



Boston University Study Abroad
Boston University Washington, DC Programs
CAS HI 327/CAS PO 204

THE MODERN U.S. SENATE: FROM COLLABORATION TO CONFRONTATION

Spring 2016

Instructor: Daniel G. Neumann (DanielGlennNeumann@gmail.com)



Course Overview:

The United States Senate was intended by the Founding Fathers to be the “upper house” of the Congress, a deliberative, calculated check on the popular passions of the House of Representatives. Throughout much of the twentieth century, and during the postwar decades in particular, the Senate often lived up to this lofty ideal. Despite significant partisan and regional disagreements, the Senate was able to maintain a productive, active role in both foreign and domestic policy. At its best, the Senate was characterized by strong working relationships, and even many close personal friendships, that transcended philosophical and personal differences.

Yet over the past 30 years, the Senate has become much less collegial, and as a result, much less effective. As veteran Senators leave office, they are replaced by newcomers who lack the institutional knowledge and respect for the Senate of their predecessors. An increasing number of members come to the Senate by way of the House of Representatives, where partisan politics has always been a much higher priority. In addition, improvements in airline travel and the constant need to raise money have caused Senators to spend much less time with each other, working together and building valuable relationships. Cameras in the chamber have gradually transformed the Senate from a legislative body to a speechmaking one. All these phenomena have contributed to the decline of the institution, with many negative implications for the nation as a whole.

The purpose of this course is to provide an in-depth examination of the Senate from the end of World War II until the present day. Particularly, we will focus on major foreign and domestic policy issues of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century and discuss the role the Senate played in crafting responses to these challenges. Overall themes the course will cover in detail include 1) **how have the life and duties of a Senator changed over the past several decades;** 2) **what the significant changes are in the Senate as an institution since World War II;** and, 3) **how the Senate has effected change in the country as a whole, and vice versa.**

In addition to our historical overview, we will also discuss specific aspects of Senate legislative procedures, Senate life and a Senator's duties, such as the **judicial confirmation process**, the **ever-controversial filibuster**, the **Senate's role in authorizing the use of military force**, and the **Senate's investigative authority**. Each class will begin with a brief discussion of a specific Senator of historical importance whose career relates in some way to that class's theme. One student a week will be asked to research and briefly provide background on that week's Senator. We will also analyze particular voting patterns of individual senators while determining their impact on the Senate and on the country. This will be counted as part of the student's class participation grade. The course is a history and political science course combined and will traverse the terrain carefully by emphasizing what has taken place in the Senate the last several decades while surveying how the Senate does its job and how it's effective. Key congressional elections will also be highlighted along with political trends that have affected our elected leaders over time.

We will also closely examine many landmark pieces of legislation, their key provisions, and the processes that led to their enactment. These include, but are not limited to, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964), the War Powers Resolution (1973), the USA Patriot Act (2001), and the Iraq War Resolution Act (2002). We will also examine several contemporary pieces of legislation (health care, immigration, financial reform) and discuss why efforts to enact legislation in these areas have succeeded or failed.

Course Objectives:

- Provide an overview of the major points in Senate History since the end of World War II.
- Gain an understanding of the way the Founders envisioned the Senate, and why the Senate has often not lived up to that ideal.
- Identify major legislation of the mid- and late-20th Century, and analyze the Senate's role in passing that legislation.
- Study, analyze, and review some of the major historical and scholarly works on the modern Senate from both political scientists and historians.
- Identify specific differences between the Senate of the mid-20th Century and the Senate of today.
- Discuss specific Senators who have influenced the Senate over the past seventy years.
- Analyze the changes in the two major political parties in the Senate since 1945.
- Learn how certain institutions such as the filibuster and the party campaign committees have evolved over the past seventy years.
- Visit the Senate Historian's office and inspire students to work with existing documents and records.

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance at all class sessions is required. Short bi-weekly assignments (1-2 pages) will be given on the readings. Students will be required to complete five of these assignments throughout the semester. Each student will also be required to write a short book review (5-7 pages) of a book on the modern Senate or on a specific modern-era Senator. A list of possible books will be distributed, but students are permitted to review a book not on the list with the instructor's permission. Final grades will be assessed as follows:

Book Review and Presentation (25%)

Class Participation (25%)

Take-Home Final Exam (30%)

Bi-Weekly Assignments (20%)

Each course will consist of a lecture/presentation lasting approximately one hour, with multimedia footage incorporated. Students are encouraged to ask questions during the lecture. The remainder of the class period will consist of a discussion of the week's readings. We will also spend some time at the beginning of each class meeting discussing recent developments in the Senate, and how they tie into the course.

