

## Congress in History and Transition

FALL 2022

Tu 10am-1:00pm

Instructor: John Lawrence, Ph.D.

Office: 305b

Office hours: After class or by arrangement.

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### Instructor

John Lawrence has taught the Congress research seminar at UCDC since 2013 after spending 38 years as a staff person in the U.S. House of Representatives, the last eight as chief of staff to Speaker Nancy Pelosi. He is the author of *The Class of '74: Congress After Watergate and the Roots of Partisanship* (2018, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018) and the forthcoming *Arc of Power: Inside Nancy Pelosi's Speakership 2005-2010* (University of Kansas Press, 2022), as well as many articles on Congress and national politics. He blogs on American politics at **DOMEocracy** ([johnlawrence.wordpress.com](http://johnlawrence.wordpress.com)) and tweets at @johnlawrencedc. He also is the author of *The Undiscovered Archives of Sherlock Holmes* (2022, MX Publishing) and other short stories. He has a Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of California (Berkeley), and an undergraduate history degree from Oberlin College.

### Description

This course will focus on the organization and operations of Congress and the American government during a period of great economic, cultural and political disruption: the coronavirus pandemic and related societal disruptions; the 2022 mid-term election; and the sharply divided public attitudes reflected in the hyper-partisan atmosphere of US politics and society more broadly.

Congress and other branches of the U.S. government were designed nearly two and a half centuries ago under circumstances and reflecting values and philosophies that bear little resemblance to contemporary America. All of these institutions have evolved over time in response to changing conditions domestically and internationally. The American electorate has undergone significant evolution as well, markedly during the last half century. All of these factors place dramatic and consequential pressures on government, elected officials and voters. How are they responding and what successes, failures and changes can we anticipate?

### Requirements and Evaluation

Course requirements are: (1) regular class attendance and participation; (2) one research paper of 8-10 pages on an assigned topic; and (3) two 3-4 page papers on assigned topics focusing on knowledge of class materials and critical thinking. **All papers should be submitted to [john.lawrence@ucdc.edu](mailto:john.lawrence@ucdc.edu) as WORD attachments.**

Please note that **this is a seminar and as such, regular student participation is expected.** Students who enroll should be prepared to engage in classroom dialogue, which affects

grading. NOTE: Student discussions should reflect knowledge of the readings and other scholarly materials rather than simply statements of one's personal opinions. All points of view are invited and welcome.

- **PLEASE NOTE: This class will involve discussion of contemporary and historic public policies that some students may find sensitive. All class members are reminded that discussions must respect the opinions of other students regardless of disagreement on political viewpoints so that all students feel free to express their views.**

### **Classroom Conduct**

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.

**Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence** (Link to an external site.)

(Links to an external site.) Click on this link for the University of California statement on sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Students who wish to report sexual misconduct or to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct may do so with any UCDC faculty or staff, or contact Debbie Deas, Director of Student Services (debbie.deas@ucdc.edu, 202-872-8937). *Please note that because the University California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.*

**Covid compliance:** All students must comply fully with masking, social distancing and other policies implemented by UCDC to ensure the safety of all members of the community.

### **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 Paper): 50%**

**DUE: TBA**

**Shorter papers (30%)**

**DUE: Several Dates**

**Class Participation (20%)**

*NOTE: Papers are due at 11:59PM on the due date. Late submissions will be subject to grade reductions unless previously authorized in writing by the instructor. All times are Eastern Time.*

### **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.**

### **Readings are available online and/or on Desktop.**

### **Class Meetings**

#### **1. Class Introduction**

During this introductory class during, we will introduce ourselves and our expectations for the class, review the syllabus, and identify key topics to be covered.

