

The Congress and Politics in Washington

FALL 2019

Tu 10am-1pm, Room 1104

Instructor: John Lawrence, Ph.D

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Office: 325

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Office hours: 2:00-3:30 Tuesday, and by appointment

- Turnitin code: Class ID: Enrollment key:

Instructor

John Lawrence has a Ph.D. in American History from the University of California (Berkeley), and an undergraduate history degree from Oberlin College. He is the author of *The Class of '74: Congress After Watergate and the Roots of Partisanship* (2018, Johns Hopkins University Press). Dr. Lawrence served as a senior staff person in Congress for nearly four decades, the last eight as Chief of Staff to Speaker Nancy Pelosi. He has taught at UCDC since 2013. He blogs on American politics at **DOMEocracy** (johnlawrence.wordpress.com)

Description

This thematic research seminar explores the history of Congress—the *first* branch under the Constitution—and its role in making public policy, as well as other issues in contemporary politics and government. The subject matter will cover the relationship between Congress and the Presidency, the organization and operation of Congress, the emergence of a highly polarized electorate and government, and the 2020 election. The course is also designed to provide students with a balanced understanding of the broader political process and the political environment in Washington.

Goals and Objectives

The Washington Center emphasizes experiential learning and critical thinking and writing, which will be reflected in the work of this seminar.

Goal #1: Students will be able to relate their internship experience with the skills and substance learned in their course. Throughout the quarter, students will be asked to discuss activities undertaken during their internship

Goal #2: Students will attend at least one congressional hearing, a think tank seminar or lecture, or NGO/advocacy/nonprofit event.

Goal #3: Student will be required to prepare a briefing memo that describes the subject under discussion at the event, including any legislation or regulation under

consideration, the prospects for passage or implementation, and the likely political reaction.

Goal #4: The two research papers will require both evidence-based research.

Class Hours

The course will meet on Tuesdays from 10am until 1pm. Room: 318. Attendance at class is mandatory. Students should schedule other activities, including those related to your internship, so as not to interfere with class meetings. Any request for an absence must be approved by the instructor in advance.

Students are encouraged to attend weekly UCDC Monday Night Policy/Politics Forums.

In the event of a weather emergency, UCDC follows the federal government's decisions about delays and closures.

Office Hours

Office hours will follow class on Tuesdays from 2:00-3:30 pm in 325 or by appointment. Students should schedule appointments with the instructor either in person or through email at: **jal221B@gmail.com**. All students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss their research papers.

Requirements and Evaluation

Course requirements are: (1) regular class attendance and participation in discussions; (2) two research papers on an assigned topic; (3) one additional applied writing assignment; and (4) participation in an internship.

Student papers must comport with the original scholarship requirements of a UCDC research seminar. Materials developed for prior classes may not be substituted or quoted in the papers required for this course. An account for this class has been created on Turnitin. The instructor will provide log in information.

Students are required to complete the weekly readings and participate in seminar discussions..

Classroom Conduct

- ***Electronic devices of any type may not be used during this class unless specifically approved by the instructor.***

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or

intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates this policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

Students who wish to speak confidentially about an incident of misconduct should contact UCDC's Counseling Services at UCDCCounseling@gmail.com. To report misconduct or ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding misconduct, please contact the UCDC Title IX administrator, Josh Brimmeier (202-974-6214 or josh.brimmeier@ucdc.edu). Because the University of California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.

ADA Accommodations for Students

Any student requiring accommodations for class should inform the instructor at the first class meeting (if not earlier). In compliance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Public Law 93- 112) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336), University of California policy prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability in its programs, services, and activities.

Grading

Research Papers (30% apiece)

Paper 1: DUE

Paper 2: DUE

Memo Writing Assignment (20%)

DUE: Anytime during the course

Class Attendance and Participation (20%)

Policy on Original Work and Use of Sources

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonest scholarship. All materials submitted for this class must be original work prepared for this class. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. **Unfamiliarity with these behaviors is not an adequate defense. All papers must be submitted to Turnitin;** the code will be provided. If you are having problems doing so, alert the instructor immediately.

Papers

Two 8 page research papers will be required for this class.

One 2-4 page paper will also be required that describes and summarizes a hearing, press conference, briefing or other public event attended by the student.

Students are strongly advised to speak with the instructor to discuss any concerns about their research and writing skills.

Deadlines

Assignments are due at **11:59pm on the day noted** and should be posted on the Turnitin page as well as emailed using Word to the instructor at JAL221B@gmail.com. [The TURNITIN CODE for the class will be provided.](#)

Please note: Assignments arriving late will receive a reduction in grades. No extensions will be granted without **prior approval** of the instructor. Incompletes must be arranged in accordance with UC policy, before the end of the quarter/ semester.

Readings are available online and/or on Dropbox.

