

United States Congress

Colgate University

Class

Spring 2023
 Persson 109
 Section A: MWF, 9:20-10:10
 Section B: MWF, 10:20-11:10



Instructor

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 Office hours: Mondays, 12-3;
 Thursday, 8:30-9:30, or by
 appointment

Course Description

No one understood the inherent messiness of politics better than the architect of our Constitution, James Madison. While others praised virtue and the innate goodness of Americans, Madison reminded them that political power had always “divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good.” The only firm basis for government was not benevolence, but badness. It was, of course, a base and ugly foundation – but it was at least solid and dependable. Yet for all his pessimism Madison had one peculiar hope: a system of representation, he wrote, would “refine and enlarge the public views.” The institution of Congress, in other words, could actually purify and broaden the American mind, and elevate us above “temporary or partial considerations” (Federalist #10). Congress would at once secure our liberty *and* make us worthy of it. Lawmaking would be taken out of the people’s hands and given to those elected to deliberate and pass legislation for the whole country; members of Congress would be accountable to the people. What are we to make of Madison’s grand hope for Congress in the midst of his general pessimism? How should we understand Congress in our own time? This is a course is a study of that question, and an examination of the legislative branch of our government, told through the story of its elected officials and its great laws.

Required Texts

Students are required to own the following texts (in order of reading):

Ritchie, Donald. *The U.S. Congress: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
 Johnson, Dennis. *The Laws That Shaped America: Fifteen Acts of Congress and Their Lasting Impact*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
Readings on Congress.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class grades will be based on the following:

- **Participation (5%).** Come to class every day with the assigned readings done, and be ready to contribute to the discussion based on the assigned reading questions. There will also be short presentations on various legends and folklore about Congress.
- **Reading Quizzes (15%).** Moodle quizzes on the readings for upcoming classes, about once per week.
- **Three Reflection Essays (30%, 10% each).** Short essays on certain disputes about Congress based on the primary historical sources. Late submissions will receive no higher than a B+.
- **Three Exams (50% – 15%, 15%, 20%).** Exams on each section of the class. Exam III will have a comprehensive section. There will be study guides.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, or the use of someone else's text without quotes and proper citation, is considered a violation of the university's standards of academic integrity and will be grounds for serious disciplinary action. A first offense will be an F on the assignment; a second offense will be an F in the class and a referral to the Dean.

Learning Services

If you have a disability that prevents you from doing as well as you could in this class, be sure to contact Evelyn Lester, Director of Academic Support and Disability Services, to discuss your specific needs and set up arrangements with the professor. Lynn's office is in the Center for Learning, Teaching and Research, and you can email her at elester@colgate.edu, or call her at 315 228 7375.

The Writing and Speaking Center

All writers and public speakers can benefit from constructive feedback on their essays or presentations. At the Writing and Speaking Center, a free service for all students, peer writing consultants can help you with a draft's focus, organization, grammar, style, citations, and many other aspects. If you're preparing a speech or oral presentation, peer speaking consultants can help you organize your content or practice your delivery to an audience. All meetings are private, and you may visit at any stage of your process, from clarifying your initial ideas to reviewing a final draft or practicing a presentation. See <http://www.colgate.edu/writingcenter> for more information or to reserve an appointment. The center is located in 208 Lathrop Hall. Phone: (315) 228-6085.

Course Outline

Students are required to read the following readings for each day of class. If classes get behind schedule, we will just continue in order of the readings.

Week 1 – The Founders' Congress

January 23

Welcome and Introduction

January 25

U.S. Congress, Chapter 1 – The Great Compromise

January 27

U.S. Constitution

Week 2 – Republicanism, Democracy, and Representation

January 30

James Madison, Federalist #10

February 1

James Madison, Federalist #51, #57, and #63

February 3

U.S. Congress, Chapter 2 – Campaigns and Constituents

Week 3 – Congress and the Government

February 6

U.S. Congress, Chapters 3 – In Committee; Chapter 4 – The Floor

February 8

U.S. Congress, Chapter 5 – Checks and Balances

February 10

U.S. Congress, Chapter 6 – The Capitol Complex

Week 4 – The Northwest Ordinance and Louisiana Purchase

February 13

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-17)

February 15

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 1 (pp. 17-34); Henry Clay, Defense of the American System (1832); Daniel Webster, Liberty and Union Speech (1837)

February 17

Exam on Weeks 1-3

Exam I – February 17

Week 5 – The Kansas-Nebraska Act

February 20

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 2 (pp. 35-52)

February 22

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 2 (pp. 52-61); John Calhoun, Speech on the Oregon Bill (1848)

February 24

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 2 (pp. 61-74); Lincoln-Douglas Debates (1858)

Week 6 – The Homestead Act and Morrill Land-Grant College Act

February 27

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 3 (pp. 75-89)

March 1

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 3 (pp. 89-94); The Yale Report (1828); Justin Morrill, Speech on National Colleges (1872)

March 3

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 3 (pp. 94-104)

Week 7 – The Nineteenth Amendment

March 6

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 4 (pp. 105-118)

March 8

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 4 (pp. 119-127); Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Solitude of the Self (1892)

March 10

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 4 (pp. 127-139); Gloria Steinem, Testimony on the Equal Rights Amendment (1970); Phyllis Schlafly, What's Wrong with Equal Rights (1972)

Week 8 – The National Labor Relations Act

March 20

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 5 (pp. 140-156); Mauritz A. Hallgren, The Right to Strike (1933)

March 22

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 5 (pp. 156-167); Robert Wagner, Speech on the National Labor Relations Act (1935)

March 24

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 5 (pp. 167-174)

Week 9 – Social Security

March 27

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 6 (pp. 175-183); Huey Long, Every Man a King (1934)

March 29

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 6 (pp. 183-193); James Wadsworth, Speech on Social Security (1935)

March 31

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 6 (pp. 193-201)

Week 10 – The Interstate Highway Act

April 3

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 9 (pp. 261-272)

April 5

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 9 (pp. 272-292)

April 7

Exam on Weeks 4-9

Exam II – April 7

Week 11 – Civil Rights and Voting Rights

April 10

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 10 (pp. 293-306)

April 12

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 10 (pp. 306-326); Senate Debate over the Civil Rights Bill (1964); Barry Goldwater, Speech Opposing the Civil Rights Bill (1964)

April 14

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 10 (pp. 306-326); Fannie Lou Hamer, Speech at the DNC (1964)

Week 12 – Medicare and Medicaid

April 17

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 11 (pp. 333-346)

April 19

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 11 (pp. 346-354)

April 21

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 11 (pp. 354-366)

Week 13 – The Environmental Protection Act

April 24

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 12 (pp. 367-374)

April 26

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 12 (pp. 375-381); Rachel Carson, A New Chapter in *Silent Spring* (1963)

April 28

Laws that Shaped America, Chapter 12 (pp. 381-393); Edmund Muskie, Speech on Earth Day (1970)

Week 14 – The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

May 1

Frontline Documentary, *Obama's Deal* (2010)

May 3

Readings on the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

May 5

Summary and Conclusion

**Exam III – Section A: Tuesday, May 9, 9-11am;
Section B: Friday, May 12, 3-5pm**