

Spring 2007: Congressional Politics

The following is a verbatim recording of the student comments on the Narrative Course Evaluation Forms that I received. Every response is included (i.e., no “cherry-picking” to include only the best responses) and there is no order to the recorded responses.

Please comment on the strengths of the course:

“Lectures & precepts were both fun and very intellectually stimulating. The Mock Congress, while not completely representative of Congress really helped to understand how things work and some of the complications in getting policies passed.”

“I like the statistical approach to politics, so I really enjoyed the systematic analysis in the class. Professor Clinton was very helpful when I had questions.”

“Professor Clinton really cares about his students and making this class interesting and enjoyable. Lectures were always clear and well done. Mock Congress was a lot of fun. Great Class, Professor Clinton!”

“Material was interesting and relevant. Professor Clinton was nice and helpful. Good class!”

“The lectures were interesting.”

“Encouragement of independent/critical-thought. Interesting and engaging lectures.”

“Prof. Clinton didn’t take himself too seriously.”

“Prof. Clinton is awesome – intelligent, funny and enthusiastic about the course.”

“Clinton is an engaging, interesting, and at times funny lecturer. He tries to ground his heavy statistics & theoretical models in real issues.”

“Lectures were easy to follow and I appreciated the interspersed jokes. Course was well-organized and Prof. Clinton...”

“Course was comprehensive, some interesting readings, lots of details. Lectures prepared well, both instructor and lecturer very knowledgeable about subject.”

“The availability of the professor and preceptor. Communication between instructors and students.”

“Lecture – Pr. Clinton is very clear. Reading – straightforward. Prof. & preceptor are kind of cute. Good hands-on congressional simulation.”

“Lectures were clearly presented and interesting. Precepts were helpful in going over course material and were engaging. Both the lecturer and preceptor made an effort to be helpful, which was appreciated.”

“Mixed current congress w/ congress through history.”

“Contributed to my overall knowledge of this subject.”

“Clear presentation of important subject matter.”

“I liked the quantitative aspects of the problem sets. Preceptor was very helpful in office hours. Professor was interested and enthusiastic which helped me become interested and enthusiastic. Both professor and preceptor were very accommodating and fair.”

“Lectures good, I enjoyed the readings.”

“Material presented clearly. Good-natured professors. Problem sets did help understanding of material.”

“Really enjoyed the political science aspect of the course. Connected the science to real world examples and situations very well. The lectures were well structured and helped explain ideas and methods used in the reading. Did a good job of breaking down the math in the readings.”

“This was a great overview of theories related to how Congress works and issues related to the incentives of legislators. I feel like I have a much greater understanding of Congress which makes my understanding of current events much greater as well. Lectures were very interesting because everything we learn is so applicable to stuff we read in the news every day.”

“Good interweaving of contemporary news articles and political science articles. Great exposure to how to critically analyze current events in Congress.”

Please comment on the weaknesses of the course:

“Would have liked to read a few more “good” readings. Excel work was a pain.”

“Sometimes lecture was a little dry, difficult to understand concepts. Not a lot of linking readings to lecture notes, precept and lecture were almost like 2 different classes.”

“Midterm was a little wacky – definitely make the exam shorter or give more time. It would be nice to time the problem sets to we got them back before the midterm and final. Posting discussion questions may discourage students from reading the material they know won’t be posted.”

“...”

“The reading was difficult and the lectures and readings didn’t always correlate well.”

“None.”

“Unnecessary readings, lectures boring.”

“Midterm was way too long.”

“Very statistically/theoretically heavy – esp. 1st half. Might be good to do a case study that can incorporate theory and stories about actual congressional issues/members.”

“1st problem set was way too much busy work. Midterm was poorly crafted. None of the sections actually tested our understanding. Precept readings were long and often uninteresting. I was disappointed that we didn’t learn about the role of policy research in policy outcomes.”

“Perhaps too many readings, not as much discussion on how different readings related to each other and the problem set until nearer the end of the semester.”

“Poorly structured exam.”

“Long problem sets – the assignments are more difficult than material covered in class. Annoying students – too intense and overzealous, but not the fault of the instructors.”

“There were times when it felt there was a lot of reading, particularly in weeks that were heavy in political science.”

“A lot of reading.”

“It was hard and the grading policies were unclear.”

“Impossible to do all the reading.”

“...”

“...”

“Not too exciting lectures or readings.”

“I would have liked a bit more on the role of campaign donors.”

“I think the lecturer should be less dependent on powerpoint. I would like to have had Professor Clinton just talking about more of the issues rather than having a slide for every main point. It would have been nice to have had a little more discussion about current events and how this related to what we discussed.”

“The first problem set and the midterm were inordinately long. I think that Prof. Clinton forgot the standard lengths, etc. during his time off.”