Course Description: “Congress is so strange. A man gets up to speak and says nothing. Nobody listens—and then everybody disagrees.” –Boris Marshalov, Russian observer after visiting the House of Representatives (quoted in Dean L. Yarwood, *When Congress Makes a Joke*).

Citizens, political pundits, members of the executive branch, and even legislators criticize Congress, often with good reason. Congress is partisan; it’s inefficient; its members rehash the same policy debates without resolving national problems; interest groups influence the legislative process. But why does Congress work this way? In this course, we will try to answer this question. To set the stage, we will look at how the founding fathers set up Congress in the Constitution and how and why Congress has changed over time. Then we will examine Congress as a collection of individual members charged with representing their own constituencies and pursuing their own goals and Congress as an institution organized around parties and committees focused on policymaking. We will also study the relationships between Congress and groups or institutions external to it, including the president, the bureaucracy, interest groups, and the courts. Two major themes run throughout the course: 1) Rules matter—the structure and rules of Congress affect not only how it operates, but the outcomes of the political process; and 2) Parties matter—there has been increasing partisan polarization in Congress whose causes and consequences are essential for understanding how Congress works today.

By the end of the course, students should understand how Congress works and why, the causes and effects of partisan polarization, and the tension between representation and national policymaking. They should also be able to apply that knowledge to explain current events involving Congress—why, for example, is it difficult if not impossible to pass a fiscally responsible budget or reduce federal debt; why is bipartisanship so hard to obtain; or why vote to repeal Obamacare 50 times when Obama is still President? Students will also learn about the resources available for studying Congress and learning about individual members of Congress.

Course Evaluation: Grades will be based on a combination of written assignments, exams, and participation. All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

--Exams: There will be a midterm exam (10% of the course grade) and a final exam (20%). The exams will be a combination of short answer and essay questions. All reading, lectures, and class discussions are fair game for exams. The date for the final exam is listed on the syllabus. Do not ask the instructor to change the date or time of the final; she has no authority to do so.

--Current Events Analysis (10%): To encourage students to make connections between what they learn in class and the news and to improve their writing and critical thinking skills, students will choose one news article from the Washington Post or the New York Times each week and write a single paragraph explaining how the article relates to what we have recently learned about the presidency. The paragraph should not summarize the article. Students can discuss how the article illustrates something we’ve been learning or use what we’ve learned to explain what is going on in the article and why; students should use what they are learning to provide analysis or explanation. As the semester progresses, I want to see more emphasis on explaining the article or considering the implications of it using what we have learned in class. (You may not write more than one paragraph on an article, and you may not use sources other than the Post or Times.)

The paragraph (typically 4-8 sentences) should be well constructed—with a topic sentence that explains the main point and supporting sentences that provide evidence or reasoning to support or further explain that point. Provide a full citation for the article at the end of each paragraph (see Moodle for an example of the CEA and citation format). Analyses should be uploaded to the student’s Box folder prior to class each Friday except for holidays (begin September 11); they can be uploaded earlier in the week, but they will not be accepted after class on Friday, and only one should be uploaded per week. Each paragraph will be worth 10 points, and the scores for 10 paragraphs will be added together to make up the Current Events Analysis grade. There are 12 Fridays in the semester, and students may opt to skip this assignment.
during 2 weeks of the term, or they may do one each week, and I will count their 10 highest scores. Failure to turn in the assignment will result in a zero for the week.

--Literature Review and Research Paper (10 and 20%, respectively). More information is included on these assignments at the end of the syllabus.

--Simulation Paper and Simulation (10% combined): There will be a simulation of the U.S. Senate during this course. Part of the simulation will take place in class, and there will be one additional time scheduled Monday, Nov. 16, 7:00-9:30 p.m. in JH101. Students should arrange their schedules accordingly. In preparation for the simulation, students will write a 3-4 page paper about their assigned senator and his or her state. More information is included in the syllabus.

--Participation (20%): Learning is not a passive activity, and students have a responsibility to themselves and to each other to be prepared for and to participate in class. This course is not designed to be a lecture course. Students will have ample opportunity to participate in class discussions (large and small groups).

