

Draft Syllabus

Final syllabus will be available on the first day of class

The Congress and Politics in Washington

Tu 10am-1pm, Room 318

Instructor: John Lawrence, Ph.D

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Office: 336

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

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* (March 1, 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, and also was staff director of two full committees and a chief of staff in the office of Congressman George Miller (D-CA). He has taught at UCDC since 2013, and at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy and has lectured widely. 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, and the emergence of a highly polarized electorate and government. 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 and interviews on a critical subject before the Congress.

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 336 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) a research paper on a policy proposal; (3) applied writing assignments; and (4) participation in an internship.

Students papers must comport with the original scholarship requirements of a UCDC research seminar. An account for this class has been created on Turnitin. The instructor will provide log in information as needed.

Students are also required to complete the weekly readings and participate in seminar discussions. Each week, students will assigned responsibility for leading the discussion of the significant issues in that week's readings.

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 to 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.

Accommodations for Students with Special Needs

If you require accommodations for class, please confidentially inform the instructor at the first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made. 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 (60%)
Other Applied Writing Assignments (20%)
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 dishonesty. 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. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense. **All papers must be submitted to Turnitin;** if you are having problems doing so, alert the instructor immediately.

Papers

Two 8 page research papers will be required for this class. For both papers, citations from the required readings as well as additional research will be required.

Two 2 page papers will also be required, one being the memo 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 about paper topics, and should meet with the UCDC methodology advisor 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

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.

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

Reading


- Readings on the direction of American Politics
- [E.J. Dionne Jr.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-trump-is-helping-to-save-our-democracy/2017/09/22/539b795e-9a1f-11e7-82e4-f1076f6d6152_story.html), Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, "How Trump is helping to save our democracy" *Washington Post* (September 24, 2017) https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-trump-is-helping-to-save-our-democracy/2017/09/22/539b795e-9a1f-11e7-82e4-f1076f6d6152_story.html
- [Clare Malone](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-future-of-the-democratic-party-is-white-men/), "The Future Of The Democratic Party Is ... White Guys?" 538 (August 10, 2017) <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-future-of-the-democratic-party-is-white-men/>
- Thomas Edsall, "The Democratic Party Is in Worse shape Than You Thought," *New York Times* (June 8, 2017) https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/08/opinion/the-democratic-party-is-in-worse-shape-than-you-thought.html?ref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fthomas-b-edsall&action=click&contentCollection=opinion®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection&r=0
- Jonathan Martin and Alexander Burns, "Democrats at Crossroads: Win Back Working-Class Whites, or Let Them Go?" *NYT* (December 15, 2016) <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/15/us/politics/democrats-joe-biden-hillary->

clinton.html?em_pos=small&emc=edit_up_20161216&nl=upshot&nl_art=5&nlid=49257326&ref=headline&te=1

- Tom Edsall, "The Not-So-Silent White Majority" *NYT* (November 17, 2016)
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/opinion/the-not-so-silent-white-majority.html>

Week 2: What Do Members of Congress Actually Do?

Reading

- "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," Congressional Management Foundation. Download the file and click on the report: <http://congressfoundation.org/projects/life-in-congress/the-member-perspective>. Download the report:  **"Life in Congress: The Member Perspective"** (PDF - 2.37 MB)

Additional Reading

- Richard Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*

Week 3: 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*.

Week 4: Visit to Capitol Hill

- <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.*
- [NOTE: The week for this field trip may vary depending on when Congress is in session]

Week 5: The Presidency and the Congress

Reading

- 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>
- Scott James, "The Evolution of the Presidency: Between the Promise and the Fear," in *The Executive Branch*, Joel Aberbach and Mark Peterson, editors.
>>> (Search on Google: "Evolution of the Presidency Scott James")
- James Surowiecki, "The Perils of Executive Action," *New Yorker* (August 8 and 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>

Week 6: House and Senate Organization

Reading

- Chapter 1, "Two Sides of the Capitol," in Ross K. Baker, *House and Senate*.
- Roger Davidson, Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee. *Congress and Its Members*. Chapter 8, Congressional Rules and Procedures," 215-251
- Steven Smith, Jason Roberts, Ryan Vander Wielen, *The American Congress*. 6th ed. (2009) Chapter 7, "The Rules of the Legislative Game."
- 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>

Additional Reading

- Mark Strand, et al., *Surviving Inside Congress* (The Congressional Institute)

Week 7: The Budget and Appropriations Process

Reading

- Eric Patashnik, "Congress and the Budget Since 1974," in Zelizer, *American Congress*, 668-686
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/08/08/the-perils-of-executive-action>

- “So ... This is Nixon’s Fault? (Politico (Oct 24, 2015)
<http://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2015/10/richard-nixon-congressional-budget-control-act-history-000282>

Week 8: Is American Government Fair? Electoral College, Gerrymandering, and Minority Districts

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
- 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.
- Christopher Ingraham, “This Is Actually What America Would Look Like Without Gerrymandering” *Washington Post* (January 13, 2016)
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/13/this-is-actually-what-america-would-look-like-without-gerrymandering/>
- [John Sides](#), “Gerrymandering Is Not What’s Wrong With American Politics,” *Washington Post* (February 3, 2013)

Additional Reading

- David Lublin, *The Paradox of Reform*

Week 9: Partisanship and Gridlock

Reading

- Pew Research, “Political Polarization in the American Public
<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public> (June 12, 2014) e
- 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/>
- Mann, Thomas E. and Ornstein, Norman J. 2012. *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks*. New York: Basic. Chapter 2, “The Seeds of Dysfunction.”
- James M. Curry and Frances Lee “Congress Is Far More Bipartisan Than Headlines Suggest,” *Washington Post* (December 20, 2016)
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey->

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2016/12/20/congress-is-far-more-bipartisan-than-headlines-suggest/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2016/12/20/congress-is-far-more-bipartisan-than-headlines-suggest/2016/12/20/)

- Gerald Seib, The Two Parties Aren't Crazy, Just Changed
http://www.wsj.com/article_email/the-two-parties-arent-crazy-just-changed-1444673977-lMyQiAxMTE1NTEwNDgxMjQ2Wj
- Sibley, Joel H., "Congress in a Partisan Political Era," in Zelizer, ed., Pp. 139-152.
- Julian Zelizer, "How America Got Polarized" (CNN) (8/3/15)
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/03/opinions/zelizer-buckley-vidal-debates-polarized/>

Additional Reading

- Frances Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*
- Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America*

Week 10: Congressional Reform

Reading

- Joseph J. Ellis, "Could the Founding Fathers Solve Today's Political Gridlock?" (*Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 2014)
- Richard Dormont, "22 Simple Reforms That Could Fix Congress Now," *Esquire*, 10/15/2014
- David Schanzer and Jay Sullivan, "Cancel the Midterms," *New York Times*, November 2, 2014.
https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/03/opinion/cancel-the-midterms.html?_r=0
- 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.