Congress and the Presidency stand at the heart of the American system of government. The president is arguably the most powerful person on earth, and many have cited Congress as one of the greatest examples of democracy in our time. Yet Congress is consistently unpopular among members of the public, and some scholars seriously question whether the presidency functions successfully as an institution. Furthermore, power-sharing between the two branches is often a contentious and vitriolic affair. Each new president enters Washington with a vow to end, in George W. Bush's words, excessive partisanship and finger-pointing and leaves the city years later having failed to do so.

What accounts for the conflict between these two branches? The method of selection in each branch? The internal governance structure? Or the modern political environment? Under what conditions does each branch function effectively?

This term, we will examine these and other pertinent questions. This will require a significant amount of dedication and effort on all of our parts. Just as you should expect thorough preparation from me, I expect the same of all of you. Therefore, it is important that everyone complete the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss them.

Evaluation this term will be based on a scale of 1000-possible points, distributed as follows: 1) Regular participation - 250 points; 2) Four 2-page response papers based on the readings - 300 points; 3) Two simulation papers: 400 points; 4) Success in simulation: 50 points.

A major component of this course will be a simulation of the presidential-congressional politics of Medicare reform. More details on this will follow, but as part of the simulation you will write two 5-page papers: 1) a background and strategy document based on your assigned role (due Monday, April 28); 2) a post-mortem assessment of the simulation, along with insights about the application of political science theories of Congress and the presidency (due June 4).

Response papers should be based on a reading or readings assigned for the day students hand them in (though they may incorporate insights from other readings) you are not expected to do outside research for these short papers! You are free to choose what to write about, although papers should make an argument (more than one argument is probably too much for a short paper). You have some degree of choice over when to write these papers, but you must write your first by the end of week two (April 11), your second by the end of week four (April 25), your third by the end of week six (May 9), and your fourth by the end of week eight (May 23). I will grant extensions only in cases of serious emergencies beyond a student's control; late papers drop 4% of the grade for each day, or portion thereof, that they are late.

Books available at the Carleton College Bookstore:


Other materials are either available online, or are on reserve (RR) at Gould Library.
1 Monday, March 31 Introduction
   - Constitution of the U.S. (online)

Perspectives on Presidential/Congressional History

2 Wednesday, April 2
   - Federalist Papers 51, 52, 62, 70, 71, 72 (online)

3 Friday, April 4
   - Nelson, Chapter 5: Stephen Skowronek, Presidential Leadership in Political Time

4 Monday, April 7
   - Dodd & Oppenheimer, Chapter 15: Joseph Cooper, The Twentieth Century Congress

Simulation Day: Medicare Background

5 Wednesday, April 9
   - Handouts

Presidential Power

6 Friday, April 11
   - Neustadt, Chapters 1, 2

7 Monday, April 14
   - Neustadt, Chapters 3, 4

  Wednesday, April 16
   - Neustadt, Chapter 5

Elections and Constituencies

9 Friday, April 18

10 Monday, April 21

11 Wednesday, April 23
   - Dodd & Oppenheimer, Chapter 4: Robert Erikson & Gerald Wright, Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections

12 Friday, April 25

Simulation Day: Position-Taking

13 Monday, April 28

Institutional Growth and Structure
14 Wednesday, April 30
   - Nelson, Chapter 15: John P. Burke, "The Institutional Presidency"

15 Friday, May 2
   - Dodd and Oppenheimer, Chapter 9 Tim Groseclose & David King, "Committee Theories Reconsidered"

Monday, May 5 (MID-TERM BREAK)

Parties and Interest Groups

16 Wednesday, May 7
   - Dodd & Oppenheimer, Chapter 10: C. Lawrence Evans, "Committees, Leaders, and Message Politics"

17 Friday, May 9
   - Dodd & Oppenheimer, Chapter 12: John Aldrich and David Rohde, "The Logic of Conditional Party Government: Revisiting the Electoral Connection"

19 Monday, May 12
   - Nelson, Chapter 14: Sidney Milkis, "The Presidency and the Political Parties"

Polarization and Power Struggles

20 Wednesday, May 14
   - Bond & Fleisher, Chapter 2: Gary Jacobson "Party Polarization in National Politics: The Electoral Connection"

21 Friday, May 16
   - Nelson, Chapter 16: Terry Moe, "The Presidency and the Bureaucracy"

22 Monday, May 19
   - Bond & Fleisher, Chapter 7: Barbara Sinclair, "Hostile Partners: The President, Congress, and Lawmaking in the Partisan 1990s"

23 Wednesday, May 21
   - Bond & Fleisher, Chapter 8: Richard Fleisher and Jon Bond, "Partisanship and the President's Quest for Votes on the Floor of Congress"

Simulation Day: Committee Markup
24 Friday, May 23

Simulation Day: Final Vote
25 Monday, May 26

Public Policy in a Separated System

26 Wednesday, May 28
   - Dodd & Oppenheimer, Chapter 13: Sarah Binder, "Congress, the Executive, and the Production of Public Policy: United We Govern?"

27 Friday, May 30
   - Dodd & Oppenheimer, Chapter 14: I. M. Destler, "Congress and Foreign Policy at Century's End: Requiem on Cooperation?"

28 Monday, June 2
   - Bond and Fleisher, Chapter 9: Richard Fleisher and Jon Bond, "Polarized Politics: Does it Matter?"
Conclusion

29 Thursday, June 4