Syllabus
POS 3424 Congress and the Legislative Process
Spring 2012

Instructor Contact

Instructor	Nathan Ilderton
Office	328 UCF Valencia West Building 11
Office Hours	Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-3:00 pm
Phone	407-582-5611
E-mail	Please contact me via the email function within webcourses for all class related emails. If webcourses is down and you need to reach me, my University email is: Nathan.Ilderton@ucf.edu
Chat	I will be available during my office hours in the class chat room to answer questions. Keep in mind you may not get an immediate response if there are students physically in my office when you ask your question. Please be patient. Chat times can be made by appointment upon a request via course email.

Course Information

Course Name	Congress and the Legislative Process
Course ID & Section	POS 3424 Section W59
Credit Hours	3 Credit Hours
Semester/Year	Spring 2012
Location	Online

Course Description

This course is an examination of the politics of the United States Congress. During the semester we will examine the election of members of Congress, the legislative process, and the place of Congress in the broader context of the American government and democracy. This will mean exploring the rules, norms, individuals, and historical events that have shaped the Congress. We will also discuss the development of the modern Congress and where it is heading in future.

Prerequisite POS 2041 or consent of the instructor.

Course Objectives

This course will equip you not only to describe how Congress operates, but analyze why it operates in the manner it does. Students will become familiar with the theories posited by political scientists to explain congressional process and evaluate the rigor of these theories. At the end of the course, students will be better able to understand and analyze political outcomes within Congress and in the American political system in general.

Required Text

- Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, and Francis E. Lee. *Congress and Its Members*, 13th edition (CQ Press)
- Jacobson, Gary C. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 7th edition. (Pearson Longman).

Course Requirements

Each week you will be expected to complete one module (see course schedule). The weekly module will open at midnight every Monday. Assignments for each module will close at 11:59pm on Sunday night. Assignments will not be reopened except for instances listed below.

Missed Assignments/Make-Ups/Extra Credit

I will not allow missed assignments to be made up without a documented university excused absence. If you know ahead of time that you will be unable to complete a module on time please inform me prior to the closing time. If you cannot inform me ahead of time, please inform me within one business day of the closing of the module either via phone or email. Date and time of makeup modules will be determined by the instructor on a case by case basis. I reserve the right to change the format and questions of makeup modules at my discretion.

Evaluation and Grading

Each module will consist of reading and lecture materials you will be required to read or watch. At the end of the module you will be required to complete an assignment. The assignment type for each module is listed on the class schedule.

Every module assignment includes a short answer question. Short answer questions are open ended questions that should be answered in the form of a paragraph. They are graded on a ten point scale.

Seven module assignments include quizzes. Quizzes consist of true/false and multiple choice questions. True/false and multiple choice questions will be worth one point each. Both your quiz grade and short answer grade will be computed by dividing the total points earned during the semester by the total points available. Be aware that you only get one attempt to complete a quiz or short answer question once you begin it. Quizzes and short answer questions are listed under the assessments tab on the course menu.

Four module assignments include discussion questions in which you will be asked to interact with your classmates. Each discussion contribution will be graded on a 100 point scale based on the accuracy of the answer to the question posed and the quality of the interaction with fellow students. These are listed under the discussions tab of the course menu.

Three module assignments include an internet assignment. These will be assignments that require you to find or examine materials related to Congress on the web and respond to them. These assignments will be graded on a 100 point scale. These will be listed under the assignments tab on the course menu.

The final module will consist of a cumulative question that must be answered with a 750-1000 word essay (approximately 2½ to 3½ double spaced pages). The essay will be due at 5 pm the final day the final exam period (Monday, April 30th). The final module will open the previous Monday (April 23rd) at the usual midnight time. The essay will be graded on a 100 point scale.

Assignments will be weighted in the following manner for calculating the final grade.

Assignment	**Percentage of Grade**
Quizzes and Short Answers	50%
Discussions	15%
Internet Assignments	15%
Final Essay	20%
Total	100%

Final grades will be awarded according to the following scale.