    To be able to participate effectively, students should complete the reading by the date listed on the syllabus and keep up with news about Congress. Discussion questions will be suggested at the end of each class to provide students with some focus for the next day’s readings. However, discussion will not be limited to these questions. My 2011 Presidency class said that if I wanted students to do the reading, I had to give quizzes, so…unannounced quizzes will be given from time to time to insure students are doing the reading. These will be graded as (+, check, -, or 0) and will be incorporated into the participation grade (a rubric for these grades and their impact on the participation grade can be found on Moodle).

    Students, particularly those who are uncomfortable talking in large groups, are also encouraged to comment on the readings or class lectures and discussion by e-mailing the professor or talking to her outside of class. Merely showing up to class everyday without engaging in some of these others forms of participation will result in at best a C+ on participation.

    Attendance will be taken. More than one unexcused absence will begin to affect participation grades. Five unexcused absences will result in a 50 on participation, and for each additional unexcused absence, ten points will be deducted from the participation grade. Generally, an absence is excused if the student has a note from the infirmary or a doctor or if the student is representing the University in some capacity. Students who know that they are going to be absent when assignments are due are expected to turn in papers or take exams in advance. In the case of unexpected absences due to illness, students are expected to make up the work they missed.

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. If it occurs, it will result in a penalty ranging from a reduction of one-letter grade to a zero on the assignment or failure in the course, depending on the severity. If students are unsure what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, they should consult the professor.

Grading scale: Plus grades end in 8 or 9 (88-89= B+). Minus grades end in zero or 1 (90-91= A-).

Electronic devices in class: Cell phones should be turned off and put out of sight as soon as students walk in the classroom. Use the time before class to get to know your classmates. If the professor hears a phone in class or sees a student using it for any reason after class begins, she will deduct 5 points from the student’s participation grade. If it happens a second time, the student will receive an F for participation. During exams, students should put their cell phones or other electronic devices in their book bag or purse or leave them at the front of the room with the professor. If the professor sees a cell phone or electronic device in the student’s hand once the exam begins (regardless of the reason), the student will fail the exam. Laptops, Ipads, etc. may be used for taking notes, but all other applications (e-mail, internet, etc.) should be closed (not merely minimized). If the professor finds a student using the laptop for any reason other than taking notes, the student will lose 5 points from their participation grade and will no longer be allowed to use the laptop in class. Before deciding to use an electronic device for taking notes, you might want to read some interesting research on the performance of students who use electronic devices in class (see “Digital Distractions” on Moodle).
Books: The following books are required and are available from the Furman bookstore.
--Keeping up with the daily news is essential for this course, particularly for class discussions. Students must follow either the New York Times (available on campus free) or Washington Post (www.washingtonpost.com) daily. The Washington Post is free online if you register with your Furman email ending in “edu.”

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:
Aug. 26—Introduction

I. Context: Historical Foundation of Congress
Aug. 28—What did the Founders set up?
Questions: What purpose(s) is Congress designed to serve? What powers does it have? What constraints are on it? What isn’t spelled out in the Constitution about how Congress operates?
Aug. 31—How has Congress evolved?
Readings: D&O, pp. 28-39
Questions: How has Congress changed over time? Why have these changes occurred? What impact might these changes have on how Congress or MC’s do their job?
Sept. 2—Discuss research paper assignment
Readings: Literature review and research paper assignment on syllabus.

II. Individuals in Congress
A. Congressional Elections
1. Incumbent Advantage/Vulnerability
Sept. 9—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 3
Questions: Why do incumbents get reelected in high numbers? What advantages do they have? What might make them vulnerable?

2. Campaign Strategies and Outcomes
Sept. 11—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 4; Abramowitz, “U.S. Senate Elections in a Polarized Era” (http://courses.furman.edu)
Questions: How might current events and the national mood affect congressional elections next year? How do we see this affecting MCs’ behavior now? What campaign strategies might they use to deal with these issues?

B. Individual Legislators
1. Representation
Sept. 14—Preliminary paper topic due by beginning of class.
Readings: D&O, Chapt. 5
Questions: What does it mean to represent someone? Who do MCs represent?

2. Constituency
Sept. 16—Readings: Find your House Representative’s and senators’ websites, Twitter, and Facebook and read them.
Questions: How do they communicate with constituents online? What do they communicate? How do they present themselves?

