

POLI 461. Congress and the Presidency

Department of Political Science

University of South Carolina

Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Joshua Meyer-Gutbrod (Dr. MG)

meyerguj@mailbox.sc.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-11:30AM

By Appointment: Wednesday 9:30-10:30AM

Course Overview

Academic Bulletin Description

Analysis of the interaction between the legislative and executive branches within a separation-of-power system.

Course Description

This course will cover the dynamics of possible the two most prominent agenda-setting institutions in American politics: Congress and the Presidency. The course will focus on the interaction of these institutions in the formation of policy. A special focus will be paid to partisan polarization and the growth of gridlock both within Congress and between these institutions.

Due to the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, this course will be conducted online in an asynchronous fashion. Students will be responsible for viewing lectures, engaging in class participation and responding to assignments during each of three course modules. Each module will culminate with an online exam.

Courses are dynamic arrangements and I reserve the right to change this syllabus at my discretion at any point during the semester.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Learning Goals

Official Goals

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Identify the powers and roles of both the President and Congress in the formation of national policy.
- Identify current conflicts between the legislative and executive branches and the roots of those conflicts within the American institutional framework.
- Apply existing theories within the discipline of Political Science to explain the origins and dynamics of these conflicts.

- Identify the patterns associated with the phenomenon of modern partisan polarization and identify its role in shaping conflicts within American national government.

My Goal for the Course

Learn to effectively participate in American politics by navigating our existing political institutions with the goal of effecting change and making your voice heard!

Course Materials

Readings

There is not textbook for this course. Required readings will be drawn from scholarly articles and books designed to engage you in active research within the discipline of political science. All of these readings can be found on Blackboard. Students should view lectures after having read the assigned readings for that section of the course. This approach will greatly help with understanding the material in class.

Software

Required access to online platform: Packback Questions: ISBN- 978-0-692-09460-0. Cost \$25 (on website).

Packback Questions is an online discussion platform powered by artificial intelligence. This platform is specifically designed to encourage curiosity and increase critical thinking & writing skills. On Packback, students will be required to apply reading and lecture topics to pose and respond to questions related to current issues in American politics.

How to Register on Packback: An email invitation will be sent to your email on record from help@packback.co prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam, or you use a different email), you may register by following the instructions below:

- Create an account by navigating to <https://questions.packback.co/login> and clicking "Sign up for an Account" Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can login with your credentials.
- Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Join a Community" module in Packback.
Community Lookup Key: 2ac02839-7fbc-488c-a4cd-50c31f68e35e
- Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.
- Packback may require a paid subscription. Refer to www.packback.co/product/pricing for more information.

Course Details

Course Format

This is a fully online course. Online classes are not easier than face-to-face lecture classes. To succeed in an online class, you must be extremely motivated and well

organized. Regular Internet access is essential for successful completion of the course. You will need to purchase the required material listed above by the first day of the course.

The class structure will consist of three learning modules (“Course Modules”). These modules will be divided into weekly sub-modules which will include:

- A summary of that week’s material, a to-do list, due dates and other notes.
- Short Videos of PowerPoint-type lectures, and links to videos, animations and other materials related to the subject.
- The class notes / slides in PDF format.
- Packback response submission (through the Packback Questions link).

Assignments for each course module will include:

- Post 2 questions on the Packback discussion forums
- Post at least two responses per module week to Packback questions submitted by your peers. – Responses are due at the end of the module
- A midterm exam at the end of the module. (The final exam will occur upon completion of the final module in lieu of a midterm and will be cumulative)

This is an entirely Web-based course. We have no face-to-face class meetings, and you will complete your work asynchronously - which simply means that you will be working on it at different times than your colleagues. You can log into the class to do your work at whatever time is convenient for you as long as you are meeting class deadlines.

It is important to understand that this is not a self-paced class or an independent study. You will have assigned deadlines, and work must be submitted on time. You may not save up your assignments to complete in the last weeks or days of the semester. One critical part of this class is regular interaction with other students and with me, your instructor. Each assignment sequence must be completed on schedule – you can't work ahead or get behind and be successful.

General Assignment Information

- All coursework (assignments, exams, etc.) is secured in Blackboard with a username and password.
- All online tests are secured in Blackboard with a password.

Feedback on assignments

Some of the assignments are automatically graded on Blackboard, and by the PackBack platform. Other assignments will be graded as soon as possible. Specific feedback will be provided as necessary through Blackboard.