#### **2. Is American Democracy at Risk?**

##### **Reading**

- Thomas Edsall, “Trump Poses a Test Democracy Is Failing” *NYT* (April 13, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/13/opinion/trump-democracy-decline-fall.html>
- Dana Milbank, “We are closer to civil war than any of us would like to believe” *Washington Post* (December 17, 2021) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/12/17/how-civil-wars-start-barbara-walter-research/>
- Young Voter Survey, Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics (December, 2021) <https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/fall-2021-harvard-youth-poll>
- Risa Brooks and Erica De Bruin, “18 Steps to a Democratic Breakdown” *Washington Post* (December 10, 2021) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/interactive/2021/january-6-next-coup-signs/>
- Jonathan Rauch and Peter Wehner, “What’s Happening on the Left Is No Excuse for What’s Happening on the Right” *NYT* (January 20, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/20/opinion/illiberalism-left-right.html>
- Francis Fukuyama, “Rotten to the Core?” *Foreign Affairs* (January 18, 2021) located in the class Dropbox

- Anne Applebaum and Richard Haass, “Can Democracy Survive?” *Nine Questions for the World*, Podcast, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/podcasts/can-democracy-survive>

### 3. What Were the Founding Fathers Thinking?

#### Reading

- Jack N. Rakove, “From the Old Congress to the New,” in Julian Zelizer, *The American Congress*, 2-22.
- Colin McAuliffe, Data for Progress, “The Senate is an Irredeemable Institution” (December 17, 2019) <https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/the-senate-is-an-irredeemable-institution.pdf>
- Ira Shapiro, *Broken: Can the Senate Save Itself and the Country?* Chapter 13, “Reconsidering the Senate” 231-251

### 4. Tour of the Capitol

### 5. The Modern Congress

#### Reading

- Eric Rauchway, “The Transformation of the Congressional Experience,” in Zelizer, 319-334.
- Ron Elving, Czars And Firebrands: A Brief History Of Power In The House” NPR (October 15, 2015) <https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/10/16/449136598/czars-and-firebrands-a-brief-history-of-power-in-the-house>

### 6. Congressional Organization: Leadership, Caucuses, Committees

#### Reading

- Roger Davidson, Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee. *Congress and Its Members*. Chapter 8, “Congressional Rules and Procedures,” 215-251
- Bryan Marshall and Bruce Wolpe, *The Committee*. Chapter 1, “Hope and Change Meets the Hill,” 1-17.
- Politico Guide to the Legislative Process (July 30, 2019) [https://www.politicopro.com/blog/guide-to-legislation?cid=promkt\\_19q3\\_corenews\\_legg](https://www.politicopro.com/blog/guide-to-legislation?cid=promkt_19q3_corenews_legg)

### 7. Diversity on the Hill

#### Reading

- Michele Swers, *Women in the Club: Gender and Policy Making in the Senate*, pp 1-23 <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NnQ-es6oHWAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Michele+Swers+gender&ots=IHiz-y9nh5&sig=fOjYla9fsn51drY3UwdrBghrY78#v=onepage&q=Michele%20Swers%20gender&f=false>
- Kathryn Lyons, “Demeaned, overlooked, fighting back: What it’s like to be a woman in Congress” *Roll Call* (August 5, 2020) <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/08/05/demeaned-overlooked-fighting-women-congress-aoc/>
- Henry Olsen “Republicans are becoming more diverse. That’s a great thing” *Washington Post* (November 17, 2021) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/11/17/republicans-are-becoming-more-diverse-thats-great-thing/>
- Daniel Marans, “A ‘Reset In Black Politics’: Retirements Set Up Battle Over Congressional Black Caucus’s Direction” *HuffPost* (January 21, 2022) <https://ucdc-edu.zoom.us/j/87050129687?pwd=cGV3OGJHQkI0bCtzNWZXL0NUcTVBUT09>
- 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.
- 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](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_601CGR.pdf)
- Christa Case Bryant, “Who’s crafting public policy? A push to diversify Capitol Hill staff” *Christian Science Monitor* (2/8/2022) <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2022/0208/Who-s-crafting-public-policy-A-push-to-diversify-Capitol-Hill-staff> [available in readings as well]
- Jim Saksa, “‘Where am I?’: Black staffers describe hurdles of working on Capitol Hill” *Roll Call* (February 25, 2021) [https://www.rollcall.com/2021/02/25/where-am-i-black-staffers-describe-capitol-hill/?utm\\_source=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletters&utm\\_content=02/28/2021](https://www.rollcall.com/2021/02/25/where-am-i-black-staffers-describe-capitol-hill/?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletters&utm_content=02/28/2021)
- 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>

