

Political Science--

POLS 408 (6 credits, Internship Credit), WI

POLS 386 (3 credits Policy Analysis)

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University of Hawaii at Manoa Undergraduate Congressional Fellows

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Syllabus Notes: This course is restricted to Manoa Undergraduate Congressional Fellows. It is not open enrollment. The Laulima listing for POLS 408 will serve as the exclusive, private communication for course discussion.

Student Outcomes

Students in this course will work through models of the representation process derived from the practices of the Congress. The literature selected is intended to complement the experience of each of the Congressional Fellows in the Member's office.

Students will review specific kinds of policy procedures used in the House and the Senate, because the work of each of the Houses of Congress is affected by the procedures of the other House. When you finish this course you will know from experience and literature: (1) the work flow of the Washington congressional office; (2) the role of constituency communication and case work for the Member's office; (3) practical professional techniques for handling calls or visits that may be disturbing to the legislative workplace or possibly dangerous.

You will be able to (1) brief a Member or senior staffer on the content and implication of information hearings; (2) backstop your hearing briefings with some knowledge of the background of proposed legislation, the structure of the economy, and the sometimes unseen political institutions which have grown up out of common practices; and (3) Produce both short-term and longer term analyses of policy problems. The readings and exercises in this syllabus are intended to bring the student back from daily activity to deliberation about legislative process at a more removed, or abstract level, and to apply some of the history of the Congress to interpreting and understanding daily tasks.

Registration is restricted to the four Manoa Undergraduate Congressional Fellows who have been selected in a competition for the Fellow positions in the current semester.

Readings for the Semester

The following monographs are available from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and internet used book dealers. Other retail sites in the DC area may also carry them. These books are also in most libraries. You can order now for delivery by Amazon or Barnes and Noble to Hawaii or to the Washington, D.C. dorm in time for the first week of classes. Most are available as Kindle books to download from Amazon.

1. Robert Caro. *Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate*. 002 (Paper and kindle). Because of the extraordinary length of this manuscript, I want to draw your attention to Johnson on his way to being Majority Leader and his particular organization of the work of Senate committees.
2. Walter Oleszek. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. Congressional Quarterly Press, 2013[HB and Kindle].

3. Jacob S. Hacker & Paul Pierson. *Winner Take All Politics*. Simon & Schuster, 2010 [paper and kindle]
4. Robert Draper. *When the Tea Party Came to Town: Inside the U.S. House of Representatives Most Combative, Dysfunctional and Infuriating Term in Modern History*. 2012, Simon & Schuster. (paper and Kindle)
5. Mark Strand, Michael S. Jonson, Jerome F. Climer. *Surviving Inside Congress*. Congressional Institute. (Kindle and Paper)
6. Mark Leibovich. *This Town*, 2013 Blue Rider Press, (Kindle and paper)
7. Alan S. Blinder. *AFTER THE MUSIC STOPPED: The Financial Crisis, the Response, and the Work Ahead*.. 2013, The Penguin Press. (HB and Kindle)

Airplane Reading:

Lyndon Johnson, Master of the Senate sets the scene for the development of an exquisite set of perceptions on power and policy. Until you have seen some of the tactics that Johnson mastered, the formal descriptions of the processes in Congress will be pretty vague. One of the most important observations you can make is of the precision with which Johnson knew what each member needed to take home, which members would be intransigent to his pleading (or threat), and exactly when to count votes on the floor of the Senate. Let's admit that the House is different in many ways from the Senate, but assuredly the skills of a Johnson are the skills anyone who wishes to be Speaker of the House must have well in hand. Please spend some time in Caro's book before you arrive in Washington. It is important to read Part IV and Part V to understand the depth of the issues facing the nation in the 1950s and 60s, and the focus that Lyndon Johnson, the Southerner, brought civil rights legislation in the United States.

Leibovich writes a work of humor that is particularly telling of the motives and social strategies of the Washingtonite. It is not a serious study of power in the Senate, as was Caro's book, and it does not lay out procedures, but it does give a picture of the place that you need to carry with you. Some of the social conventions might never be explained, and you might never experience some of them, but Leibovich's comments on the posture of funeral attendees says a lot about self-presentation.