Details on Assignments:

The **Book Review and Presentation** will consist of a five to seven page review of a book on the modern Senate or on a specific modern-era Senator. Students will assess both the content of the book and the way it ties into the greater themes of the course. Each student will be required to give a brief (10-15 minute) in-class presentation on his or her book.

Class Participation will be assessed based on students' preparation for class, reading of the assigned materials, and participation in class discussion.

The **Take-Home Final Exam** will consist of several essay questions distributed in class, of which students will be required to answer three with essays of 2-3 pages, drawing from class readings, lectures, and in-class discussions.

The **Bi-weekly Assignments** will consist of short essays of 1-2 pages based on the week's readings. Students will be required to complete *five* of these assignments throughout the semester.

Required Readings:

Sarah A. Binder, *Stalemate: Causes & Consequences of Legislative Gridlock* (Brookings Press, 2003)

Lewis L. Gould, *The Most Exclusive Club: A History of the Modern United States Senate* (Basic Books, 2005)

Gregory Koger, *Filibustering – A Political History of Obstruction in the House & Senate* (Chicago Press, 2010)

Neil MacNeil and Richard A. Baker, *The American Senate: An Insider's History* (Oxford University Press, 2013)

Thomas Mann & Norm Ornstein, *Even Worse Than it Looks – How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (Basics Books, 2012)

Terrence Samuel, *The Upper House: A Journey Behind the Closed Doors of the U.S. Senate* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Ira Shapiro, *The Last Great Senate: Courage and Statesmanship in Times of Crisis* (Public Affairs, 2012)

Charles Stewart III, *Analyzing Congress – New Institutionalism in American Politics* (W.W. Norton, 2011)

Julian Zelizer (ed.), *The American Congress: The Building of Democracy*
(Houghton Mifflin, 2004)

Sean M. Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators – The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress*
(Oxford, 2013)

Suggested Readings also cited in class:

Tom Allen, *Dangerous Convictions: What’s Really Wrong with the U.S. Congress*
(Oxford University Press, 2013)

Robert G. Kaiser, *Act of Congress: How America’s Essential Institution Works, & How it Doesn’t* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013)

Burdett A. Loomis, ed. *From Deliberation to Dysfunction*.
(CQ Press, 2012)

Walter Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures & the Policy Process*
(CRS Press, 2013)

Barbara Sinclair, *The Transformation of the U.S. Senate*
(Johns Hopkins, 1990)

Olympia Snowe, *Fighting for Common Ground: How We Can Fix the Stalemate in Congress*.
(Weinstein Books, 2013)

Course Outline:

Week 1. Introduction to the Senate

Reading: Gould Introduction (vii-xiv)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Prologue (3-13)

Reading: Jack N. Ravone, “From the Old Congress to the New” in *The American Congress* (6-24)

Reading: Charles Stewart, *Analyzing Congress* (Chapters 3-6)

Video Clip: “The Empty Chamber” (PBS) <http://video.pbs.org/video/1634527723/>

Week 2. The Postwar Senate and the Marshall Plan

Spotlight Senator: Arthur Vandenberg

Reading: Gould Chapter 10 (175-194)

Video Clip: Vandenberg discusses the Marshall Plan:

www.britishpathe.com/video/senator-vandenberg-on-marshall-plan

Week 3. McCarthyism and the Cold War

Spotlight Senator: Joe McCarthy

Reading: Gould Chapter 11 (195-212)

Reading: Randall Bennett Woods “The Cold War” and Donald A. Ritchie “McCarthyism in Congress” in *The American Congress* (493-528)

Video Clips: Army-McCarthy Hearings: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Po5GIFba5Yg and www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTwDUpbQHJg

Video Clip: CNN’s “The Cold War” clip on McCarthyism

Audio: McCarthy Address to the Chicago Irish Fellowship Club

Week 4. **The Senate of Lyndon Johnson**

Spotlight Senator: Lyndon Johnson

Topic: Senate Leadership

Reading: Gould Chapter 12 (213-232)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Chapter 8 (297-239)

Video Clip: Walter Cronkite Interviews Johnson:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1SDBIcTnyM&noredirect=1

Video Clip: PBS American Experience: Lyndon Johnson



Week 5. **Civil Rights and the Senate**

Spotlight Senator: Everett Dirksen

Topic: The Filibuster

Reading: Koger’s *Filibustering* (chapters 2-6)

Reading: Gould Chapter 13 (233-256)

Reading: Timothy N. Thurber “The Second Reconstruction” in *The American Congress* (529-47)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Chapter 12 (302-334)

Video Clip: Interview with Dirksen: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm6fnQ5no0o

Video Clip: LBJ and Mansfield discuss Civil Rights:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZKPUkzxqvE

