

## GVPT 473

Fall 2008

E. Uslander

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Course home page: <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/uslander/gvpt473.html>

MW 1-1:50 p.m.

Tydings 2126E, x54151

### The U.S. Congress

This course will examine politics and policy-making in the U.S. Congress. We shall focus on what motivates members of Congress, how bills become (or don't become) laws, how Congress has changed over the past two decades, the roles of committees, parties, and the President in affecting Congressional decision-making, and elections and representation.

The course has its own home page:

<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/uslander/gvpt473.html>

The page has lots of information (including the syllabus, suggestions for the paper design, class notes, information on internships, and useful linkages).

The course requirements include: (1) a midterm examination on October 29 covering material through Topic 6 (20 percent of your grade); (2) a 10 page paper in which you analyze the fate of a bill introduced in a recent Congress (30 percent of your grade, due on December 3 **in class**); (3) a take-home final examination due on Tuesday, December 16 at 1:00 p.m. in my office (40 percent of your grade); and (4) class participation in lectures and discussion sections (10 percent of your grade).

**See the end of the syllabus for the take-home final and the requirements for the paper.** You are also required to turn in a one-page statement of your paper proposal by October 1. This paper will not be graded but if you do not turn it in on time, you will lose one-third of a grade on your course paper for each day late. I encourage you to set up meetings on your paper with either Ms. Bentley-Smith or myself.

All written work must be your own. Copying the work of others, whether that of fellow students or anyone else, constitutes plagiarism. You need not copy a work in its entirety to plagiarize. Should you plagiarize, you will be reported to the appropriate authorities at the university and the case will be prosecuted. The penalties for plagiarism range from failure in the course to expulsion from the university. The university defines plagiarism as using the works of others without attribution. I also include the use of others' words with attribution **if your use of others' words are excessive**. It is fine to quote others when useful. It is wrong to make extensive use of other people's words. The paper should reflect your own ideas and words. If you have any questions about what constitutes excessive use of other people's words, please ask me. The paper is an exercise in research, not retyping others' words. Should anyone have **any** questions, please feel free to consult me. **All cases**

**of plagiarism will be referred to the University Honors Court.**

You are expected to come to class--and not to leave early because you have some other pressing obligations. Doctors and dentists have office hours other than Mondays and Wednesdays at 1:00. Poor attendance will adversely affect your participation grade. The only excuses that will be accepted for missing examinations are medical (YOU MUST HAVE A NOTE FROM EITHER THE HEALTH CENTER OR YOUR DOCTOR) or a verified death in your immediate family. If you are not sick enough to visit a doctor, you are well enough to take an exam. **This note MUST describe the nature of your illness and why you could not take the examination. Merely visiting the Health Center or your doctor is not an excuse for missing an examination. If the note is not detailed, I will call the Health Center or doctor to verify (sorry, but false excuses in the past force me to be skeptical).**

I take notice of who walks out of class when I have my back turned and who shows up late. When you come in late or leave early (even to go to the rest room), it takes my attention away from teaching. If you have to come late because you can't make it here from another class across campus, please let me know and please enter the class by making the minimum disturbance. Also, I expect you to schedule meetings with other professors, job interviews, and appointments with doctors and dentists when the class is not in session.

I expect you to take care with your writing. An excessive number of spelling and/or grammatical errors will lead to a reduction in your grade on both the paper and essay questions on examinations.

Incompletes will not be granted unless: (1) you die; (2) you have a baby; or (3) you can convince me, prior to week 10, that something terrible will happen to you if an incomplete is not granted. Failure to request an incomplete prior to November 17 will, except under the most unusual circumstances, eliminate the possibility of receiving an incomplete. Also, I try to be accessible to answer questions that you might have. If something terrible happens, please wait until a reasonable hour to let me know of your problem.