Letter Grade	**Points**
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	59 or below

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the *UCF Golden Rule* for further information. I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. In other words, don't cheat by giving answers to others or taking them from anyone else. I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not ask me to change (or expect me to change) your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

Disability Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Copyright

This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Third-Party Software and FERPA

During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need **not** make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally

identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

Protocols

Classroom Expectations

The following ground rules will help your work in this course to go much more smoothly. Please carefully review these expectations and follow them.

1. Academic integrity will be appraised according to the student academic behavior standards outlined in The Golden Rule of the University of Central Florida's Student Handbook. See http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/ for further details.
2. Don't turn in late assignments. Late submissions will result in a lower grade (will not be accepted).
3. Keep up with the reading. You have quite a few chapters, modules, discussion postings, and e-mail messages to read for the class. Please keep up with the reading. Students who keep up with the reading tend to do much better in this kind of class than those who do not.
4. Don't miss a quiz. Missed quizzes may not be retaken.

E-mail

E-mail will be an integral part of this course. Make sure you:

1. For this course use the email function within the course to communicate with me rather than my .ucf.edu address.
2. Check your e-mail at least twice per week (more often is better).
3. Be patient. Don't expect an immediate response when you send a message. Generally, two days is considered reasonable amount of time to receive a reply.
4. Include "Subject" headings: use something that is descriptive and refer to a particular assignment or topic.
5. Be courteous and considerate. Being honest and expressing yourself freely is very important but being considerate of others online is just as important as in the classroom.
6. Make every effort to be clear. Online communication lacks the nonverbal cues that fill in much of the meaning in face-to-face communication.
7. Do not use all caps. This makes the message very hard to read and is considered "shouting." Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation (you may want to compose in a word processor, then cut and paste the message into the discussion or e-mail).
8. Break up large blocks of text into paragraphs and use a space between paragraphs.
9. Sign your e-mail messages.

10. Never assume that your e-mail can be read by no one except yourself; others may be able to read or access your mail. Never send or keep anything that you would not mind seeing on the evening news.

Discussion Topics

Many of the "rules of the road" or protocols that apply to e-mail also apply to the use of discussions. Use the following conventions when composing a discussion posting:

1. During a Discussion assignment, deadlines for posting to and replying will be specified with each assignment. It is a good practice to always check the Discussions multiple times during the week a discussion assignment is due.
2. If you want to send a personal message to the instructor or to another student, use e-mail rather than the discussions (see above E-mail Protocols).
3. Use the appropriate Discussion Topic; don’t post everything on the "Main" Discussion Topic.
4. Be patient. Don’t expect an immediate response when you send a message.
5. A helpful hint for use with both discussions and e-mail --- Compose your message in your word-processing application in order to check spelling, punctuation, and grammar --- then copy and paste your composition into e-mail or the discussion. This also saves online time.
6. Everyone should feel free to participate in class and online discussions. Regular and meaningful discussion postings constitute a substantial portion of your grade.
7. Respect each other’s ideas, feelings and experience.
8. Be courteous and considerate. It is important to be honest and to express yourself freely, but being considerate of others is just as important and expected online, as it is in the classroom.
9. Explore disagreements and support assertions with data and evidence.
10. "Subject" headings: use something that is descriptive and refer to a particular assignment or discussion topic when applicable. Some assignments will specify the subject heading.
11. Use the "reply" button rather than the "compose" button if you are replying to someone else’s posting.
12. Do not use postings such as "I agree," "I don’t know either," "Who cares," or "ditto." They do not add to the discussion, take up space on the Discussions, and will not be counted for assignment credit.
13. Avoid posting large blocks of text. If you must, break them into paragraphs and use a space between paragraphs.
14. Use the Technical Discussion topic for assistance with technical issues. Use the Help Discussion topic for questions about course material or assignments. There will be specific discussion topics for particular discussions - pay close attention to the assignment, and post appropriately.

