

THE POWER GAME:  
A SIMULATION OF WASHINGTON POLITICS

This course examines the nature of political power in American politics, but it does so in an unusual way: by offering students an opportunity to immerse themselves into the political process. The core of the course is a simulation of the U.S. government in which students play the roles of real members of Congress, the executive branch, and interest group lobbyists. The simulation is designed to acquaint students with key national leaders, the complexities involved in policymaking, and the relationship between these different political actors.

Course Grades

Course grades will be based on a research project, a brief quiz, a take-home final exam, and participation.

For the project, you will be asked to research a member of Congress, the executive branch, or an interest group. If you play a representative, you must investigate this member so that you know the member's positions on a range of important issues, how he or she is likely to approach new issues, and the character of the member's district. Executive branch members will be asked to provide comparable information on the president, or another executive branch official. Lobbyists conduct research on an individual interest group. Once assigned a role, it is important that you begin work on this project immediately. I have placed a guide to valuable resource material, along with links, on the course's Blackboard site.

The quiz will focus on the rules of the simulation and congressional procedures. The final is cumulative, and will be based on class readings, lectures, discussions, and films.

Participation grades will be made by the professor with input from the class advisers. These evaluations will be made on the basis of qualitative and quantitative participation. Qualitative participation can be conceived in terms of: (1) realistic behavior and (2) legislative effectiveness. A portion of your grade will depend on quasi-objective indicators -- attendance records, voting records, number of bills introduced, number of bills passed, and so on. Attendance at the simulation is mandatory. If you have more than one unexcused absence from the game, your participation grade will be reduced. To ensure fairness, students are asked to turn in a short self-evaluation

of their performance at the end of the semester to help me determine their grade. The self-evaluation is not required.

Grades will be based on the following formula:

30 %	Project (120 points)
10 %	Quiz (40)
30 %	Participation (120)
30 %	Final (120)

### Required Texts

There are two books and a course manual for this class. The books are available at the PSU bookstore. The manual is available on the course's Blackboard site.

*The Power Game: A Simulation* (Simulation manual)

Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek, *Congress and Its Members*, 12th edition (referred to as "CAIM" below)

Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer, *Congress Reconsidered*, 9th edition (referred to as CR below)

### Course Outline and Reading Assignments

On the next page, I provide a day by day overview of the course, detailing what will be covered in lecture, where you should be in the readings, and the general schedule for the simulation. As you can see, the first part of the course is dominated by lectures, and the second by the simulation. I have listed all of the readings so they correspond to the related lectures. I know this means that there is a lot of reading at the beginning of the course. If you can keep up, you will acquire a better understanding of the material. If you can't get to all the readings immediately, you should try to read the first few book chapters ASAP to get a good introduction to Congress. You need to **read the manual immediately**, since there is a quiz on it in April.

Some changes in the schedule may occur, particularly in the simulation activities. Once the simulation gets rolling you will need to keep in touch with your party leaders to be certain of changes in the daily schedule.

Throughout the quarter, updates about the game will be posted on Blackboard. The students will also be asked to upload information to the Blackboard site. If you do have an Odin account, you will need to get one to access Blackboard.

## SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Activity</u>	<u>Readings</u>
3/30	Introduction	*Manual: read all
4/1	"The Job of Governing" <u>ROLE PREFERENCE SHEETS DUE</u>	CAIM: chapters 1-2 CR: chapter 6
4/3	"Structure, duties, and powers"	
-----		
4/6	"Structure, duties, powers" <u>ROLE ASSIGNMENTS DISTRIBUTED</u>	CAIM: chapters 5 & 8 CR: chapters 2 & 3
4/8	"Policymaking Process"	
4/10	"Policymaking Process"	
-----		
4/13	"Congressional Leadership"	CAIM: 6-7 CR: 7-8
4/15	"The Power of the Presidency" <u>RESEARCH PROJECT DUE</u>	
4/17	First Caucus	
-----		
4/20	<u>QUIZ ON MANUAL</u> Second Caucus	
4/22	First General Session	
4/24	"Shared Governance"	CAIM: 9-10 CR: 14 & 16
-----		
4/27	First committee meetings	
4/29	State of the Union <u>FIRST BILL DUE</u> (except President)	
5/1	"Interest Group Power"	CAIM: 13 CR: 13 & 15

-----  
(\* Read manual right away to prepare for quiz. Also try to read the first few book chapters ASAP to understand your role in the game.)