Surviving Inside Congress introduces the building, the history, the procedures—of the whole of the Congress from the standpoint of a new staffer. It has detailed descriptions not only of the processes of getting bills in order, and getting them heard, but also the related budgeting issues that must be resolved in all government actions. Perhaps more critical for your enlightenment, it is an instructional guide for the new staffer on surviving in Washington—written in a sufficiently non-partisan fashion that both Republicans and Democrats may benefit from it. The paper version is available, but you should learn to search the Kindle version on your reader (or phone). **Please prepare to read this on the airplane! You will have adequate regular course readings during your time in Washington.**

Please acquaint yourself with these books before arriving in Washington, D.C. They convey not only factual information about the operation of the Congress and the social climate in Washington, but help set a framework for understanding the city.

Regular Course Readings—for which you have written assignments:

We will read these initially in the order Oleszek,, Draper ,Hacker & Pierson, Blinder.

This order to some extent alternates technical with comic or tragic. Oleszek presents the foundation of how the Congress works. Oleszek has been a highly proficient technical insider for over 30 years. He has written analyses and position papers for the leadership of both parties from the beginning of his tenure at the Congressional Research Service. I would like to finish the Oleszek by the 8th week of the

semester.s

Draper writes of the collapse of the traditional legislative process of the House. He writes tragedy, not just because he is angry and disappointed, but because the tasks that had to be done, and the enormous errors of the past that needed to be fixed could not be touched in the new ethos of the House, held captive to a “damn the government” cult. The details of these tragic errors are set out in the Hacker and Pierson and the Blinder books.

Hacker and Pierson lay out the “Thirty Year War” in the United States. This is not the one in the 16th Century, but in the tail end of the last and the beginning of this Century. While the Blinder book talks about the economy as its central focus, particularly the banking system, Hacker and Pierson follow the playout of this game in the political system, for it is not only money and risk that was redistributed, but the essence of democracy, the right to participate in public choice. In short, one might accuse them of arguing that the American democracy was sold, and sold for cheap. Do the facts mustered and the depth of their argument support this facile conclusion?

Blinder comes to the study of economic collapse first as a very highly skilled mathematical economist—He has years of experience modeling complex economic phenomena. He has also served as the Chair of the Federal Reserve Board. He knows the content of banking and financial market regulations and the consequences of failing to follow them or of dismissing regulation on some pretext or other. The “Great Recession” was not happenstance, but flowed from specific relaxing of banking laws, specific patterns of compensating brokers and traders, and specific conscious failures by the bond and security rating agencies to honestly rate the risk of “securities” that were woven of thin strips of bad mortgages that could never be untangled.

The syllabus sets out the main discussion lines, spread over 15 weeks. As the Internships get underway, I may specify a few additional readings on the Laulima site which may have specific due dates.

Week1: Leibovich: This Town

Questions and Assignments for the Oleszek monograph.

The questions are ordered in part by topics and by the book authors. Please plan to finish the Oleszek questions by responding to them on Laulima in the first 8 weeks of the semester. The questions for the last three readings are pitched at a more global level, and ask you to respond to reviews and other commentary on the readings. . Please note that you must all read every chapter—but only one person briefs the chapter on the web site. Most important, your comments must be made in the spirit of discussion and question as those of a person who has read the material. This is not an opportunity to be snide, disrespectful, or make fun of another person's argument. It is an opportunity to engage in the expansion of a discourse. I will generally throw out some questions on each of the readings, in response to the written brief and your comments.. **Please respond to these on the Laulima POLS 408 Discussion section. Our comments on these books are open discussion, so they should not be buried in e-mail. Please enter your comments into the Laulima text—do not try to attach a file.**

Weeks 2 through 8 -- Oleszek:

Oleszek, Ch 8a

Oleszek describes two distinct methods for bringing House and Senate bills into conformity with each other, conference committee and "ping-pong." **Please describe the circumstances in which Oleszek believes that the back and forth process will produce a more efficient outcome (of a single bill).**

Oleszek, Ch 5, a

At times it seems that the heart of Chapter 5 is a discussion of rules, suspending rules, kinds of amendments, and strategies for achieving advantages. **Please evaluate the different tactics discussed in terms of whether you think they will likely lead to an accommodation of the majority with the minority on a given bill. You may illustrate your discussion with the treatment of a bill as described in the Congressional Record or the Journal or another record of actions taken in the discussion of the bill.**

Oleszek, Ch 3, b

It appears to be the case that bills are **often multiply referred** in the Congress. Some of these referrals have time restrictions which pull the bill back to the floor if the second committee does not report it out. In Hawaii the second committee in either house can hold any bill--that is report it as no action. **Why would one want to limit the power of the second committee in the Congress by putting the bill back on the floor if no action is taken?**

Oleszek Ch3a

Bills which lack wide support, the vast majority of all bills, are typically not expected to pass. They are commonly sidetracked by committees. This seems to be a tremendous waste of staff and Member time, producing bills which will always be discarded, just to show some kind of action to the constituency. **Construct a serious argument in favor of maintaining a place for bills of initial little interest.**

Ch 3e

In discussing a Republican proposal that committee members should defer committee votes in markup sessions to a time certain when all members could be in attendance was a subterfuge that allowed members to skip all the hard work and content of the markup session and show up merely to vote. **Defend Dingell's position.**

Oleszek, Ch 2. b

House and senate are required to separate authorizations from appropriations. The similarity may end there. A house chair has complained that the Senate can put anything into an appropriations bill and let the House bills sit, untouched.