Video Clip: LBJ and Dirksen:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2g2UORBoDM



Week 6. **The Senate and Vietnam**

Senate Spotlight: William Fulbright

Topic: The Senate's Role in Declaring War/Authorizing Use of Force

Reading: Fredrik Logevall "The Vietnam War" and Louis Fisher "War Power" in *The American Congress* (584-600, 687-702)

Video Clip: 60 Minutes Clip on Vietnam: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOEH-xAMHRk

Video Clip: Senate Committee Hearing on Vietnam: www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Hea

Week 7. **The Senate and Watergate**

Spotlight Senator: Sam Ervin

Topic: The Senate's Investigative Authority

Reading: Gould Chapter 14 (257-276)

Reading: Mann & Ornstein (TBD)

Reading: Bruce Schulman "Restraining the Imperial Presidency: Congress and Watergate" in *The American Congress* (638-649)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Chapter 10 (245-275)

Video Clip: PBS Looks Back at Senate Watergate Hearings:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfXPcQroX1U

Week 8. **The "Great Senate"**

Reading: Shapiro, "The Great Senate" (pages/chapters TBD)

This class meeting will be a discussion of the major themes in Shapiro's book.

Week 9. **The Bork Hearings and the Contentious Judicial Nominations Process**

Spotlight Senator: Ted Kennedy

Topic: The Senate's Role in Judicial Confirmations

Reading: Gould Chapter 15 (277-294)

Reading: Binder and Samuel (pages/chapters TBD)

Video Clip: Senator Kennedy at the Bork Hearing: www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvFLXFCJvJA

Video Clip: Segment from HBO's "Ted Kennedy in His Own Words"

Week 10. **The Senate and the Media**

Reading: Michael Schudson "Congress and the Media" in *The American Congress* (650-667)

Reading: Richard Fenno, "The Senate Through the Looking Glass" (Will be distributed in class.)

Video Clips: Selected Senate Floor Speeches

Week 11. **The Republican Revolution**

Final Exam Questions Distributed

Spotlight Senator: Jesse Helms

Topic: Campaigns and Elections

Reading: Donald T. Critchlow, "When Republicans Became Revolutionaries" in *The American Congress* (703-731)

Reading: Gould Chapter 16 (295-312)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Chapter 2 (35-52)

Video Clip: Documentary on Jesse Helms, "Senator No": <http://vimeo.com/11203847>

Video Clip: "Hands" Ad: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIyewCdXMzk

Video Clip: A&E "Investigative Reports" Documentary on 1994 Revolution:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CD5JGpgzuSI and www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVKEigOzUwk

Week 12. **Foreign Policy in the Post 9/11 Senate**

Spotlight Senator: Robert Byrd

Reading: Samuel, *The Upper House*

Video Clip: Byrd's Speech on the Iraq War Resolution

www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxWfawiufK0 and www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzLLU9Uxvdc

Week 13. **The 21st Century Senate**

Spotlight Senator: John McCain

Reading: Gould Conclusion (313-320)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Chapter 13 and Conclusion (335-362)

Reading: George Packer, "The Empty Chamber"

www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/09/100809fa_fact_packer

Video Clip: 60 Minutes: "Is the U.S. Senate Broken?"

www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50134480n



Week 14. **Student Presentations**

Book Review Due

Week 15. **Conclusion, Summary & Final Analysis**

Video: "The Last Best Chance" (Full Length Documentary)

The Final Exam will be due during Finals Week, on the last day of the semester.

Guest Speakers:

As available, the course will feature a number of guest speakers throughout the semester. These will include current and former Senate staffers, historians from the Office of the Senate Historian, and other subject matter experts of the U.S. Senate.

Grading and Attendance:

Please contact me prior to class if you are unable to attend any class session. Unexcused absences and lateness will be considered in calculating the grade for participation.

Academic Integrity:

Please read the Boston University Academic Conduct Code. Handing in someone else's work or ideas as your own (even if you worked on it together as a group) constitutes plagiarism, as does using someone's ideas in your paper, even if you do not quote the text word-for-word. I will go over in class the correct procedures for quoting and referencing the work of others. If you have any questions, please ask. Any infraction **must** be reported.

See here for details: www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/

About the Instructor:

Daniel G. Neumann served as a Professional Staff Member with the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation for eight years. He graduated from Boston University with a B.A. in History and participated in the Washington Internship Program as a senior, interning with the office of Congresswoman Sue Kelly (NY). In 2013 he earned an M.A. in Liberal Studies from Georgetown University. His graduate studies focused on the modern U.S. Senate and key pieces of legislation passed in the 21st century.