Course Communication

I will be communicating with you regarding grades and assignments. If you need to get in touch with me, the best method is via email. Generally, I will reply to emails within 24

hours during the work week and will provide feedback on assignments within 72 hours. You may also post questions pertaining to the course on the Blackboard Discussion Board. These questions will be answered within 24 hours during the work week.

If you are having trouble with this course or its material, you should contact me via email to discuss the issues.

Announcements will be posted to this course whenever necessary. If there is any other information I think is important, I will send it to your email address you have in Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that your email account works properly in order to receive email.

Below is how you check your email address in Blackboard:

- Access blackboard.sc.edu
- Click your name on the main Blackboard navigation panel on the left
- Review your email address. By default, Blackboard uses your university-issued email address
- Your email address in Blackboard coincides with your preferred university email. If you are unsure of your preferred email, [check your account \(myaccount.sc.edu\)](http://myaccount.sc.edu). For more information on setting your preferred university email, please see the [How To Change Your Primary University Email Address \(https://scprod.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0011464\)](https://scprod.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0011464) Knowledge Base article.

Module Schedule

All course deadlines are listed in Eastern Time Zone. Blackboard will record all deadlines in this time zone. If you are in a different time zone, plan accordingly.

Each week will begin on a Monday and will end on Friday.

Technology Requirements

You must have access to the Internet to view/hear lectures. No special software is required.

The PowerPoint lecture presentations, links to articles, assignments, quizzes, and rubrics are located on the Blackboard site for the course. Videos will be posted to youtube. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations (transcripts provided);
- Reliable Internet access and a USC email account;
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard);
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program; and
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage.

If your computer does not have Microsoft Word, Office 365 ProPlus package is available to you free of charge and allows you to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to 5 PCs or Macs and Office apps on other mobile devices including tablets. Office 365 also includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 ProPlus, log into your student (University) email through a web browser, choose Settings (top right corner), and select software. If you have further questions or need help with the software, please contact the [Service Desk](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/servicedesk.php) (https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/servicedesk.php).

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Minimal technical skills are needed in this course. All work in this course must be completed and submitted online through Blackboard. Therefore, you must have consistent and reliable access to a computer and the Internet. The minimal technical skills you have include the ability to:

- Organize and save electronic files;
- Use USC email and attached files;
- Check email and Blackboard daily;
- Download and upload documents;
- Locate information with a browser; and
- Use Blackboard.

Technical Support

If you have problems with your computer, technology, IT-related questions, support, including Blackboard, please contact the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) Service Desk at (803) 777-1800 or submit an online request through the [Self-Service Portal](https://scprod.service-now.com/sp) (<https://scprod.service-now.com/sp>) or visit the [Carolina Tech Zone](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/ctz.php) (https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/ctz.php). The Service Desk is open Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM (Eastern Daylight Time). If you are located in the Columbia, SC area, the Thomas Cooper Library at USC has computers for you to use in case you encounter computer issues/problems. If you are not located in the Columbia, SC area, most regional campuses and public libraries have computers for public use.

How to Get Help for the Packback Questions platform:

If you have ANY questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please contact their customer support team directly at help@packback.co. For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Requirements

Midterm Exams (1 @ 20%, 1 @ 25%):

The midterms will be assigned at the end of the first two modules and will cover lectures and readings from that module. Midterms will be conducted online using blackboard.

Final (30%):

The final will be scheduled in accordance with university policy and will act as the exam for the third and final module. Unlike the midterms, the final will be cumulative, covering material for the entire course. The final will be conducted online using blackboard.

Online Participation (25%):

We will be making use of the online software Packback for discussions. Packback allows students to contribute questions and respond to the questions of other students. Students will be responsible for posting 2 questions for each module. They will also be required to post 2 responses to questions per module week, totaling 28 responses. These responses are required to be made within each module, with eight responses in the first module, eight in the second, and twelve in the final. Responses are due by the midterm/final exam for that module. Questions are due at intervals during the module, as noted in the schedule. Late posts will not be accepted.

More information on this can be found in the Evaluations section.

Evaluation

Packback and Online Discussions

Students are responsible for posting 2 questions per module and 2 responses per module week. All responses are due by the module midterm. Question due dates are listed below.

