PLSI 316 (Fall 2006)
Congress (5 units)
MW, 6:00pm – 8:05pm (CRN: 41602);
Location: Music Building, Room 113

Professor: Dominique Apollon, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science
California State University, Bakersfield
Office Hours: MW, 11:00am – 12:30pm, Tue 3pm – 6pm; or by appt.
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Course Purpose:
The major purpose of this course is to advance the two goals of the Political Science Department, through the study of the legislative branch of the United States national government. As stated in the university catalog, these goals are to 1) provide students, regardless of career aims, “with the kinds of information they will need to function as effective citizens”, and 2) to help students develop an understanding of contemporary political systems and institutions (2005-07, p. 265).

Students will analyze the history of Congress, including the continued relevance of the constitutional framework laid at the nation’s founding. Students will also examine Congressional decision making and the organizational and structural factors that shape contemporary legislative processes. Given the forthcoming midterm elections of November 7, 2006, the course will focus in particular on the electoral process (U.S. Senate and seats in the House of Representatives). Required readings, assignments, and exercises will largely reflect this emphasis unless otherwise noted by the instructor.

Prerequisite: one course in Political Science or permission of the instructor.

Required Texts:

Grading:
20% - Quizzes (4 of 6)
30% - Midterm
20% - Election Exercises
30% - Final Exam

Course Outline (readings subject to addition/omission as announced in class):

Introduction to Course / Congress
Wed. Sept. 13
Founding: 2006 Midterm Elections and the Contemporary Background
Week of Mon. Sept. 18
• Sabato, Chap. One, “The Sixth-Year Itch” (Sabato)
• Sabato, Chap. Seven, “The 2006 Midterms from a Republican Perspective” (Hinderaker)
• Sabato, Chap. Eight, “Motivate the Base: A Democratic Party Strategy for the 2006 Elections” (Moulitsas)
• Sabato, Chapter Nine, “Gentleman, Start Your Engines: History’s Paragraph for the 2006 Election” (Sabato)
• Federalist Papers, No. 51, 10

2006 Midterm Elections and the Contemporary Background Part II
• Dodd, Chap. 16, “From Congressional to Presidential Preeminence: Power and Politics in Late Nineteenth Century America and Today” (Cooper)
• Dodd, Chap. 1, “The New World of U.S. Senators” (Sinclair)
• Dodd, Chap. 2, “A Decade of Republican Control: The House of Representatives, 1994-2005” (Dodd and Oppenheimer)

Elections Part I: Congressional Campaigns
Week of Mon. Sept. 25
• Jacobson, Chap. 2 “The Context”
• Jacobson, Chap. 3 “Congressional Candidates”
• Dodd, Chap. 7, “Keystone Reconsidered” (Fiorina)
• Jacobson, Chap. 4 “Congressional Campaigns”
• Dodd, Chap. 6, “Deep Red and Blue Congressional Districts: The Causes and Consequences of Declining Party Competitiveness” (Oppenheimer)

Elections Part II: Congressional Voting and Public Opinion
Week of Mon. Oct. 2
• Jacobson, Chap. 5, “Congressional Voters”
• Dodd, Chap. 3, “What the American Public Wants Congress to Be” (Hibbing and Larimer)
• Sabato, Introduction, “Election 2006: After Their Record Turnout in '04, Can America’s Youth Do It Again?” (Shaheen)
• Sabato, Chapter Three, “Will Lobbying Scandals Hold Sway on Election Day?” (Birnbaum)

Midterm Review / MIDTERM
Week of Mon. Oct. 9
• Wed. Oct. 11 – Midterm Examination

Political Parties and Representation (Class, Gender, Ideological, Racial/Ethnic, etc.)
Week of Mon. Oct. 16
• Jacobson, Chap. 7, “Elections, Representation, and the Politics of Congress”
• Sabato, Chap. Six, “The Bush Drag: How the President Affects the GOP’s Chances in 2006” (Dickerson)
• Dodd, Ch. 17, “African Americans and the New Politics of Inclusion: A Representational Dilemma?” (Haynie)
Leadership and Organization
Week of Mon. Oct. 23
• Dodd, Chap. 9, “The House Leadership in an Era of Partisan Warfare” (Schicler and Pearson)
• Dodd, Chap. 10 “Obstruction and Leadership in the U.S. Senate” (Evans and Lipinski)
• Dodd, Chap. 11 “Congressional Committees in a Partisan Era” (Aldrich and Rohde)

MIDTERM ELECTIONS WEEK!!
Week of Mon. Nov. 6
• In-class exercises / presentations / discussions (to be discussed later)

The Policymaking Process - Pork Barrel Politics
Week of Mon. Nov. 13
• Dodd, Chap. 12, “The (Dis)Integration of the House Appropriations Committee: Revisiting The Power of the Purse in a Partisan Era” (Gordon)
• Dodd, Chap. 14 “The Politics of Taxing and Spending in Congress: Ideas, Strategy, and Policy” (Rudder)
• Dodd, Chap. 15, “Congress and Policymaking in an Age of Terrorism” (Wolfensberger)
• Sabato, Chap. Two, “Neither Red Nor Blue: The Immigration Dividing Lines” (Escobar)

“Advice and Consent”
Mon. Nov. 20
• Dodd, Chap. 13, “Congress and the Politics of Judicial Appointments” (Binder and Maltzman)

FINAL EXAM – Monday, November 27 – 8:00pm – 10:30pm