

POL 323: The U.S. Congress

Fall 2017

Lecture: MW 5:30pm-6:50pm

Course website: <https://sites.google.com/a/stonybrook.edu/mperess/teaching/usc2017>

Prof. Michael Peress

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SBS N743

OH: Monday and Wednesday afternoon by appointment

Overview: This course offers an overview of the legislative branch of the United States government. We will discuss the electoral process, the nature of representation, legislative organization, the committee system, floor procedure, congressional parties, and inter-branch relations. We will examine theories of lawmaking and the impact of institutional and electoral rules on legislative behavior and outcomes.

Course Requirements:

There will be three major requirements for this course. The first is reading and participation in class discussions. The reading list (subject to modification at my discretion) can be viewed at,

<https://sites.google.com/a/stonybrook.edu/mperess/teaching/usc2017/course-readings>.

Participation counts for 15% of your final grade.

Two short papers and a few mini-assignments will be assigned throughout the semester. These will be related to the readings or to news converge of the U.S. Congress. These collectively will count for 35% of your final grade.

Your will be required to write one research paper (10-15 pages in length).¹ I will make some suggestions for research topics later in the course. You must gain my approval for your topic before you begin. The main requirement is that you go beyond the class readings and perform some amount of original research. Some useful resources can be found at <https://sites.google.com/a/stonybrook.edu/mperess/teaching/usc2017/course-readings>. A 2-4 page proposal will be due on Nov. 20th. The final paper will be due on Dec. 11th. I will be happy to read through a preliminary draft of your paper. The research paper will count for 50% of your final grade.

Readings:

Readings will be posted on the course website. In addition, I would recommend purchasing a used version of an older addition of Walter Oleszek's *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. These can be found on amazon.com for a few dollars.

Course Schedule:

The course schedule can be found on the main course web site (<https://sites.google.com/a/stonybrook.edu/mperess/teaching/usc2017>). I will update the course schedule throughout the semester, so make sure you check the course schedule online before preparing for class.

¹ This is based on 12 point font and double spacing.