



**Boston University Study Abroad
Boston University Washington, DC Programs**

CAS HI 327/PO204

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

Fall 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 the life and duties of a Senator have 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 or two students a week will be asked to research and briefly provide background on that week's Senator. 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. Each student will also be required to write a short book review (4-5 pages) of a book on the U.S. Senate as well as track and analyze a Senate election in this year's elections. Final grades will be assessed as follows:

Book Review and Discussion (25%)

Class Participation (25%)

Take-Home Final Exam (25%)

Election Project (25%)

Each course meeting 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 four to five page review of a book on the Modern United States Senate. A list of suggested books will be distributed at the first class meeting. Students may also select a book of their choosing provided it meets the requirements of the assignment.

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 two with essays of 4-5 pages, drawing from class readings, lectures, and in-class discussions.

The **Election Project** will consist of a 3-4 page essay and class presentation by each student on a

competitive Senate race in the 2016 Congressional Elections.

Guest Speakers:

At least two course meetings will feature guest speakers. This includes a discussion with a reporter who has covered Capitol Hill, as well as an end-of-semester roundtable with current and former Senate staffers.

Required Readings:

- Lewis L. Gould, *The Most Exclusive Club: A History of the Modern United States Senate* (Basic Books, 2005)
- Burdett A. Loomis (ed.) *From Deliberation to Dysfunction*. (CQ Press, 2012)
- 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)

Graduate Students:

Graduate students will be required to meet for three additional one-hour sessions for in-depth discussion of course material. These meetings will be scheduled at a time of mutual convenience for the students and instructor. Additional readings for graduate students will also be assigned throughout the semester.

Course Outline:

September 6

Introduction to the Senate

Reading: Gould Introduction (vii-xiv)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Prologue (3-13)

Video Clip: “The Empty Chamber” (PBS)

<http://video.pbs.org/video/1634527723/>

September 13

The Postwar Senate and the Marshall Plan

Spotlight Senator: Arthur Vandenberg

Reading: Gould Chapter 10 (175-194)

Reading: Loomis Chapter 1

Video Clip: Vandenberg discusses the Marshall Plan:

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

September 20

McCarthyism and the Cold War

Spotlight Senator: Joe McCarthy

Reading: Gould Chapter 11 (195-212)

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

September 27

The Senate of Lyndon Johnson

Spotlight Senator: Lyndon Johnson

Topic: Senate Leadership

Reading: Gould Chapter 12 (213-232)

Reading: MacNeil and Baker Chapter 8 (197-229)

Reading: Loomis Chapter 5

Video Clip: Walter Cronkite Interviews Johnson:

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

Video Clip: PBS American Experience: Lyndon Johnson



October 4

Civil Rights and the Senate

Spotlight Senator: Everett Dirksen

Topic: The Filibuster

Reading: Gould Chapter 13 (233-256)

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

Reading: Loomis Chapters 7 and 8

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



October 11

The Senate and Vietnam

Senate Spotlight: William Fulbright

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

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

Video Clip: Senate Committee Hearing on Vietnam: <http://www.c-span.org/video/?181065-1/vietnam-war-hearing-1971>

BOOK REVIEWS DUE--STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

October 18

The Senate and Watergate

Spotlight Senator: Sam Ervin

Topic: The Senate's Investigative Authority

Reading: Gould Chapter 14 (257-276)

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

Video Clip: PBS Looks Back at Senate Watergate Hearings: www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfXPcQroX1U

October 25

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: Loomis Chapter 9

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

November 1

Student Presentations on Senate Elections

November 8

NO CLASS—ELECTION DAY

November 15

The Senate and the Media

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

Video Clips: Selected Senate Floor Speeches

November 22

Makeup Date

**This course meeting will be used to make up for any course meetings that may need to be cancelled during the semester.

November 29

The Republican Revolution

Final Exam Questions Distributed

Spotlight Senator: Jesse Helms

Topic: Campaigns and Elections

Reading: Gould Chapter 16 (295-312)

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

Reading: Loomis Chapter 2

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

December 6 (**Final Exams Distributed**)

Conclusion: The 21st Century Senate

Spotlight Senator: John McCain

Reading: Gould Conclusion (313-320)

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

Reading: Mann and Ornstein (Entire Book) Page 7 of 8

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



December 16: Final Exams Due

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.