3. Goals
Sept. 18—Readings: Vinson, “Tale of Two Senators” (http://courses.furman.edu)
Questions: What goals do MCs have? How might these goals reinforce each other? How might they be in tension? How do we see this in the case of Graham and DeMint?

III. Internal Organization of Congress: Path to Polarization
A. Committees
   Sept. 21—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 7

B. Parties
   1. Leaders and polarization in the House
      Sept. 23—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 6 (p. 133-145); Theriault, Chapt. 1-2
   2. Leaders in the Senate
   3. Conditional Party Government in the House
      Sept. 28—Readings: Aldrich and Rohde, “The Consequences of Party Organization in the House” (http://courses.furman.edu)
   4. Polarization in the Senate
      Sept. 30—Readings: Theriault, Chapt. 3-6
   5. Partisan Warfare
      Oct. 2—Readings: Theriault, Chapt. 7-9
      Oct. 5—DV in DC, no class.
      Oct. 7—Readings: Theriault, Chapt. 10-11

Oct. 9—Midterm Exam
Oct. 12-13 Fall Break, no class.

C. The Legislative Process: Unorthodox Lawmaking
      Oct. 14—Literature Review Due at the beginning of class.
      Readings: D&O, Chapt. 8 (p. 205-228)
   2. How a Bill Becomes a Law: Senate version
      Oct. 16—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 8 (p. 228-244); Lee, “Individual and Partisan Activism on the Senate Floor” (http://courses.furman.edu)
   3. Case Study: Dodd-Frank
      (For each day we are discussing Kaiser, email the professor questions for discussion from that day’s reading at least an hour before class starts.)
      Oct. 21—Readings: Kaiser, p. 84-149
      Oct. 23—Readings: Kaiser, p. 150-226
      Oct. 26—Readings: Kaiser, p. 227-328
      Oct. 28—Readings: Kaiser, p. 329-386
      Oct. 30—Current Events Discussion
   4. Budget Process
      Readings: D&O, Chapt. 14
      Nov. 4—Simulation paper due at beginning of class. Simulation, Part I in class.

   5. Voting Decisions
      Nov. 6—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 9

IV. External Constraints and Relationships
   A. President
      Nov. 9—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 10
      Nov. 11—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 15
      Simulation Amendments Due by beginning of class.
   B. The Bureaucracy
      Nov. 13-16—Readings: D&O, Chapt. 11

Simulation—Mon. Nov. 16, 7:00-10:00 p.m. (in JH 101)
Nov. 18—Simulation Debrief
Nov. 20—Research Day, no class.

C. The Media
   Nov. 23 — **Readings**: Vinson, “CBC Goes Public” ([http://courses.furman.edu](http://courses.furman.edu))

   **Nov. 24—Research paper due by noon.** (turn in hard copy and upload electronic copy to Box)

Nov. 25-29—Thanksgiving Break, no class.

D. Interest Groups
   Nov. 30—**Readings**: D&O, Chapt. 13

E. The Courts
   Dec. 2-4—**Readings**: D&O, Chapt. 12

V. Reforming Congress?
Dec. 7—**Reading**: D&O, Chapt. 16

**Final Exam Mon. Dec. 14, 12:00-2:30 p.m.**
Simulation Paper

The simulation paper is designed to familiarize students with the member of Congress they are assigned to portray in the simulation and to introduce them to some of the resources available for political science research, particularly topics requiring current information in an environment that changes frequently. It should be 3-4 pages double-spaced using standard fonts and margins; pages should be numbered. It should include appropriate in-text parenthetical citation of sources and a bibliography of sources, including internet sources. See “Sample Citations” under the simulation assignment at http://courses.furman.edu. Citation of internet sources must include an author or organization that provides the information, a title of the specific page on the website where information was obtained, a date where possible, and the web address. If you can’t figure this information out on your own, ask the reference librarian or the professor. Several useful sources are listed below.

The paper should include the following:

Basic Congressional Member Information
In addition to basic information about the member (such as political party, career background, and current committee assignments), discuss information about the member’s state that might have an impact on the legislator’s interests and votes in Congress (the demographic makeup of the state, major industries, economic conditions, ideology, etc.). Also look for information that might indicate whether or not this individual is vulnerable to electoral defeat (for example, tenure in office or margin of victory in the last election or who the state voted for in the presidential election). Be selective with the information you include; where the member was educated and all of his or her previous jobs are probably not particularly useful to you.