How can this happen? What are the implications?

Oleszek, Ch 9a

Which acts and congressional rules strengthen the Congress's power of oversight?

Oleszek, Ch 9b

How would you argue that the appropriation power is sufficient to give Congress effective oversight over the operation of the government?

Oleszek, Ch 2, a

There is a discussion of "controllables" and "uncontrollables" at the beginning of the budget process chapter. **Please argue the benefits or necessity of moving the whole of "uncontrollables" into the annual budget world of "controllables."**

Oleszek, Ch 4, a

The current House schedule of Tuesday through Thursday days for session was in part inspired by Speaker Gingrich's heavy pressure on new Republican House members to retain their homes and families in their districts, and be "home" every weekend--that is, to be people of the district, rather than politicians from Washington.

Argue a defense for this practice, and a counterargument for Congress Members staying in DC for all but the longest recesses.

Oleszek, Ch 1,

Much of your assigned work to date has assuredly been constituency work. **What is the conflict between constituency work and the other obligations of member of Congress?**

Oleszek, Chapter 1, c

Oleszek gives the documentary sources for major House and Senate rules on pp 6 and 7 of his text.

What have you been assigned to read that covers the rules of your house, and where in Oleszek's list, as far as you can tell, does its content originate?

Oleszek, Chapter 1, a

Both "logrolling" and "compromise" are terms used to describe legislative processes? What is the difference between them? **If we look at the recent history of the House, would you say there was too little of which one (logrolling or compromise)? What might have been different had there been more of it?**

Oleszek, Chapter 1, b

Former Speaker Nancy Pelosi is alleged to have kept a "favor file" which cataloged the favors done for House members. **If you had a favor file of your own, how would it work?**

Oleszek, Ch 6, a

Discuss the role of unanimous consent agreements in the execution of legislation in the Senate. Identify any major drawbacks to using consent agreements to the parties involved.

Oleszek, Ch 7a

How does cloture work in the Senate?

Oleszek, Ch3, d

Hearings, as broadcast on CSPAN, often contain much more detailed technical information and more well-developed national positions than is typical for state legislative hearings. Sometimes, it seems as if the folks testifying are like perch or trout invited to a fish fry.

Describe any recent CSPAN hearing in which one might see the fish being grilled. Why? What interests were at stake?

Oleszek, Ch 3c.

Defend the proposition that there should be no term limits for committee chairs in the House or Senate.

Oleszek, Ch 2, d

The 1974 budget act included the creation of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). The text points out that the CBO's provision of "scoring reports" almost any report of the likely outcome of a bill--compared to doing nothing--can create intense political pushback in House or Senate.

Please identify some action in the past year in which the CBO report on a proposed bill initiated or fed dissent in the Congress over the bill or some policy contained therein.

Oleszek, Ch 2, c.

Oleszek describes a sequence of actions in which a relatively mildly restrictive rule on government expenditures for abortions was escalated into the very restrictive Hyde amendment.

What was the fundamental House rules point of order that led to the escalation of the restrictiveness of this act?

Week 9 –Draper. When the Tea Party Came to Town

How did the Tea Party ultimately change the processes of the House? Did the Tea Party members undermine the power of their Republican Speaker? Is there any evidence the Tea Party Members have a larger stage in mind, such as the position of the United States in world trade and economic or capital transactions?

Weeks 10-12–*How to Survive in Congress*.

How to Survive is in some ways unique: It is an instruction—to help the staffer's execute assigned duties for the Member, support the Member's responsibilities in committee work, keep to the law in ethics issues, understand the limitations and priorities of the office. The book is absolutely fascinating. The only other thing I can think of in English that is such a good instructional manual and reference is a book in print for nearly a hundred years in updated editions, *Machinery's Handbook*. Like *How to Survive*, the machinist's manual tells you how to do almost everything—and the rules or for doing it.