**\_\_\_\_\_ IF FOR ANY REASON YOU CANNOT TAKE AN EXAMINATION OR HAND IN AN ASSIGNMENT ON TIME, YOU NEED TO CONTACT ME OR MS. BENTLEY-SMITH. BEFORE THE ASSIGNMENT IS TO BE HANDED IN. IF WE DON'T HEAR FROM YOU BEFORE THE DEADLINE, THERE WILL BE NO POSSIBILITY OF A MAKE-UP FOR EXAMS AND YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY LOSE A FULL GRADE FOR EACH DAY LATE FOR PAPERS/TAKE-HOME EXAMS. WE WILL MAKE EXCEPTIONS FOR TRULY EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT YOU MUST BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE TO US THAT YOU WERE UNABLE TO CONTACT US. IF YOU DO MISS AN EXAMINATION, YOU NEED A STATEMENT FROM YOUR DOCTOR VERIFYING YOUR ILLNESS.**

**PLEASE ALSO NOTE: THE COURSE PAPER IS DUE *IN CLASS* ON DECEMBER 3, 2008 AND THE TAKE HOME FINAL IS DUE EITHER IN MY OFFICE OR IN THE MAIN GVPT OFFICE AT 1:00 P.M. ON DECEMBER 16, 2008. THE DEPARTMENT OF**

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS DOES NOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PAPERS. ESPECIALLY IF YOUR PAPER IS LATE, YOU MUST BE SURE TO GET IT TO US PERSONALLY. WE CANNOT ASSUME THAT YOU LEFT IT IN THE MAIN OFFICE AT A PARTICULAR TIME OR UNDER MY DOOR. WE ASSUME THAT ALL LATE PAPERS WERE PLACED UNDER MY DOOR OR IN THE MAIN GVPT OFFICE WHEN WE RETRIEVE THEM.**

**IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:**

- \* **October 1: ONE-PAGE STATEMENT OF YOUR PAPER TOPIC**
- \* **OCTOBER 29: MID-TERM EXAMINATION**
- \* **DECEMBER 3: COURSE PAPER DUE (IN CLASS)**
- \* **DECEMBER 16: TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE (1:30 P.M. IN MY OFFICE OR MAIN GVPT OFFICE ).**

**ALL PAPERS MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME AND WITH HARD COPIES. WE CANNOT DOWNLOAD YOUR PAPERS. AND, SORRY, WE DO NOT DISCUSS GRADES OVER E-MAIL. E-MAILS SENT TO US REQUESTING YOUR GRADES OR FOR US TO DISCUSS YOUR GRADES WILL NOT BE ANSWERED. YOU CAN MAKE AN APPOINTMENT BY E-MAIL, BUT WE WILL NOT ANSWER ANY OTHER GRADE-RELATED QUESTIONS BY E-MAIL. IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE COMMENTS ON ANY ASSIGNMENT, YOU MUST EITHER PICK UP THE ASSIGNMENT DIRECTLY FROM US OR YOU MUST GIVE US A STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.**

**REQUESTS FOR APPOINTMENTS TO DISCUSS GRADES CAN ONLY BE MADE WITH PROFESSOR USLANER. HE WILL BE WILLING TO MEET WITH YOU, BUT NOTE THAT WE TAKE CARE IN OUR GRADING, SO CHANGES ARE EXTREMELY UNLIKELY. IF I DO REREAD YOUR PAPER, YOUR GRADE IS AS LIKELY TO GO DOWN AS IT IS TO GO UP.**

Four books are required for the course. All are available at the University Book Center and the Maryland Book Exchange. They are:

David R. Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection  
L.C. Dodd and B.I. Oppenheimer, eds., Congress Reconsidered, eighth edition  
Mann and Ornstein, The Broken Branch

In addition, you can get the following book as a photocopy (it is out of print) at the College Copy Center, 7319 Baltimore Road.

T.R. Reid, Congressional Odyssey

The topical outline and reading assignments are as follows:

Week/Date    Topic/Assignments

9/3

(1)    Introduction

9/8    NO CLASS

9/10            Conducting research for the course paper  
Ms. Geraldine Foudy, GVPT reference librarian, will discuss resources for the paper.  
The class will meet in McKeldin 6137.

(2)            Policy Formation in Congress

9/15, 9/17    Reid, entire

9/22, 9/24

(3)            What Motivates Members of Congress?

