

**University of Arkansas - Fort Smith
5210 Grand Avenue
P.O. Box 3649
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3649
479-788-7000**

General Syllabus

PLSC 31333 The United States Congress

Credit Hours: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Laboratory Hours: 0

Prerequisite: PLSC 27533 American National Government

Effective Catalog: 2019-2020

I. Course Information

A. Catalog Description

The study of the evolution of the United States Congress, its structure, the activities of its members, and the way legislation proceeds.

B. Additional Information

This course will be used as an upper level course for the Minor in Political Science.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Subject Matter

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Describe the evolution of the modern U.S. Congress.
2. Discuss theories of representation.
3. Document the organizational structure of Congress.
4. Analyze and evaluate of the motivations and activities of congressmen.
5. Analyze the process of law-making.

B. University Learning Outcomes

This course enhances student abilities in the following areas:

Analytical Skills

Critical Thinking Skills

Students will identify the key aspects of the U.S. Congress as an institution. Students will research, evaluate, and compare information from varying sources in order to

evaluate authority, accuracy, recency, and bias relevant to what it takes for Congress to effectively carry out its constitutional duties. They will generate solutions to/analysis of various issues that impede Congress's ability to fully play its role as the legislative branch of the U.S. government. Students will assess and justify the solutions and/or analysis of Congressional actions.

Quantitative Reasoning Skills

Students will apply appropriate statistical models to understand the actions of U.S. lawmakers. Students will represent statistical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally and will interpret models and data in order to draw inferences on the effectiveness of Congressional members. They will recognize the limitations of quantitative analysis.

Communication Skills (Written and Oral)

Students will develop the ability to proficiently articulate and defend their opinion in front of their peers by composing coherent documents appropriate to get their points across to the class and to the instructor. They will also effectively communicate orally in a public setting.

Ethical Decision Making

Students will identify ethical dilemmas that congressional members often face and apply ethical frameworks to resolve a variety of ethical dilemmas associated with being a U.S. lawmaker.

Global and Cultural Perspectives

Students will reflect upon legislative differences and their implications for consuming news from political cultures other than their own. They will demonstrate understanding of the U.S. Congress in a global environment. Students will also demonstrate how the U.S. Congress impacts or is impacted by different political cultures.

III. Major Course Topics

- A. The historical and structural evolution of Congress
- B. Elections and political parties
- C. Goals and strategies of Congressional members
- D. The role of leadership
- E. Lawmaking
- F. The relationship of Congress to the Presidency and the Supreme Court
- G. Policy issues and Congress