To post a Packback Question

Find a current news article from the list of online news sources (listed below) about a subject that is related to Congress and/or the Presidency. The article has to have been posted within the last 15 days.

- First, write a brief summary of the article. What is it talking about?
- Then, post a question / discussion / counterpoint, that emerges from the article. It may be something that intrigued you, or something that sparked your curiosity by reading the article. It may be some personal reflection if the article is related close to you, your lifestyle, or your hometown, etc.... It may be a view that the article did not consider but you think it is relevant. Add something to the article!
- Finish the article by posting a question that could be addressed with material from the course. The question should relate directly to your discussion of the article!

The entire paragraph (summary and question) should be at least 100 words. In addition to the word count, the paragraph should include the URL of the article, the title of the article and the original author (if available).

To post a Packback Response

You need to respond to one of your fellow students' posts for each week in the module. You should provide thoughtful and well-developed arguments that engage with the original question and the answers posted by your peers by incorporating arguments and material from the course. You can include references from other news sites to support your point of view / response.

Grading

Grading is based on participation and students are awarded points for meeting a sufficient level of "curiosity points" per Packback's AI scoring system. The required points for completion are 60 "curiosity points" for your question and 40 for your answers. The Packback system will help guide you to achieve this score.

Approved online news sources

BBC	Los Angeles Times	USA Today
Bloomberg	New York Times	NPR
Fox News	Wall Street Journal	The Guardian
Washington Post	The Hill	Politico

Reminder: If the article you want to access is behind a Paywall, use the Library to try and access it.

Some advice for posting

- **Use the course material to help you engage with the news.**
- **Check your partisanship at the door.** We all have opinions on the policies. The goal is not to debate the policies but to understand the politics.
- **Get some perspective.** Think like a politician, your peers, a voting constituent. How would they react to what is being said.
- **Broaden your search.** Bring in an article from a different news sources that covers the same material. Compare the frames being used and understand the motivation for those frames
- **Add something personal.** How does this relate to you and your peers?

Class Schedule

Introduction – Aug. 20-21

The Foundations – Aug. 24 – Aug. 28

- The Constitution, Article 1 and 2:
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/index.html>
- The Federalist Papers, #47-51, 69-74: <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text>

Module 1: Congress

Congressional Motivations – Aug. 31 - Sept. 4

- Arnold, R. Douglas. The logic of congressional action. Yale University Press, 1990. – Ch 1, 4
- Mayhew, David R. "Observations on Congress: The Electoral Connection a quarter century after writing it." PS, Political Science & Politics 34.2 (2001): 251.
- Hurley, Patricia A. "David Mayhew's" Congress: The Electoral Connection" after 25 Years." PS: Political Science and Politics 34.2 (2001): 259-261.
- Abramowitz, Alan A. "" Mr. Mayhew, meet Mr. DeLay," or the Electoral Connection in the post-reform Congress." PS, Political Science & Politics 34.2 (2001): 257.

First Packback Question Due – September 4

Congressional Activity I - Origins – Sept. 7 – Sept. 11

- Barry Weingast and William Marshall, "The Industrial Organization of Congress," Journal of Political Economy 96 (1988): 132-63.
- Aldrich, John H. Why parties?: The origin and transformation of political parties in America. University of Chicago Press, 1995. – Ch. 2 (Optional-Ch. 1)

Congressional Activity II – The Modern Congress – Sept. 14 – Sept. 18

- Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. Setting the agenda: Responsible party government in the US House of Representatives. Cambridge University Press, 2005. –Ch. 1, 2 (Optional-Ch. 4)
- Sinclair, Barbara. "Spoiling the sausages? How a polarized Congress deliberates and legislates." Red and blue nation 2 (2008): 55-87.

Second Packback Question Due – September 18

Congressional Outputs – Ideology and Policy – Sept. 21 – Sept. 25

- Binder, Sarah A. Stalemate: Causes and consequences of legislative gridlock. Brookings Institution Press, 2004. – Ch. d 3, 4
- Hare, C., & Poole, K. T. (2014). The polarization of contemporary American politics. Polity, 46(3), 411-429.