10/1, 10/6    Mayhew, entire

10/8, 10/13    Dodd and Oppenheimer, chs. 7 (Fiorina) and 17 (Haynie)

10/1            **One-page statement of course paper due**

(4)            How Congress Has Changed: Norms

10/15, 10/20,

10/22            Dodd and Oppenheimer, chs.1(Sinclair), 2(Dodd/Oppenheimer), 3 (Hibbing/Larimer),  
15 (Wolfensberger)  
Evans and Oleszek, chs. 1-2

Binder, "Elections and Congress's Governing Capacity," available at  
<http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/extensions/fall2005/Binder.pdf>

Caldwell, "The Antiwar, Anti-Abortion, Anti-Drug-Enforcement-Administration,  
Anti-Medicare Candidacy of Dr. Ron Paul," New York Times Magazine (July  
22, 2007) in course packet and at  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/magazine/22Paul-t.html?pagewanted=print>

**10/27 Midterm Examination**

**(5)** Parties and Committees in Congress  
10/29, Mann and Ornstein, chs. 1-5.  
11/3-5 Dodd and Oppenheimer, chs. 8 (Smith/Gamm), 9 (Schickler/Pearson), 10  
(Evans/Lipinski), 11 (Aldrich/Rohde), 12 (Binder/Maltzman), 16 (Cooper), 18  
(Dodd), 12 (Gordon)  
Ono, "Electoral Origins of Partisan Polarization in Congress: Debunking the Myth,"  
available at <http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/extensions/fall2005/Ono.pdf>  
Poole, "The Decline and Rise of Party Polarization During the Twentieth Century,"  
available at <http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/extensions/fall2005/Poole.pdf>

11/10,11/12,  
11/17 Video on Speaker Newt Gingrich and discussion led by Ms. Gottlieb.

11/24-26 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

**(8)** Congressional Elections

11/19,  
12/1, Dodd and Oppenheimer, chs. 4 (Erikson/Wright), 5 (Herrnson)  
12/3

**12/3 Course paper due**

12/8-10 Video "Vote for Me" and discussion led by Ms. Gottlieb.

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION

Fall 2008

E. Uslander

This examination is due on in either my office, or Ms. Bentley-Smith's office by 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16, 2008. We leave at precisely 1:00 p.m. If you turn in a paper after this deadline, you need to get it to us and you will be downgraded. **WE CANNOT WAIT FOR YOU OR COME TO YOU.**

You have been selected as an advisor to Jack Wolfman, the freshman Democratic member of Congress from the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional district of the Northeastern state of Transylvania. Wolfman defeated Republican Congresswoman Andrea Doria, who was first elected in the Republican landslide of 1994. Wolfman's margin was a mere 50.8% to 48.2% in an upset that no one saw coming, as a Democratic tide swept the state and nation. Two other Transylvania Republican members of the House also lost, but many thought that Doria had a firm hold on her seat. Yet she too sunk in the 2006 Republican debacle.

Doria has announced her intention to gain her seat back in what she hopes will be a more favorable year for Republicans than was 2006. She has spent the past two years building up support in the district for her comeback attempt, serving as volunteer coordinator for the xxx Red Cross chapter. She was an early supporter of John McCain for the Republican nomination for President and over the past six months has served as his state coordinator. McCain has promised to campaign for her and to raise funds for her race. Doria's husband was named Executive of the Year by the Transylvania Chamber of Commerce. He runs a start-up company that provides low-cost medical care to poor people throughout the state and is a member of the Republican National Committee. In 2000 he was the state chair of McCain's committee in the Republican primary.

Even as the national Republican party had moved sharply to the right, Doria remained a moderate. She supported environmental regulations, abortion rights, gun control, and gay marriage. She regularly bucked her party's leadership and was one of the first Republicans to call for the resignation of Majority Leader Tom DeLay when charges of ethical violations were lodged against him. She was a strong supporter of the President's tax cuts and remained a strong backer of his foreign policy, including the war in Iraq until the summer of 2006, when she announced that she favored a gradual withdrawal of American troops, but later indicated that she would support the President's "surge" plan.

Doria had a close first race in 1994, when she won in an upset in what had been a historically Democratic district. She beat a long-standing Democratic incumbent, Horace Race, by 51-49%. Her margin increased sharply in her first reelection contest and remained consistent, if not overwhelming, thereafter:

1996	57.0
1998	55.2
2000	60.0
2002	61.1
2004	56.2

Only twice, in 1998 and in 2004, did the Democrats field a challenger who was widely known in the district.

Wolfman upset her in 2006 by mobilizing a large number of young voters opposed to the war in Iraq. Wolfman is a career military officer who had fought in Iraq and in the 1990 Gulf War when the United States sent troops to Iraq to restore the sovereignty of Kuwait. He resigned his commission in 2006 to run for Congress to express his opposition to the war. He ran as a moderate Democrat against a moderate Republican and defeated a more liberal candidate, State Senator Paul Bite, in the primary by 55 percent to 45 percent.