Week 1: Introduction to the Class: The State of American Politics

Reading

- Elaine Godfrey, "House Democrats Don't Know What to Make of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez" *The Atlantic* (November 21, 2018)
https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/11/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-confounds-house-democrats/576307/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=politics-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20181121&silverid=MzI1NTY2MDA2NjQ5S
- David Leonhardt, "A Dose of Moderation Would Help Democrats" *New York Times* (March 3, 2019)
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/03/opinion/2020-moderate-democrats.html?action=click&emc=edit_ty_20190304&module=Opinion&nl=opinion-today&nid=73194429emc%3Dedit_ty_20190304&pgtype=Homepage&te=1
- Ronald Brownstein, "California Has Become a Crisis for the Republicans" *The Atlantic* (11/21/18)
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/11/democrats-greatly-reduce-gop-california-delegation/576559/>

- Jamelle Bouie, “The Republican War on Democracy” *New York Times* (April 27, 2019)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/27/opinion/sunday/the-republican-war-on-democracy.html>
- PETER BEINART, “WILL THE LEFT GO TOO FAR?” *ATLANTIC*, (DECEMBER, 2018)
[HTTPS://WWW.THEATLANTIC.COM/MAGAZINE/ARCHIVE/2018/12/DEMOCRATIC-PARTY-MOVES-LEFT/573946/?FBCLID=IWAR08H-1IDS9MINDSUFEFEV4RPWN-F45WGORY8YTHF33J8OZNI5HFLQ6WDO](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/12/democratic-party-moves-left/573946/?fbclid=IWAR08H-1IDS9MINDSUFEFEV4RPWN-F45WGORY8YTHF33J8OZNI5HFLQ6WDO)

Week 2: Congress in American History

Reading

- Jack N. Rakove, “From the Old Congress to the New,” in Julian Zelizer, *The American Congress*, New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin. 2-22.
- Eric Rauchway, “The Transformation of the Congressional Experience,” in Zelizer, 319-334.
- Nelson Polsby, Chapter 5, “Overview: How Congress Evolves” in *How Congress Evolves*.
- Rep. Bill Pascrell, “Why is Congress so dumb?” *Washington Post* (January 11, 2019)
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2019/01/11/feature/why-is-congress-so-dumb/?utm_term=.24fc41466c87

Week 3: Running for Congress

Reading

- Sahil Chinoy and Jessica Ma, “How Every Member Got to Congress” *New York Times* (January 26, 2019)
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/01/26/opinion/sunday/paths-to-congress.html?em_pos=small&emc=edit_ty_20190128&nl=opinion-today&nl_art=11&nlid=73194429emc%3Dedit_ty_20190128&ref=headline&te=1

Note: Students also will read some, not all, of these excerpts:

- Cline, Five Profiles, excerpt
- Loomis excerpt
- Lawrence excerpt
- Fraser excerpt
- Jenrette excerpt
- Bonior excerpt
- O’Neill excerpt

Week 4: Visit to Capitol Hill

- **NOTE: This visit could take place a different week based on the congressional session.**

Reading

- <http://clerk.house.gov/about/house-chamber-brochure.pdf>
- http://clerk.house.gov/about/house_chamber.aspx
- **Students will meet at the SOUTH DOOR of the Capitol Building at 10:45 AM to tour the House floor and other areas of the building.**

Week 5: House and Senate Organization

Reading

- Roger Davidson, Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee. *Congress and Its Members*. Chapter 8, Congressional Rules and Procedures,” 215-251
- William Dauster, “The Senate in Transition or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Nuclear Option,” *NYU Journal of Legislation & Public Policy* <http://www.nyujlpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/The-Senate-in-Transition-or-How-I-Learned-to-Stop-Worrying-and-Love-the-Nuclear-Option-19nyujlpp631.pdf>
- Linda L. Fowler, “The Long Decline of Congressional Oversight” *Foreign Affairs* (Nov 15, 2018) https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-11-15/long-decline-congressional-oversight?cid=nlc-fa_fatoday-20181115
- Charles Homans, “Mitch McConnell Got Everything He Wanted, But At What Cost?” (NYT Jan. 22, 2019) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/22/magazine/mcconnell-senate-trump.html>

Week 6: The Budget and Appropriations Process, and reports on first papers

Reading

- Eric Patashnik, “Congress and the Budget Since 1974,” in Zelizer, *American Congress*, 668-686
- “The Dead Earmarks Society” *The Hill*, Feb. 15, 2019 <https://www.rollcall.com/news/congress/pork-earmarks-making-comeback>

- Asawin Suensaeng And Lachlan Markay, “Trump on Coming Debt Crisis: ‘I Won’t Be Here’ When It Blows Up” *Daily Beast* (December 5, 2018)
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/trump-on-coming-debt-crisis-i-wont-be-here-when-it-blows-up>