Please write two essays, based on *How to Survive* and any other current material you find in the daily Capitol Hill journals (Politico, CQ, etc.): (1) A sketch of the instructions for a new Member, outlining how an office must be set up in order to do the work of both constituent relations and committee membership. Remember that there will be different ways to do this—you must pick one that you can explain on the basis of *How to Survive*. (2) A guide for new employees on the Hill that will help them make the transition from student or intern to someone who must pay rent, get the dry cleaning picked up, figure out which tasks require urgent attention, and which can be put off—and how to forge working relationships with other staffers.

Weeks 12-13Hacker and Pierson:

As you read Hacker and Pierson, please respond to the following assertions with a brief, four page essay. First – the evidence. Hacker and Pierson draw on work by economists like Picketty and Saez on the substantial growth in US inequality (and on comparisons between the US and other countries), but argue that many of the explanations preferred by economists (the effects of technological change on demand for skills) simply don't explain what is going on. First, they do not explain why 'inequality is so top-heavy' – that is, why so many of the economic benefits go to a tiny, tiny minority of individuals among those with apparently similar skills. Second, they do not explain 'cross national variation' – why the differences in the level of inequality among advanced industrialized countries, all of which have gone through more-or-less similar technological shocks, are so stark. While Hacker and Pierson agree that technological change is part of the story, they suggest that the ways in which this is channeled in different national contexts is crucial.

Many economists are skeptical that politics explains the outcome, suggesting that conventional forms of political intervention are not big enough to have such dramatic consequences. Hacker and Pierson's reply implicitly points to a blind spot of many economists – they argue that markets are not 'natural', but instead are constituted by government policy and political institutions. If institutions are designed one way, they result in one form of market activity, whereas if they are designed another way, they will result in very different outcomes. Hence, results that appear like 'natural' market operations to a neo-classical economist may in fact be the result of political decisions, or indeed of deliberate political inaction. Hacker and Pierson cite e.g. the decision of the Clinton administration not to police derivatives as an example of how political coalitions may block reforms in ways that have dramatic economic consequences.

Hacker and Pierson argue that too many books on US politics focus on the electoral circus. Instead, they should be focusing on the politics of policy-setting. Government is important, after all, because it makes policy decisions which affect people's lives. While elections clearly play an important role in determining 'who' can set policy, they are not the only moment of policy choice, nor necessarily the most important. The actual processes through which policy gets made are poorly understood by the public, in part because the media is not interested in them (in Hacker and Pierson's words, "[f]or the media, governing often seems like something that happens in the off-season").

We can identify the causal mechanisms intervening between some specific political decisions and non-decisions and observed outcomes in the economy. We cannot yet provide a satisfactory account of how these particular mechanisms work across a wider variety of settings and hence produce the general forms of inequality that they point to.

Weeks 14-15– Alan Blinder. When the Music Stopped.

This is an exercise in imagination. Blinder was chair of the Federal Reserve Bank in an earlier moment. He knew how the financial system worked, and he had a good idea of the indicators of early failure. Putting yourself into his shoes, **(1) describe the general policy themes of the administration in which he served, and the Fed that he ran. (2) Based on his analysis of the 2008 crash, what pieces of the banking and security laws or regulations should he have lobbied for or enforced on his own as Fed. Chair when he was in office?**

Meetings Planned

At this point I plan to be in Washington, DC around the middle of the semester. I plan to visit your offices while I am there and schedule several seminars with guest speakers. Please hold evenings that week and Saturday evening for planned events. The seminars are mandatory class meetings, scheduled at breakfast, suppertime, or both during the workweek. Please do not plan to skip any of these unless you are in the infirmary. I will let you know more about these as arrangements are confirmed.

Flow of Work:

Journal: The key communication on the flow of your work will be the weekly reflective journal. Please send your journal entry by Webmail on the UH mail system, so that no history is inadvertently left on the machine that you use. UH Webmail will post a copy of your communication to your own UH mail account. Please use only UH email to communicate with me—you can log on from any

browser, anywhere.

The Subject Line of your mail must read “**Congressional Journal: your name.**”. I am going to filter the journals by this subject line, so please do not alter or shorten it. General notes on reflective journals: The reflective journal is not merely a calendar of activities or a list of tiny actions taken. It is a thoughtful analysis of the implications of what you have been doing. What is it for? What does it do? Is there a history here? What kinds of people might be affected?

Please do not report items that are confidential within the office. I have no need to know such items. Please be careful that you use proper formal address when you refer to other Members of the Congress. Smart-ass short remarks and nicknames have no place in these communications.

What are you learning about the organization of a congressional office? Do you find descriptions of how things work in documents of the Congress or the Congressional Research Service?