As House Democrats have displayed historic levels of party loyalty in voting, Wolfman initially strayed from this path. He was openly critical of Speaker Nancy Pelosi's support for Rep. John Murtha (D, PA) over heir-apparent Steny Hoyer (D, MD) for the position of Majority Leader. He also charged that the party should not have mimicked the Republicans in limiting the terms of committee chairs, another move by the Speaker. While he has criticized his party leadership as being too far to the left, his own voting record has been strongly loyal to his party on the floor. Aside from supporting some Republican amendments to cut the budget, he has voted with the Democratic majority most of the time. He has supported his party on 88 percent of all roll calls, somewhat lower than the average Democrat but still far more than even party leaders expected from a freshman from a marginal district. He told the *Transylvania Press*, "I am not voting for big government and for the liberal Democratic agenda. I am voting to protest George Bush's attempt to dismantle government altogether. The middle class cannot survive on a Bush budget." He has been at the forefront of Congressional Democrats in their battle to reduce troop levels in Iraq.

There are rumblings that Race, who came back in 1998 to be elected state Attorney General and has won by convincing margins ever since, might challenge Wolfman in the 2008 Democratic primary, but Wolfman says he is not worried. Wolfman has allies in high places. His wife Jane was a high ranking official in the Hillary Clinton campaign for President in 2008 and Senator Clinton has promised to campaign for him. Wolfman's daughter, Elvira, was a star student in Barack Obama's law school class at the University of Chicago and is serving as a top-level staffer in the Illinois Senator's campaign and the Illinois Senator has called Wolfman "one of the most thoughtful and inspirational new members of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress." Wolfman did not take sides in the Transylvania Democratic primary, but there were rumors that he admired Obama's early opposition to the war in Iraq. Clinton carried the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional district in the Transylvania primary and some political observers believe that Wolfman was trying to protect his own base—and keep harmony in his household—and was reluctant to take a clear position in the primary. Race was a strong supporter of Clinton.

Doria was never a favorite among many Republicans. Her challenges to party orthodoxy made her an outsider in the Congressional party and she never received good committee assignments. She

was assigned to the Veterans Affairs Committee after she was first elected, but later was appointed to Foreign Affairs, even though she had asked for a position on either Ways and Means or on Small Business. Wolfman was treated better by his party's leadership, winning a position on Armed Services.

The national Republican party was ambivalent about another run by Doria. In 2006 the party contributed relatively little to her reelection, many say because she bucked the party line (but others thought the party did not want to get too close to an incumbent with ethical problems in her family). Some conservatives within the party, including John Boehner (R, OH), who was to become Minority Leader, charged her with being too friendly to Democrats (what some Republicans call a "RINO" or "Republican in Name Only"). Democrats have a large number of vulnerable freshmen to defend in 2008 and there is similar concern that the party will not put many resources into Wolfman's campaign. However, her close ties to McCain have solidified her status with the national party and the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee has promised strong support for her in 2008, especially given the paucity of strong challengers to other freshman Democrats.

The district was one of the few in the state that did not support Democrat Marty Blood in his upset victory over Republican incumbent Alvin Lance in the 2000 Senate race in Transylvania as Republicans fared well otherwise throughout the country and in Transylvania. In 2000, Democrats won the offices of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Controller, and Attorney General. The incumbent Democratic Governor, Maurice Fang, set a record in the state by crushing his Republican opponent Ellen Horror with 82 percent of the vote. But the Republicans came back in 2004, when Republican newcomer Nancy Growl ousted Fang for the Governorship by 54 percent to 46 percent. Finn carried the 7<sup>th</sup> district by an almost identical margin (53 percent to 47 percent). Transylvania's economy was in a deep recession and has still lagged behind the recovery in the rest of the country. Continuing economic problems and budget woes have made Growl an underdog for reelection in 2008. Fang will likely attempt a comeback and recent polls show him beating Finn by between 10 and 15 percent.