Week 7: The Presidency and the Congress

Reading

- James Surowiecki, “The Perils of Executive Action” *New Yorker* (August 8&15, 2016)
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/08/08/the-perils-of-executive-action>
- Ellen Nakashima, “‘It breeds resistance’: Even among conservatives, Trump’s use of presidential power causes alarm” *Washington Post* (September 29, 2018)
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/it-breeds-resistance-even-among-conservatives-trumps-use-of-presidential-power-causes-alarm/2018/09/29/1769991a-bdbf-11e8-b7d2-0773aa1e33da_story.html?utm_term=.85b390b6dfc3
- Erin Hawley, “Obama’s Curtain Call: A Look Back On A Legacy Of Executive Overreach” *The Hill* (December 24, 2016)
<http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/the-administration/311608-obamas-curtain-call-a-look-back-on-a-legacy-of>
- Elizabeth Slattery and Andrew Kloster, *An Executive Unbound: The Obama Administration’s Unilateral Actions* (Heritage, 2014)
<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/02/an-executive-unbound-the-obama-administrations-unilateral-actions>

Week 8: The Changing Face of Congress

Reading

- Claudine Gay, *The Effect of Minority Districts and Minority Representation on Political Participation in California*, (2001), Public Policy Institute of California
http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_601CGR.pdf
- Michele Swers, “Gender and Party Politics in a Polarized Era,”
https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1?ui=2&ik=5658b5b6b5&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1624783283432819254&th=168c63c9ae018a36&view=att&disp=inl&realattid=f_jru4irgi0
- Bridget Bowman, “House members are more diverse, but does the same go for staff? Roll Call (January 25,

2019)<https://www.rollcall.com/news/congress/house-members-diverse-go-staff>

- DeSipio, Louis, “Demanding Equal Political Voice...And Accepting Nothing Less: The Quest for Latino Political Inclusion,” in *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*, pp. 273-287.
- Smith, et al., *The American Congress*. Cambridge. Cambridge, “The American Congress: Modern Trends,” 1-25.
- David Bernstein, “Trump’s Secret to Victory in 2020: Hispanic Voters,” *Politico* (Feb. 24, 2019)
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/02/24/2020-hispanic-voters-donald-trump-225192>

Week 9: Partisanship and Gridlock

Reading

- George Packer, “The Corruption of the Republican Party” *The Atlantic* (December 14, 2018)
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgxvzMBrShlpXqMdCnZzrCStRDzMT>
- Drew DeSilver, “The Polarized Congress Of Today Has Its Roots In The 1970s,” Pew (June 12, 2014) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/12/polarized-politics-in-congress-began-in-the-1970s-and-has-been-getting-worse-ever-since/>
- Michael Grunwald, “How Everything Became the Culture War” *Politico Magazine* (Nov-Dec, 2018)
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/11/02/culture-war-liberals-conservatives-trump-2018-222095>
- David Freedlander, “The Democrats’ Culture Divide” *Politico Magazine* (November-December 2018)
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/10/30/democratic-party-culture-divide-wars-working-class-blue-collar-221913>
- Gerald Seib, The Two Parties Aren’t Crazy, Just Changed
http://www.wsj.com/article_email/the-two-parties-arent-crazy-just-changed-1444673977-lMyQjAxMTEwNDgxMjQ2Wj
- Frank Newport, “Bringing About More Compromise in Congress” Gallup (October 10, 2018) <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/243566/bringing-compromise-congress.aspx>

Optional Reading

- Frances Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*
- Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America*
- Kevin Kruse and Julian Zelizer, *Fault Lines*
- Sam Rosenfeld, *The Polarizers*

Week 10: Congressional Reform

Reading

- Congressional Problem Solvers Caucus, “Break the Gridlock” proposals (2018) https://www.nolabels.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/break_the_gridlock_packet.pdf
- Henry Olsen, “The Courts Can’t Fix Our Gerrymandering Problem,” *Washington Post* (April 26, 2019) https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/04/26/courts-cant-solve-our-gerrymandering-problem-take-it-former-gerrymanderer/?utm_term=.bae3e3272b8c
- Joseph J. Ellis, “Could the Founding Fathers Solve Today’s Political Gridlock?” *Los Angeles Times* (February 21, 2014) <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-adv-ellis-congress-founders-filibuster-20140221-story.html>
- Richard Dorment, “22 Simple Reforms That Could Fix Congress Now,” *Esquire* (10/15/2014) <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/news/a32838/congress-the-report-reforms-fixcongress-1114/>
- Parker Richards, “The People v. the U.S. Senate” *The Atlantic* (October 10, 2018) <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/10/senators-kavanaugh-represented-44-percent-us/572623/>
- Eric Orts, “The Path to Give California 12 Senators, and Vermont Just One” *The Atlantic* (January 2, 2019) <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/01/heres-how-fix-senate/579172/>

Optional Reading

- Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks*. Chapter 4, “Bromides to Avoid.”
- Mickey Edwards, *The Parties Versus the People: How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans*, 35-87.
- Tom Davis, Martin Frost, and Richard Cohen, “The Way Forward” in *The Partisan Divide: Congress in Crisis*, 271-286.
- Julian Zelizer, *On Capitol Hill*