

Political Science 337  
The Congress and Legislatures  
3 Semester Hours Credit  
Fall 2007

Professor: John Holcombe  
Time: TH 6-9  
Location: The University Center

**Textbooks:**

1. Contemporary Congress, (Fifth Edition), by Loomis and Schiller.
2. Congressional Travels by Fenno

**Office Information:** My office is located in AB1 room 315 G. The phone number is 294-1467. My e-mail address is HOLCOMBE @shsu.edu. The Fax number is 936-294-4172.

**Course Description:**

This course deals chiefly with structural features of the U.S. Congress and the Texas State Legislature. It also examines such major influences on these legislative bodies as the chief executives, interest groups, political parties and constituents.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To study the powers and procedures of the U.S. Congress and the Texas State Legislature
2. To examine major influences on these legislative bodies
3. To understand the historical development of the U.S. Congress and the Texas State Legislature

**Attendance Policy:**

1. Attendance will be taken each class period at the beginning of the period.
2. Attendance is encouraged, since the major exams will be based on the lecture notes.
3. Each evening class meeting will count as two attendance periods: one before the break and after the break
4. There will be two points taken off the final semester average for each absence in excess of three absences. On the other hand, points will be needed to the semester average for having very few absences, as indicated below:

| Absences | Points Added |
|----------|--------------|
| 0        | 6            |
| 1        | 4            |
| 2        | 2            |

**Exams and Grades:**

There will be a mid-term examination and a final exam, each worth 25% of the semester grade. These exams are all essay and are based on the class notes only. The final exam is not comprehensive; it simply covers the class notes after mid-term test.

The average on the reading exams makes up another 25% of the semester grade. Each reading exam is based on one chapter from the Loomis and Schiller book and is announced at least one week in advance. The format of a reading exam is to answer 10 multiple-choice items. There will be five reading exams. The lowest grade of the five reading will be dropped.

The remaining 25% of the grade will be based on a book review of the Fenno book. That review will be due on November 29. A separate information sheet is attached concerning the book review.

Make-up reading exams will be given December 6. The make-up reading exam will be based on a chapter different from the any other reading exam. The make-up on the mid-term exam will be arranged on an individual basis with the instructor.

The following point distribution will be used to determined letter grades:

A= 90 -100+

B= 80 -89

C= 70 -79

D= 60 -69

F= 0 -59

### **Other Policies:**

Policies concerning the following topics may be found on the SHSU webpage at:  
<https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

1. Academic Dishonesty
2. Americans with Disabilities Act
3. Religious Holidays
4. Visitors in the classroom

### **Instructor Evaluation:**

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

### **Classroom Rules of Conduct:**

The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline is found at the following link:  
<http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>

All cell phones and other devices that would disrupt class should be shut off.

### **Sexual Harassment:**

Sam Houston State University has a sexual harassment policy. A copy may be obtained from the Director of Human Resources on campus.

## TOPICS

(All chapters indicated are from Loomis and Schiller.)

1. FORMAL POWERS OF CONGRESS- Chapter 2.
2. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AS LEGISLATIVE ACTOR- Chapter 6.
3. INTERST GROUPS AND LEGISLATURES - Chapter 3.
4. CONGRESSMEN AND CONSTITUENTS - Chapter 1.
5. STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF CONGRESS- Chapter 9.
6. STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF THE TEXAS STATE LEGISLATURE
7. ROLES AND NORMS OF TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVES
8. CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS-Chapter 4.
9. POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS- Chapter 5.
10. STAGES OF A BILL BECOMING A LAW IN CONGRESS- Chapter 7 and 8.
11. CONGRESSIONAL REFORM- Chapter 10.
12. LEGISLATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVES

## POLITICAL SCIENCE 337

### Information about the Book Reivew

The book assigned to be reviewed is Congressional Travels by Fenno. The due date is November 29. There will be a reduction of ten points off the grade on the final draft for each one weekday late.

You may submit a preliminary draft to me on November 1. I will return this preliminary draft to you with corrections and suggestions on November 15. I will give a tentative grade on this draft, if the draft is at least 8 pages long.

Your book review should be about 8 to 12 pages long. This review will count 25% of the semester grade.

There are two problems frequently made with reviews. The first is to make many mistakes in spelling and punctuation. The second is to include very little analysis and evaluation.

You should summarize many of the major points made in the book. However, this is not enough! You should also evaluate what you have read. Here are some points you might consider in your evaluation:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the book?
- Which is the best chapter? Why?
- Which is the worst chapter? Why
- What are the implications of the findings?
- What further research might be done on these topics?

Avoid the use of the first-person singular (“I”, “me”, or “mine”). The review is already assumed to be your paper.