

POLS 3350 (0): Research Methods (CRN 46501)

3 credit hours

Fall 2014

MW 3:25-4:40pm, Brock Hall 205

**** NOTE: Starting in week 4, this course will meet online except for exam days.**

Instructor: Liz Norell

Office location: PSCI computer lab, Fletcher Hall 4th floor

Office hours: TR 2-3pm, R 4:30-5:30pm, or by appointment

E-mail address: elizabeth-norell@utc.edu

You should expect a reply to emails within 48 hours.

Course description: The contemporary Congress. The roles of congressmen and women, the distribution of power within Congress, relations with other branches of government, and prospects of reform.

Materials:

- Smith, Steven S., Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. 2013. *The American Congress* 8th Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-1-107-61824-4.
- Other readings as assigned in Blackboard.

NOTE: Our class week will run from Monday to Sunday. We will begin a new chapter/module each Monday morning. Discussions should be wrapped up by midnight each Sunday evening.

Graded course components:

- **Participation:** As this course will be meeting online starting in the fourth week, your active participation is absolutely critical.

Each week, starting in week five, three students will lead the class's discussion in the Blackboard discussion board. As discussion leader, your job is to pose for the class at least one discussion question, then monitor and lead the discussion that ensues. You should coordinate with your fellow discussion leaders how you will organize yourselves; each discussion leader should create a separate discussion thread that they manage, but the topics should not overlap. They may complement one another, though.

If you are not the discussion leader, you are responsible for posting at least one original post, as well as at least one substantive response, to **each** of the discussion threads that week. Your steady and substantive engagement in the discussion boards will comprise 30% of your final grade.

- **Paper:** You will write a research paper on a topic related to Congress. This paper will be due on the final day of class (for those keeping track, that's the Monday after Thanksgiving). You may choose your own topic, and your proposed topic should be turned in no later than Sunday, October 5th. As long as your topic is somehow related to Congress, it is likely to be approved. You should choose a topic that is of interest to you and manageable within the context of a single semester. The paper will be strictly a research paper (you may, if you choose, think of this as a literature review). At least 10 scholarly, peer-reviewed sources are required. These may be journal articles or academic books. If you need help, please ask! The paper will be worth 25% of your final grade.
- **Midterm exam:** The midterm will occur **IN CLASS** on Monday, October 13th during the scheduled class time. You should come prepared to answer a handful of short-answer questions based exclusively on the readings you have done thus far in the semester (Chapters 1-6 in Smith et al.); you may bring two 8.5" x 11" one-sided pages of your own personal notes to the exams. Exams must be completed during the time allotted. Make-up exams will not be offered except in extraordinary circumstances, such as documented emergencies, at the convenience and discretion of the instructor, using an alternative exam (such as an oral exam). Bring a blue book. Worth 20% of your final grade.
- **Final exam:** The final exam will be held according to the final exam schedule. Our scheduled time is Monday, December 8th from 3:30-5:30pm. As with the midterm, you should come prepared to answer a handful of short-answer questions based on the readings from the midterm forward; the final exam will not be cumulative. You may bring two 8.5" x 11" one-sided pages of your own personal notes to the exams. Exams must be completed during the time allotted. Make-up exams will not be offered except in extraordinary circumstances, such as documented emergencies, at the convenience and discretion of the instructor, using an alternative exam (such as an oral exam). Bring a blue book. Worth 25% of your final grade.
- **Extra credit:** Occasional extra-credit opportunities may be made available, but they will be relatively few in number and will, at most, boost your grade by 1 letter grade (10%).

Academic integrity

Careful adherence to standards of academic integrity is expected of all students. Students are responsible for ensuring that they understand and follow these standards. Students are expected to adhere to the UTC honor system. To protect the academic integrity of this university and this course, the instructor takes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously and seeks the most severe sanctions available in response to instances of academic dishonesty.

Blackboard

Students are responsible for submitting assignments and accessing readings and other course materials on Blackboard. Many supplemental study aids are also available on the course Blackboard page. Blackboard may be accessed at <http://utconline.utc.edu>. Students who are unfamiliar with Blackboard, especially the assignment and quiz functions, should enroll in the UTC Online Student Training course (<http://utconline.utc.edu/StudentResources/StudentTraining.php>).

Blackboard is available at this URL: <http://www.utc.edu/learn>
Use the same login you use for MyUTC.

A note about assignments

All papers and other written assignments in this class should be submitted to UTC Learn (Blackboard) text-matching software (SafeAssign) for review and to analyze for originality and intellectual integrity. By submitting your paper online, you agree to have your paper included in the institutional repository of digital papers. If the results of the review indicate academic dishonesty, disciplinary action may be taken against the student as outlined in the UTC Student Handbook.

Accommodation

If you are a student with a disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or a special accommodation in this class or any other class, call the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 425-4006 or come by the office, 102 Frist Hall.

Counseling Center

If you find that personal problems, career indecision, study and time management difficulties, etc. are adversely impacting your successful progress at UTC, please contact the Counseling and Career Planning Center at 425-4438.

Honor Code Pledge (for reference)

I pledge that I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on any test or assignment. I understand that plagiarism constitutes a serious instance of unauthorized aid. I further pledge that I exert every effort to insure that the Honor Code is upheld by others and the I will actively support the establishment and continuance of a campus-wide climate of honor and integrity.

Tentative Course Schedule – subject to change as needed

Week/dates	Topic	Readings assigned
Week 4: Sept. 8-14	Representation & Lawmaking in Congress	Smith et al. Chapter 2
Week 5: Sept. 15-21	Congressional Elections & Policy Alignments	Smith et al. Chapter 3
Week 6: Sept. 22-28	Members, Goals, Resources, and Strategies	Smith et al. Chapter 4
Week 7: Sept. 29-Oct. 5	Parties & Leaders	Smith et al. Chapter 5
Week 8: Oct. 6-12	Standing Committees	Smith et al. Chapter 6
October 13, 3:25-4:40pm ** IN PERSON **	Midterm exam, covering chapters 1-6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two 8.5x11” pages of notes allowed • Bring blue book 	
Weeks 9 & 10: Oct. 13-26 <i>** Fall Break Oct. 20-21</i>	The Rules of the Legislative Game / The Floor & Voting	Smith et al. Chapters 7-8
Week 11: Oct. 27-Nov. 2	Congress & the President / Congress & the Courts	Smith et al. Chapters 9-10
Week 12: Nov. 3-9	Congress, Lobbyists, and Interest Groups / Congress & Budget Politics	Smith et al. Chapters 11-12
Week 13: Nov. 10-16	Readings from <i>Congress Reconsidered</i>	PDFs on Blackboard
Week 14: Nov. 17-23	Readings from <i>Congress Reconsidered</i>	PDFs on Blackboard
Week 15: Nov. 24-25 & Dec. 1	Readings from <i>Congress Reconsidered</i>	PDFs on Blackboard
December 8, 3:30-5:30pm ** IN PERSON **	Final exam, covering material from Weeks 9-15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two 8.5x11” pages of notes allowed • Bring blue book 	