Netiquette

"Netiquette" has evolved to aid us in infusing our electronic communications with some of these missing behavioral pieces. However, I expect discussion responses and essays to be written in a formal and academic manner. Therefore, when writing for an assignment you should avoid things such as "emoticons." For example:

:-)
: happy, pleased
:-(
: sad, displeased
:-O
: surprised
>:-|
: angry

You should also avoid abbreviations in your writing. Examples:

LOL
: laugh out loud, "I find this funny"
ROFL
: rolling on floor laughing, really funny
BTW
: by the way
grin
: smiling
IMHO
: in my humble opinion
FYI
: for your info
Flame
: antagonistic criticism

Viruses

A virus can spell disaster. Your use of a reputable anti-virus program is a requirement for participation in this course (good ones include McAfee or Norton).

Also, back up your files: "My hard drive crashed." "My modem doesn't work." "My printer is out of ink." These are today's equivalents of "My dog ate my homework." And these events really do occur and they are really inconvenient when they do. However, these are not valid excuses for failing to get your work in on time.

Technical Resources

Please do not come to me for tech support, I will not be able to troubleshoot most problems wit the website.If you have problems in any of the areas below or for further information go to the corresponding link for assistance.

- UCF Home Page will help find UCF resources
- UCF Computer Service Desk - You can also call the Service Desk at 407-823-5117.
- Learning Online This site provides information on study skills for distance learners, the library and the writing center.
- Buying a new computer or upgrading your current equipment - http://www.cstore.ucf.edu/
- Hardware/Software Requirements
- Technical Discussion Topic: If you have technical questions and/or problems, please post a message to the Technical Discussion Topic. I encourage members of the class who are technically proficient to also monitor this discussion topic and assist your classmates.
- If your equipment problems prevent you from using e-mail from home, there are many computer labs on campus and virtually every public library offers Internet access.

Schedule

Note:. Weekly modules open midnight Monday and stay open for 7 days. Weekly module assignments stay open until 11:59 pm of the date listed

Week/Dates	Topic	Module	Readings	Open Date	Close Date
Week 1	Introduction, Origins and Development of Congress	1 (Quiz)	DOL Ch. 1 and 2	January 9	January 15
Week 2	The Electoral Connection	2 (Discussion)		January 16	January 22
Week 3	Congressional Elections: Context and Candidates	3 (Quiz)	Jacobson Ch. 1,2,3	January 23	January 29
Week 4	Congressional Elections: Campaigns	4 (Internet Assignment)	Jacobson Ch. 4	January 30	February 5
Week 5	Congressional Elections: Voters and National Politics	5 (Discussion)	Jacobson Ch. 5 and 6	February 6	February 12
Week 6	Representation and an Introduction to Lawmaking	6 (Quiz)	DOL Ch. 5	February 13	February 19
Week 7	Parties	7 (Internet Assignment)	DOL Ch. 6	February 20	February 26
Week 8	Committees	8 (Quiz)	DOL Ch. 7	February 27	March 4
	Spring Break	None	None	March 5	March 11
Week 9	Rules, Norms, and Procedures	9 (Discussion)	DOL Ch. 8	March 12	March 18
Week 10	Roll Call Voting	10 (Quiz)	DOL Ch. 9	March 19	March 25
Week 11	Congress and the Executive Branch	11 (Internet Assignment)	DOL Ch. 10 and 11	March 26	April 1
Week 12	Congress and the Courts	12 (Quiz)	DOL Ch. 12	April 2	April 8
Week 13	Congress and Organized Interests	13 (Discussion)	DOL Ch. 13	April 9	April 15
Week 14	Congress and Policymaking	14 (Quiz)	DOL Ch. 14 and 15	April 16	April 22
Week 15	Final Essay	15		April 23	April 30 (5 pm)

Note: All dates and times are subject to change by Dr. Ilderton. Be informed and routinely check the Schedule and Class Discussion topics for any changes or updates.