***THE CONGRESS***

Winter Quarter 2013 and Spring Semester 2013

*Thematic Research Seminar*

University of California Washington Center

Instructor: Arthur Burris

**Description**

This thematic research seminar will explore the workings of Congress—the first branch under the Constitution—and its role in making public policy. The Instructor, Arthur Burris, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science and also worked in Congress for 10 years, giving students the opportunity to look at the workings of Congress through the combined lens of academic and practical experience. It combines coursework with the original scholarship requirements of a UCDC research seminar and is designed particularly for students in Congressional internships and those considering Congressional staff positions after graduation. This seminar will take advantage of our Washington location by featuring guest speakers and seeking connections to current policy and political debate.  In addition to studying the pathways of lawmaking, we will ask how Congress and its Members relate to the other branches of government, the press, and the public.  Topics to be examined include the rules and organization of Capitol Hill, campaign finance, redistricting, lawmaking and the House and Senate rules, budget process and politics, executive oversight, judicial nominations, lobbyists and influence, and policy entrepreneurialism.  Seminar requirements in addition to the internship include preparation and in-class participation, a substantial research brief and several applied writing assignments related to a policy that currently is or should be before Congress.

**Class Hours**

The course will meet in Room 318 of the UCDC Center on Monday evenings from 7:35pm-9:30pm (following the Monday Night Forum). Enrolled students are also required to attend weekly UCDC Monday Night Policy/Politics Forums and applied writing/skill instruction sessions.

**Instructor**

Arthur Burris ([aburris@rcn.com](mailto:aburris@rcn.com)) is Director of Policy at Living Cities. He served for ten years on the staff of the House Budget Committee, including six years as deputy staff director. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from UC Berkeley, and has taught political science and public policy at George Mason University and the East Bay Campus of the Cal State system. His published scholarship has appeared in *American Politics Research, Studies in American Political Development,* and the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

**Requirements and Evaluation**

Course requirements are: (1) regular class attendance and appropriate contributions to seminar discussions; (2) a research brief on a policy proposal; (3) applied writing assignments related to the proposal (specifically, a memo, speech and press release); (4) an in class short answer 1 hour exam on the reading and (5) participation in an internship, preferably in or related to Congress. Semester students will do an additional short memo on a proposed Congressional reform. All students are required to attend the Monday Night Forum from 6:30pm to 7:30pm as part of the three-hour course expectation mandated by your campuses.

Further details about the supplemental academic component to the internships follow.

***Attendance and Contribution:*** Effective discussions depend on participants being familiar with the material covered in the reading. Preparation, punctual attendance, and informed contribution will thus represent a substantial component of the course grade. In addition to the weekly assigned reading, students are expected to read national and political stories in the *Washington Post* on a daily basis during the term, and to be prepared to discuss them in class. Students are also encouraged to read the *New York Times* and *Politico*.

***Research Brief:*** Students will select a policy that is currently before Congress or one that should be in their opinion. They review five previous or current related bills in this area, relevant academic studies and government reports. The brief should focus on a specific proposal and explain how it differs from and improves on the status quo. The total number of pages for the research brief and applied writing assignments below will need to equal the page requirements for your campus. Each paper will have the following components: review of relevant literature, discussion of bill merits based on some original research, an analysis of five related bills, and an analysis of likely political prospects and strategy for passage.

***Applied Writing Assignments:*** Students will compose several applied writing assignments related to the policy proposal, creating a portfolio of writing examples that can be used to apply for Congressional staff and other related positions. Each student will write:

1. A short memo to the Member of Congress addressing the potential merits of the bill and the political feasibility of this proposal;
2. A short speech for the Member of Congress introducing the policy as a bill; and
3. A press release or op/ed (1page) for the hometown paper.
4. IN ADDITION, for SEMESTER students only, there will be a short memo on a Congressional reform proposal.

***In-class Final Exam:*** There will be a final exam covering the reading.

**Grading Basis: Quarter Students**

Exam (20%)

Research Paper (45%)

Related Applied Writing assignments (15%)

Class Attendance and Participation (20 %)

**Grading Basis: Semester Students**

Exam (15%)

Research Paper (45%)

Related Applied Writing assignments (15%)

Reform Memo (10%)

Class Attendance and Participation (15 %)

**Policy on Original Work and Use of Sources**

Responsibly attributing ideas is an important part of this seminar, as in all work at the University of California. While students are encouraged to discuss their ideas with classmates and others, all work submitted in this course must ultimately be your own. Please raise any questions about appropriate collaboration and attribution with the instructor. This course will respect UC Berkeley’s policies on original work and use of sources. Students are encouraged to inquire about proper treatment of sources ahead of time.

