

Common Course Outline
POLS 107
Introduction to the U.S Congress
3 Credit Hours

The Community College of Baltimore County

Description

POLS 107- 3 credits- Introduction to the U.S. Congress offers students a comprehensive introduction to Congress through an investigation of the legislative branch of government as envisioned by the framers of the Constitution and analyzes its growth into the institution it has become. Students review the Articles of Confederation then examine Article One of the Constitution and the powers of Congress. Students will discuss the personalities, the legislative process, partisan battles, elections, congressional procedures and pressures along with the demands from voters and lobbyists.

Pre-requisites: POLS 101

Overall Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. examine the history of the US Congress;
2. outline how the power of Congress has grown and changed since the writing of the US Constitution in 1787;
3. discuss the role the Founding Fathers anticipated for Congress;
4. describe the powers of Congress in Article One and how they have expanded over time;
5. compare and contrast the House of Representatives and the US Senate;
6. identify the steps of how a bill becomes a law;
7. explain the roles of interest groups, political action committees and lobbyists in the functioning of Congress;
8. assess the political and partisan impact of congressional oversight on the legislative and executives branches of government;
9. examine the impact of congressional elections on the workings of Congress;
10. discuss how congressional scandals and actions impact public opinion;
11. outline how abuse of power during the McCarthyism era impacted Congress and the nation;
12. evaluate the impact Maryland's congressional delegation has in Congress; and
13. debate how Congress could be reformed to better function for citizens.

Major Topics:

- I. What did the Founding Fathers and Framers say
 - a. Articles of Confederation

- b. 1787 Constitutional Convention
- c. Legislative branch of government

II. The Powers of Congress: Article One

- a. Term of Office
- b. Enumerated Powers
- c. Elastic Clause
- d. Exclusive Powers of the House of Representatives
- e. Exclusive powers of the US Senate

III. Membership in Congress and its privileges

- a. House of Representatives
- b. US Senate
- c. Congressional Immunity
- d. District of Columbia and US possessions
- e. Maryland delegation

IV. How a bill becomes a law

- a. Types of bills
- b. Proposing a bill
- c. The committee process
- d. Debating legislation in Congress
- e. Voting on legislation
- f. Conference committee
- g. Presidential options

V. Lobbying Congress

- a. Origins and rationale
- b. Role of interest Groups
- c. Types of lobbyist
- d. Role of the media
- e. Fundamentals of lobbying
- f. Role of Political Action Committees, 527's and Super PACS
- g. Federal Election Commission

VI. Congressional oversight

- a. What does oversight do
- b. Constitutional basis
- c. Independent agencies
- d. Subpoena power of Congress
- e. Congressional immunity

VII. Abuse of power

- a. Senator Joe McCarthy
- b. Hollywood Blacklist
- c. Recent abuses

- VIII. Assessment of Congress
- a. Opinions and Suggestions
 - b. Future of Congress

Course Requirements

Students are required to use appropriate academic resources.

Grading/exams: Grading procedures will be determined by the individual faculty member but will include the following:

Class participation in at least 5 collaborations, debates, oral presentations and/or online discussion forums about current political events and topics and their impact on Congress

A minimum of 2 examinations

A research assignment or project on a selected topic of interest that is approved by the instructor

Other Course Information:

This course is a Political Science elective.

Date Revised: 03/27/12