Content: The U.S. Congress—like legislatures in all republics—plays a critical role in determining how preferences in the electorate get mapped into national policy outcomes. This course will attempt to develop a picture of Congress’s role in this mapping. The depth of our analysis will necessarily be limited by the length of the term, but the scope of the class will be comprehensive in the sense that we will discuss members of the House and the Senate (a.) in relation to their constituents, (b.) in relation to each other, and (c.) in relation to members of the U.S. government outside of Congress. The course is divided into three sections to reflect this division. Sequentially, we will review some major scholarship pertaining to each of these sets of relationships.

In the conclusion of the course we will look at the prospects for reform in the U.S. Congress. We will also consider Congress from a comparative perspective—e.g., by comparing it to state legislatures across the U.S., and national legislatures in foreign countries.

Philosophy: We will use this class as an opportunity to appreciate the power of formal (i.e., mathematical) modeling for making sense of politics. There are least two reasons for studying the “rational choice” approach in the context of the U.S. Congress: It is in congressional scholarship that the tools of formal modeling have seen their fullest expression in political science, and, it is in this field that the approach has accumulated some of its most impressive empirical successes. Moreover, the critical assumption of rational, strategic actors is highly defensible in the context of the Congress.

Grading: The final grade will be based on the following allocation of points.

- Participation: 10%
- Bi-weekly quizzes: 40% (four total, worth 10% each)
- Final paper outline: 5%
- Final paper: 30%
- Final exam: 15%

Note! Quizzes will be taken on the following dates: April 17; May 1; May 15; May 29. A rough draft of the final paper will be due in week 5 (on April 29) and returned in week
The final paper will be due in week 10 (on June 5) and available for pick-up during finals week.

I will hand out a detailed description of my expectations for the class paper and the final exam when I assign them. As I will explain, a large part of your course grade will depend on the clarity and technical quality of your writing.

**Expectations**: My expectation is that you attend every class and make a serious effort to engage the material. There will be approximately 55 pages of reading per class. If you are reading correctly, the assigned readings will not take more than 5 hours per week. This is a very reasonable amount of reading for a college student. Do the assigned readings before the lecture for which they are assigned.

**Academic Dishonesty**: Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law in accordance with the Dean of Students’ guidelines (see the url below). Do not engage in this behavior!

http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx

**Course books**: The following textbooks are highly recommended.


**Course Outline**: All the readings in the outline below are either in one of the required texts or available on Blackboard.

The dates next to each section give a rough idea of when we will discuss the topics in lecture and what the corresponding reading will be. Note however that the dates and readings listed below are only approximate and are subject to change. For instance, Rep. DeFazio will be visiting our class at some date that has yet to be determined. We may move ahead or fall behind for unforeseen reasons, in which case it may necessary to modify the outline below. After each lecture I will make a definitive statement about the reading that should be done before the next lecture.
I. Introduction  (Weeks 1 & 2)
   1. Course Logistics
   2. A Congressional overview
   3. A Primer on formal models of politics
      Shepsle & Bonchek (1997), pp. 5-35
      Cox & McCubbins (2007) Chapter 4, pp. 79-98

II. Members of Congress in their districts  (Weeks 3 & 4)
   1. The concentric circles of constituent influence
   2. Congressional candidates and congressional voters
      Jacobson (2001), Chapters 3 and 4
   3. Legislators as single-minded reelection seekers
      Mayhew (1974), pp. 1-77

III. Members of Congress in the Legislature  (Weeks 5, 6, 7)
   1. MCs organize Congress to meet their reelection needs
      Mayhew (1974), pp. 78-180
      Quiz 1
   2. The industrial organization of Congress
      Cox (2006); pp. 141-158
   3. A brief history of the Senate up to LBJ
   4. Parliaments versus legislatures
      Laver (2006); pp. 122-138
      Quiz 2
   5. Parties and in Congress
      Hershey (2010) pp. 5-44
      Smith & Gamm (2013) pp. 167-192
   6. Procedural aspects of the Congressional budget process
      Thurber (2013); pp. 319-346
      Oleszek (2011); pp. 46-92
      “House Ways and Means Committee” (Wikipedia)
   7. The politics of tax reform
      Birnbaum & Murray (1987), ch. 1-2
      “House and Senate Budget Committees” (Wikipedia)
“House Appropriations Committee” (Wikipedia)

**Quiz 3**

**IV. Members in relation to the other branches and bureaucrats (Weeks 8 & 9)**

1. **Lawmaking and the presidential veto**  
   Cameron (2000), pp. 1-31

2. **Energy policy and the evolution of executive-legislative relations**  
   Oppenheimer (2013) 287-318

3. **Congressional control of the federal bureaucracy**  

**V. The prospects for institutional reform in Congress (Week 10)**

1. **A history of gerrymandering in Congressional elections**  
   Dodd & Oppenheimer 2012

   **Quiz 4**

2. **The prospects for reform in U.S. politics**  
   Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser (2008), chapter 15

3. **Review**  
   Jacobson (2001), Chapter 8, 237-270

   **Writing assignment** Due June 5  
   **Final Exam** Monday June 9, 1-3