Midterm Exam - 1 – September 25

Module 2: The Presidency

Presidential Politics – Sept. 28 – Oct. 2

- Skowronek, Stephen. 1997. The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton. Harvard University Press – Chapter 2-3
- Lemiux, Scott. 1/23/2017 "Is Donald Trump the Next Jimmy Carter?". The New Republic

Third Packback Question Due – October 2

Presidential Strategies – Oct. 5 – Oct. 9

- Kernell, S. 2006. *Going public: New strategies of presidential leadership*. Cq Press. – Ch. 2
- Beckmann, Matthew. 2010. *Pushing the Agenda: Presidential Leadership in US Lawmaking 1953-2004*. Cambridge University Press. - Ch. 2

Swaying Opinion – Oct. 12 – Oct. 15

- Jacobs, L. R., & Shapiro, R. Y. (2000). *Politicians don't pander: Political manipulation and the loss of democratic responsiveness*. University of Chicago Press. - Ch. 2
- Eshbaugh-Soha, Matthew. "Presidential influence of the news media: The case of the press conference." *Political Communication* 30.4 (2013): 548-564.

Fourth Packback Question Due – October 15

Presidential Action: Orders and Signing Statements – Oct. 19 – Oct. 23

- Moe, Terry M., and William G. Howell. "Unilateral action and presidential power: A theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29.4 (1999): 850-873.
- Kelley, Christopher S., and Bryan W. Marshall. "The last word: Presidential power and the role of signing statements." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38.2 (2008): 248-267.
- American Presidency Project. "The Greatest Number of Constitutional Objections in a Signing Statement."
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/analyses/the-greatest-number-constitutional-objections-signing-statement>

Midterm Exam - 2 – October 23

Module 3: Polarization and the Division of Power

Branch Interaction I - Vetoes – Oct. 26- Oct. 30

- Cameron, Charles. 2000. *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Bargaining*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. - CH. 1
- Cameron, Charles, and Nolan McCarty. "Models of vetoes and veto bargaining." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 7 (2004): 409-435.

Branch Interaction II – Congressional Oversight – Nov. 2 – Nov. 6

- Ainsworth, Scott H., Brian M. Harward, and Kenneth W. Moffett. "Congressional response to presidential signing statements." *American Politics Research* 40.6 (2012): 1067-1091.
- McCubbins Matthew, and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms," *American Journal of Political Science* 28, (1): 165-179.

Fifth Packback Question Due – November 6

Invoking the Public – Nov. 9 – Nov. 13

- Christenson, Dino P., and Douglas L. Kriner. "Mobilizing the public against the president: Congress and the political costs of unilateral action." *American Journal of Political Science* 61.4 (2017): 769-785.
- Cameron, Charles, and Jee-Kwang Park. "Going Public When Opinion Is Contested: Evidence from Presidents' Campaigns for Supreme Court Nominees, 1930-2009." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41.3 (2011): 442-470.

Polarization – The Problem – Nov. 16 – Nov. 20

- Mann, Thomas E., and Norman J. Ornstein. *It's even worse than it looks: How the American constitutional system collided with the new politics of extremism*. Basic Books, 2016. – Intro, Ch. 1
- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Steven Webster. "The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of US elections in the 21st century." *Electoral Studies* 41 (2016): 12-22.

Sixth Packback Question Due – November 20

Polarization and Elected Officials – Nov. 23 – Nov. 27

- Lee, F. E. (2016). *Insecure majorities: Congress and the perpetual campaign*. University of Chicago Press. - Ch. 2-3

Final Exam - TBD

Final Notes

Honor Code

Every student has a role in maintaining the academic reputation of the university. It is imperative that you refrain from engaging in plagiarism, cheating, falsifying your work and/or assisting other students in violating the Honor Code. Two important components of the Honor Code:

Faculty members are required to report potential violations of the Honor Code to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

When a student is uncertain as to whether conduct would violate the Honor Code, it is their responsibility to seek clarification from the appropriate faculty member.

Your enrollment in this class signifies your willingness to accept these responsibilities and uphold the Honor Code of the University of South Carolina. Any deviation from this expectation can result in a (insert academic penalty here) and a referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. You can learn more about the University's policies on academic integrity at:

https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_conduct_and_academic_integrity/index.php

Student Disability Resources

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Student Disability Resource Center: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Student Disability Resource Center.

Diversity and Inclusion

The university is committed to a campus environment that is inclusive, safe, and respectful for all persons, and one that fully embraces the Carolinian Creed. To that end, all course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings. You are expected at all times to apply the highest academic standards to this course and to treat others with dignity and respect.