reform.

#### **Requirements**

Students will be required to do all reading and participate in class discussions. There will also be three short papers on assigned topics. The first paper will ask you to research one of the Congressional districts and the electoral/constituency pressures its representative must deal with. In addition to looking up the electoral history and demographic profile of the district, you will be required to interview at least two people with knowledge of it. The second paper will take the form of a short policy memo advising a hypothetical representative of a position he or she should adopt. The last paper will be an open book synthesis of the material in the course answering a broad question posed by the instructors. Students may also be asked to attend Center talks and events related to the subject matter of the course.

The course will have frequent guests from the Hill and will depart from the schedule outlined below when timely opportunities arise or circumstances dictate.

**Texts:**

There will be one primary text: *The Legislative Branch* edited by Paul J. Quirk and Sarah Binder. There will be other materials distributed in class.

Topics and Course Outline. Part I. Congress and the California Delegation

Week of January 4<sup>th</sup>. A Profile of California and its Congressional Delegation

January 11<sup>th</sup>. Congressional Elections and Campaign Finance.

January 18<sup>th</sup>. Rising Partisanship and its Effect on Congress.

January 25<sup>th</sup>. Congress and the Media

February 1<sup>st</sup>. Congress and the Presidency

February 8<sup>th</sup>. Committee Chairs and Congressional Leadership

February 15<sup>th</sup>. Interest groups, lobbyists

Part II Issues Before Congress that Impact California

February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Climate Change

March 1<sup>st</sup>. The Economy

March 8<sup>th</sup>. Foreign Policy and wrap up