*Schedule for Research Paper/Applied Writings and Exams*

January 22: **ALL UC STUDENTS** *Paper Proposal* (1 page): Pick a bill you want to work on, describe its content, the sources you will use and the five related bills you will compare your bill to.

February 11: **ALL UC STUDENTS** *Research Brief* (10-15 pages, depending on campus page requirement)

February 25: **ALL UC STUDENTS** *Applied Writing Assignments* (5 pages)

March 11: **QUARTER STUDENTS ONLY** *Final Exam*

(1 hr, short answers, closed book)

April 8: **SEMESTER STUDENTS ONLY** *Reform Proposal Memo*

April 15: **SEMESTER STUDENTS ONLY** *Final Exam***Assigned Readings and Meeting Topics**

**I. UNDERSTANDING THE CONGRESSIONAL WORLD**

*Pre-Class--* Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) Training that is sponsored by the Robert T. Matsui Foundation to be held on **Monday, January 7th, 9am-4pm.**

*January 7:* Introduction to Class and Overview Lecture

*January 14*: Congressional Campaigns

Reading

* Jacobson, Gary, “Modern Campaigns and Representation,” in *The Legislative Branch*, Binder and Quirk (eds.)
* Binder, Sarah, “Elections, Parties and Governance,” in *The Legislative Branch*, Binder and Quirk (eds.)

*TUESDAY January 22:* Orthodox and Unorthodox Lawmaking

Reading

* Sinclair, Barbara. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Chapters 2-4.

*January 28*: The House

Reading

* Price, David E. *The Congressional Experience: Transforming American Politics*. 3d ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Pp. 179-210 (Chapter 8).
* Sinclair, Barbara. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Chapter 7.

*February 4:*  The Senate

Reading

* Sinclair, Barbara. 2008. “The New World of U.S. Senators.” In *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Pp. 1-22.
* Sinclair, Barbara. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Chapter 8.

**II. BEYOND THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

*February 11*: Budget and the Politics of Fiscal Choice

Reading

* Streeter, Sandy.*The Congressional Appropriations Process: An Introduction*. Congressional Research Service Report 597-684.
* Sinclair, Barbara. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Chapters 5, 9.

*February 25*: Congress and Foreign Policy

Reading

* Deering, Christopher, “Foreign Affairs and War,” in The Legislative Branch, Binder and Quirk, (eds.)

*March4*: Oversight and Executive Branch Relations

Reading

* Oleszek, Walter J. 2007. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. 7thed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. pp. 288-312.

*March 11*: *In-class Final Exam for Quarter Students Only*

Additional Semester Segment on Congressional Reform

*March 11:* Broken Branch?

Reading

* Mann, Thomas E., and Norman J. Ornstein. 2006. *The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 141-91.

*March 18:* Congressional Redistricting Reform

Reading

“*From Equality to Fairness: The Path to Political Reform*,” Party Lines, Thomas Mann and Bruce E. Cain, Brookings, 2005.

“*Voters Prefer to Win Elections*,” Thomas Brunell, **Redistricting and Representation**: **Why Competitive Elections are Bad for America**, Routledge, 2008.

*Spring Break for Semester Students March 25-29*

*April 1:*  Lobbyists and Congress

Reading

* Smith, Richard A. 1995. “Interest Group Influence in the U.S. Congress.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 20(1): 89-1

*April 8:* Congressional Campaign Finance Reform

Reading

* “*Voting with Dollars*,” Bruce Ackerman, **Bulletin of the American Academy**, Summer 2004
* *“Do Public Funding Programs Enhance Electoral Competition?*” Kenneth Mayer, Timothy Werner and Amanda Williams in **The Marketplace of Democracy**, Michael P. McDonald and John Samples, Brookings, 2006.

*April 15: In-class Final Exam for Semester Students*

Note on Obtaining Readings

The instructor is aware that the cost of purchasing readings, particularly in a course such as this where there are many sources, represents a substantial burden on

students. He has made every effort to minimize expenses for students consistent with copyright law.

Students will need to purchase *Unorthodox Lawmaking* (4th edition). Based on feedback from UCDC students in prior terms, the instructors have not placed this volume on order at a local bookstore. Students are urged to order this book online promptly so as to ensure delivery in time to complete reading assigned for January 22.

Other readings on the syllabus will be available to students through the UCDC website.