Please send the journal, 2 single spaced pages, at the end of the week. I would like to see the journals in my mailbox by Sunday evening, 6 PM Hawaii Time. Since this is the end of the weekend, there is little excuse for submitting the journal late.

A note on your first journal entry: Please, among other things, tell me what the office staff has asked you to read!

Final Paper:

In the last month of the Internship, I would like you to write a final paper. I am asking you to think of topics as the semester progresses, but not to tie down anything until April 1 (About the 12th week of the semester). Please suggest to me three potential topics for your paper. You may do a policy history of some piece of legislation in the current session or an analysis of proposed legislation that was not passed (yet), but which has had ample reporting on it from the Congressional Research Service, the Congressional Budget Office or the Office of Management and Budget. Our target here is a 20 to 25 page paper, including full references. [Before you protest, please think of how much harder this would be if I had asked you for a 10 page paper on critical national issues.]

The final paper is due in my e-mailbox by Noon, Hawaii time on the last day of the semester exam period. I must point out that I am obligated to turn in grades in such a way that the records of people graduating are complete. Leaving grades open and assigning incompletes is not consistent with the Manoa Undergraduate Congressional Fellowships.

Grades and Allocation of Work:

POLS 386 – Your final paper.

POLS 408 – Your journals, essays and responses to the questions in the syllabus; discussions in any meetings or conference calls. Your job performance: an evaluation by your supervisor and may count up to one half of your grade.

Directed Research (Other Department Minimum 3 credits) –The research project for which you have contracted with another department. This is an important part of the internship. We want you to have a research project that is of interest and within the specialization of a Manoa faculty member in some department other than Political Science.

This is an opportunity to spread the sources of your work beyond the internship instructional faculty, and to take advantage of the good experiences you have had in any of a variety of departments at Manoa.

Overall Standards:

This internship is not only an academic course, but an employment relationship. You are working for one of Hawaii's four representatives in the Congress of the United States. This has to guide your behavior and judgment. There are some basic rules and some cardinal sins.

1. Be unfailingly polite—you may be the only chance a constituent has to contact his or her representative in the Congress.
2. Do not express your dissatisfaction with Washington, D.C., the Congress, or the United States Government. You are working there—and there are any number of other Hawaii constituents in colleges all over the country who would gladly take your place. If for any reason you cannot handle the work, the office relationships, the city, or whatever, please let us know, and we will extricate you from the situation. If we must do so, we shall endeavor not to cause undue embarrassment to you or to your office.
3. Show up for work on time
4. There is no such thing as a “Spring Break.” You are on duty at the will of the Congress.
5. There is no such thing as a “TG its Thursday!” You will be in the office, clean and sober on Friday morning.
6. Dress for Congress, not the Club. Your clothing must be sufficiently formal to be seen in the office when the Congress is in session. There may be other rules that vary by office for out-of-session periods, but these are set by the individual offices.
7. You are responsible for asking to have all the standard training required to work in a congressional office. There may be waiting lists for some particular classes, please ask your office to get you on these lists as soon as possible. There is a mandatory harassment class, and more positive sessions on using the Congressional Research Service facilities. There is training for the mail batching and constituent response system of each office—and these may be a little different. Any time the Congress is not in session is a window in which you should plan additional training or briefing experiences.
- 8. You may not, without the advance written permission of the course professor, Dean Denise Konan and your office supervisor, take any additional employment. In particular, you may not work in the bar and restaurant industry, or any occupation or activity which involves late evening hours.**

Violation of office work rules is a very serious issue. If an office asks us, we will “repatriate” a student, even in the middle of the semester. You may occasionally hear of an intern somewhere who was put in a corner and assigned virtually no work. This is not a sign of a great experience, but evidence that the office has decided the student is unsalvageable, and sticking him or her in the back corner without any duties is less embarrassing than asking that the student be sent home. It is still a glaring failure in the main part of the experience.

Critical Transmissions:

Mail: UH Webmail (or UH Gmail mailer)
Journal: UH Webmail, specific subject line (NOT an ATTACHMENT!)
Paper: PDF or Word (Windows) Attachment to e-mail.

Any Emergency Communication: E-mail with descriptive subject line;

Phone call and voice-mail message to 808-956-8665 during the business week or my cell: 808-292-5341 on evenings or weekends (After 9AM Hawaii Time)

Please, if you encounter any problems, let me know by e-mail right away. Sometimes there are misunderstandings and these can usually be cleared up easily. Please do not let misunderstandings or pseudo-conflicts generate running disasters.