The district long voted Republican for President. Reagan carried it by 48% to 40% for Carter in 1980, with 14% for independent John Anderson. In 1984, Reagan's victory was more impressive: 56% compared to Mondale's 44%. In 1988 Bush defeated Dukakis by 53% to 47%, just slightly worse than he did nationally. In 1992, however, with the economy slumping in the district, Bill Clinton carried the district with 45% compared to 33% for Bush and 22% for Ross Perot. In 1996, Clinton won again, with 52% of the vote, compared to 36% for Bob Dole and 12% for Perot. Clinton was the first Democratic Presidential candidate to win the district since Franklin D. Roosevelt barely carried it in the biggest landslide in American history in 1936. Al Gore carried the district (and the state) handily, as part of his more general sweep of the Northeast in 2000. Gore received 56% of the vote in the 7<sup>th</sup> district, somewhat less than the 62% he won statewide. McCain, who has promised to campaign for Wolfman, beat George W. Bush by a 15 percent margin in the Transylvania primary and carried 60% of the 7<sup>th</sup> district's Republican vote, compared to 37 percent for Bush. Current trends favor the Democrats in Transylvania. John Kerry defeated George Bush by 58 to 42 percent in the state and by 56-44% in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional district.

The district is heavily suburban, with a considerably above average per capita income, and substantial black, Hispanic, and Asian populations.

Wolfman seeks your advice about how to retain his seat in his race with Doria. You must put aside any partisanship you might have and give him the best advice you can.

Wolfman wants your advice on the following questions: (1) Should he continue his drift to the center, or should he veer more toward his party's base? (2) Should he maintain his position on the Armed Services Committee or seek assignment to a different committee? (3) Which issues should he stress and which should he avoid? (4) Should he try to paint Doria as too conservative on Iraq and economic issues, or might this strategy backfire? and (5) How would you design his reelection strategy in 2008?

A strong answer must draw upon both course reading and lectures. *An answer that does not draw heavily upon both reading and lectures can receive a grade no higher than C. To receive a C, your answer must have at least 3 citations from the reading. To receive a grade higher than a C, your answer must have substantially more citations from the reading.*

## COURSE PAPER REQUIREMENTS

Each student will prepare a paper of approximately 10 pages (typed and double-spaced) about a bill considered in a recent Congress. You must select a bill considered in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005), but if you can make a good case for a bill considered in an earlier Congress, that will be acceptable providing you clear it with me or Mr. Matthewson first.

You must hand in a one-page statement of the bill you intend to investigate by September 28. This paper will not be graded, but failure to turn in this short paper will lower your grade on the full paper by one-third of a grade for each day late. The full paper is due **in class** on December 5.

The bill need not have passed. The focus of your paper should be why the bill passed *or did not pass*. You should consider:

1. the subject matter of the legislation—is this a bill with a lot of popular support or is it highly controversial? What can you find about public opinion on this bill (or the more general idea behind the legislation)? (If you can't find public attitudes about a specific bill on gun control, for example, what can you find about gun control in general?)
2. who was in favor of the bill and who opposed it? What stand, if any, did the President take? What stand, if any, did the majority party leadership take in each House? Were the supporters or opponents “big players” in Congress?
3. to which committee(s) was the bill referred? What happened in committee and subcommittee? Were the committee and subcommittee leaders favorable to the bill? What happened at the hearings for the bill? Who testified in favor of the bill and who testified against it? What was the balance of the testimony? Is there any evidence that the hearings made a difference in the outcome of the bill?
4. for the House: did the bill make it out of committee and to the floor? If not, why not? Did the bill go to the House Rules Committee? If so, what happened (what type of rule did the bill get) and why? Was there a fight over the rule on the House floor? for the Senate: why was the procedure under which the bill was brought up (explain any unusual procedure).
5. what were the coalitions in favor of and opposed to the bill? Can you find evidence of deals made between different factions that might help pass the bill?
6. are there clear-cut electoral implications for how members might vote on the bill? Might these implications differ for Republicans and Democrats?
7. finally, why do you think that the bill passed or failed? If the bill only passed one house, why did it pass that house?

Good places to begin are Congressional Quarterly Weekly, the National Journal, the Congressional Quarterly Almanac, the Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, and the web site for the Congress, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov). We will discuss other resources when the Government and Politics librarian, Geraldine Foudy, talks to the class on September 28.

A key requirement of the paper is that it follow our class discussion. The paper, like the take-home final, must have references to the lectures and especially to the readings. As with the take-home final, a paper with three or fewer references to the reading cannot receive a grade higher than a C. Three references do not guarantee a C.