## 8. Bean Counting 101: Budgets, Appropriations, Entitlements, CRs, Omnibuses, Minibuses, Sequestration, Fiscal Cliffs, Earmarks and Reconciliation

### Reading

- Budget Exercise: Concord Coalition  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=5658b5b6b5&attid=0.2&permmsgid=msg-f:1724507917979348421&th=17eeaed08781edc5&view=att&disp=inline>
- Thomas Kahn, “A Democrat Against Deficits” *Wall Street Journal* (July 28, 2021)
- Eric Patashnik, “Congress and the Budget Since 1974,” in Zelizer, *American Congress*, 668-686
- “Democrats planning budget blitz to pass Biden agenda” *Roll Call* (January 20, 2021) [https://www.rollcall.com/2021/01/20/democrats-planning-budget-blitzkrieg-to-pass-biden-agenda/?utm\\_source=morningheadlines&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletters&utm\\_content=01/21/2021](https://www.rollcall.com/2021/01/20/democrats-planning-budget-blitzkrieg-to-pass-biden-agenda/?utm_source=morningheadlines&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletters&utm_content=01/21/2021) “The Dead Earmarks Society” *The Hill*, Feb. 15, 2019 <https://www.rollcall.com/news/congress/pork-earmarks-making-comeback>
- Paul Kane, “Earmark spending went away after corruption scandals. Now, it’s back on the table,” *Washington Post* (March 13, 2021) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/earmark-congress-spending-cunningham/2021/03/12/cd135fb0-82c2-11eb-ac37-4383f7709abe\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/earmark-congress-spending-cunningham/2021/03/12/cd135fb0-82c2-11eb-ac37-4383f7709abe_story.html)
- Ezra Klein, “The Senate Has Become a Dadaist Nightmare” (*NYT*, 2/5/2021) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/04/opinion/democrats-senate-reconciliation.html/>

#### **Additional Reading**

- Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, “Reconciliation 101” (January 22, 2021) <http://www.crfb.org/papers/reconciliation-101?emci=135b67dc-285c-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&emdi=646334c0-de5c-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&ceid=142324>

## **9. The Imperial Presidency and the Resurgent Congress**

### **Reading**

- Emily Bazelon, “What Happens When a President and Congress Go to War?” *NYT Magazine* (November 5, 2019) [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/magazine/congress-president-impeachment.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2FFamily-bazelon&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/magazine/congress-president-impeachment.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2FFamily-bazelon&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection)
- Ezra Klein, “The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, Explained” *Vox* (May 20, 2014) <https://www.vox.com/2014/5/20/5732208/the-green-lantern-theory-of-the-presidency-explained>

- “Rewriting the Limits on Presidential Power,” CBS News (August 12, 2020) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rewriting-the-limits-of-presidential-powers/>
- 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>
- 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>
- Ellen Nakashima, “‘It breeds resistance’: Even among conservatives, Trump’s use of presidential power causes alarm” *WP* (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](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)

## 10. Origins of Polarization

### Reading

- Naomi Ehrich Leonard, Keena Lipsitz, Anastasia Bizyaeva, Alessio Franci, and Yphtac Lelkes, “The nonlinear feedback dynamics of asymmetric political polarization” <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/50/e2102149118>
- Sam Tanenhaus, “The Promise of Polarization” *The New Republic* (October 29, 2018) <https://newrepublic.com/article/151612/promise-polarization-book-review-sam-rosenfeld-the-polarizers>
- David Frum, “How the American Two-Party System Became So Divided” *The Atlantic* (April 8, 2018) <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/the-polarizers-interview/557288/>
- 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>
- Finkel, et al., “Political Sectarianism in America,” *Science* (October 30, 2020) <https://pcl.stanford.edu/research/2020/finkel-science-political.pdf>; for articles cited, see: <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/370/6516/533#BIBL>
- John Lawrence, “You Don’t Actually Need to Reach Across the Aisle, Mr. Biden,” *New York Times* (April 27, 2021) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/28/opinion/joe-biden-bipartisanship.html?referringSource=articleShare>
- Ezra Klein, “Democrats and Republicans Can’t Agree on Anything. They Shouldn’t Have To” *NYT* (April 29, 2021) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/29/opinion/biden-schumer-manchin-bipartisanship.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

- 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/>