Interest Groups and PACs
You should find out how much your assigned senator spent on his or her last congressional election. What groups contributed significant amounts to the campaign? (You may use broad groupings such as agriculture or business rather than specific organizations to answer this question.) Find out how a variety of interest groups have rated your assigned congressional member’s voting record relevant to issues in the simulation. Choose at least four different interest groups. For example, you might look at ratings from a pro-life group, a tax cut group, a liberal or conservative ideological organization, environmental groups, labor unions, etc.

Voting Record and Issues of Concern
You can use the Congressional Record to find out what bills your assigned member of Congress has introduced and what he or she has spoken about on the House or Senate floor during the current congressional session. Find out how your senator has voted on key votes relevant to simulation issues. Thomas (Library of Congress’ Congressional website) provides access to this information as does the Almanac of American Politics. More information will be given to you early in the term about what issues will be discussed in the simulation.

Useful Resources
--The Almanac of American Politics includes biographies of all members and descriptions of states and districts as well as members’ voting records on key legislation and interest group ratings. Available on the library website.
--http://www.votesmart.org/. This is a website put together by Project Vote Smart. It contains information about interest group ratings, campaign finance, and members’ issue positions.
--http://thomas.loc.gov/. Thomas is the official website of the Library of Congress. It includes links to member websites and links to The Congressional Record.

Note: You may use members’ websites to prepare for the simulation, but you may not use them for the simulation paper.

The Simulation Paper is due at the beginning of class on Nov. 4. Electronic copy is fine. Late papers will be penalized 10 points per day.
Literature Review and Research Paper Assignments

**Topic:** Students should choose a question about some aspect of Congress (post-1974) they would like to answer. The question should require you to analyze (how or why) not just describe something. Be sure it can be answered based on evidence and is not just a matter of opinion. Questions can focus on the behavior of individual members of Congress or congressional leaders, specific aspects of Congress like committees or congressional rules, or outcomes on specific issues that Congress has dealt with. **The question cannot be about campaigns or elections.**

The purpose of this project is not to regurgitate what has already been written on Congress; your paper should add to the scholarly conversation on Congress. One way to do that is to apply the concepts discussed in class and in political science literature concerning Congress and its members to new events or situations in Congress. Or you might address questions that have not been discussed in existing research. The paper should not merely present a chronological account of an event or congressional action. The paper must be analytical, making an argument that answers the question and supporting it. You may use accounts of events to provide evidence to support a point, but a retelling of history alone will not satisfy the assignment.

By Sept. 14 students should submit via e-mail a preliminary research topic they plan to answer. In addition, they should include citations for at least 3 scholarly books or journal articles (other than those assigned for class) related to their topic that can serve as a starting point for the literature review. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss potential topics with the professor before Sept. 14. Failure to submit an acceptable topic on time will result in a 2-point deduction from the research paper grade.

Sample Topics:
--What factors help explain the House and Senate’s different versions of health care reform in 2009?
--How has the Congressional Black Caucus’ use of the media to influence policymaking changed from the Bush to the Obama Administrations?
--How do ideologically extreme MCs differ from ideologically moderate MCs in the same party? (You could look at voting behavior or rhetoric or social media messages.)
--How does an MC’s position in Congress affect what he/she communicates on Twitter or Facebook?

**Literature Review**
To help refine the topic, students will write a 5-6 page literature review relevant to their topic. A literature review is a *synthesis* of existing scholarly research on the subject or topics related to one’s research question. It does not merely summarize other studies. Instead, it discusses the theories, themes, collective findings, discrepancies, and gaps in the current research (what do we already know about this topic; what don’t we know; are there reasons to question the validity of existing theories on this topic). It provides a foundation and theory for your own research and places your research in the context of what we already know about the subject. It may provide possible explanations that you will apply to your specific research area. **The literature review will not answer your research question.** For samples of literature reviews, look at articles in scholarly journals (see for example, the *Journal of Politics* or the *American Journal of Political Science*); most of them include a literature review early in the article. I will also put the book *Preparing Literature Reviews* on reserve in the Library; it includes practical advice on how to write a lit review and several sample literature reviews.

By scholarly research, I mean peer-reviewed books and scholarly journal articles that report research, not commentary or journalistic accounts of events. Thus, most of your sources for the literature review will not be found on the internet, though some scholarly journals are available online. You should not include information from newspapers or magazines for the literature review, though these may be appropriate for the research paper. Please note that *CQ Weekly* and *The National Journal* are not scholarly journals, nor is much of what is reported on CQ Researcher. The library’s catalog is useful for locating books. *Academic Search Premier* on the library website can locate scholarly journal articles. Steve Richardson or one of the other reference librarians can also assist you in finding sources.

The literature review should be cited properly with parenthetical citations in the text where appropriate and a bibliography. For citations and references, use the format used in articles in the *American Political Science Review* (see Citation Guidelines at [http://courses.furman.edu](http://courses.furman.edu)). Do not use footnotes or endnotes for citations. The paper should be 5-6 pages double-spaced (not including the references). Please number pages. The literature review should help you to refine your research question, and a revised version of it will become part of your research paper. **Please upload your revised research question and a brief research design (how you will study your research question and your dependent and**
independent variables) to your Box file when you upload your literature review (put them in separate documents). The literature review is due **Oct. 14 at the beginning of class.** Late papers will be penalized 10 points per day.

**Research Paper**

The paper will answer the research question you have proposed. The paper should be modeled after a scholarly journal article and include the following:

--An introduction that explains your question.
--A literature review (this will most likely be a revised version of the one you turned in that provides relevant theory you use in answering your research question).
--Your hypotheses (expectations based on existing literature or your own theory of how things work)
--Your methods, if relevant (particularly important for quantitative research).
--Your findings and the evidence that supports them regarding your question.
--Your conclusions, including the implications or importance of your findings. Answer the so what question.

**Sources:** Students should consult a variety of sources for the paper. In addition to the sources used in your literature review, other sources that might be of use include *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, government documents (such as the *Congressional Record*), or statistics or data from other sources such as the National Election Surveys or Gallup polls. You may also use newspaper and magazine articles. You may use internet sources but be careful with them. Not all of them are authoritative or even credible sources. (See “Resources” at [http://courses.furman.edu](http://courses.furman.edu) for additional resources.)

Students are also encouraged to conduct original research for their papers if appropriate to the topic. For example, if you chose to examine MCs’ use of new media, you might do your own content analysis of their Twitter or Facebook communications. Or you might interview congressional staffers if you have access to an office. You could do your own analysis of press releases or constituent mailings, which are often posted on members’ websites. You might do your own study of members voting records, interest group ratings, or sponsorship of bills to answer a particular research question.

**Guidelines:** The paper should be at least 12 pages double-spaced and no more than 15 (I will not be flexible about this), using standard fonts and margins (see me if you have a question about this). Pages should be numbered. All papers should be properly cited with parenthetical documentation in the text where appropriate and a bibliography (this does not count toward the minimum or maximum page length). For citations and bibliography, use the format used in articles in the *American Political Science Review* (see “Citation Guidelines” under the Research Paper assignment at [http://courses.furman.edu](http://courses.furman.edu)). Please note that for internet sources, the internet address alone is not sufficient. Papers should be stapled or paper clipped; no folders, please. If you use tables or figures, they should be numbered and placed at the end of the paper and referred to in the text of the paper; they do not count toward the minimum or maximum page requirements. Failing to do any of these things will reduce your grade.

**Direct quotes and information paraphrased from sources should also be documented within the paper in parenthetical citations, and quotation marks should be used for direct quotes. Failing to do this is plagiarism, and it will result in a penalty ranging from a reduction of one letter grade to a zero, depending on the severity.** Copying the work of other students is also not acceptable and will result in a similar penalty.

Papers must be carefully researched, present a clear and consistent argument, and be well-written and properly referenced. Papers will be graded on both content and style. Therefore, you should pay as much attention to proper grammar and careful organization of the paper as you do to the research. And remember that spell check on the computer is not fool-proof. Proofread your papers carefully. A first draft should not be the final draft.

You may talk to me at any time about your papers and your research. I am also willing to look over outlines for your papers and offer suggestions.

**Papers are due by noon on Nov. 24 (hard copy and electronic copy).** Ten points will be deducted for each day that papers are late.