POS 3424
Congress and the Legislative Process
Fall 2012

Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:45
Classroom 1, Room 308

Instructor: Nathan Ilderton
Office: 313 Howard Phillips Hall, 328 Valencia West Building 11
Office Hours: Main Campus: Tuesday, Thursday 11:00-12:00
West Campus: Wednesday 1:00- 3:00
I will also meet with you by appointment at either campus.
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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.

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 Reading:

There are three books and a course pack required for this class. Each is available at the University Bookstore and through the usual off campus and internet outlets.

- 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*, 8th edition. (Pearson Longman).

If you purchase the text books online please insure that you are purchasing the correct editions of the required texts. This course will adhere to the listed editions; students who purchased the wrong editions are responsible for acquiring any new or changed material.

Assignments, Exams and Grading:
Students will be graded on the basis of three exams (two in class exams and one during the final exam period), a term paper, and quizzes. Final grades will be calculated using the following formula:

Quizzes: 10%
First Exam: 35%
Second Exam: 35%
Simulation: 20%

Exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. The exams will cover reading and lecture material from their section of the course calendar. Exam 2 will be administered during the final exam period, but will <u>not</u> be cumulative.

Six quizzes will be given during the semester. They will be administered at the beginning of the class period, and will take place on the Tuesday of the week they scheduled in the course calendar unless I announce otherwise. I will not give makeup quizzes to late arrivals or for unexcused absences. The only way to prepare for them is to stay current with the reading and attend class. Each student will have their lowest quiz grade dropped; therefore you can miss one quiz without penalty.

During this semester will be conducting a simulated legislative session of Congress. Each student will be assigned a member of the House of Representatives and will learn about the member and his/her constituents, draft legislation, participate in mock committee hearings and a legislative session, and report back to your constituents regarding how you represented them.

There are four graded assignments within the simulation. Details on the content and format of the assignments will be discussed in class. Your simulation grade will be a weighted average of these four assignments. Simulation assignments are weighted based on the amount of work needed to complete each assignment. The assignments are:

1. Member profile (20%): a profile of the member you are assigned and a demographic profile of their district.
2. Bill (35%): a proposed piece of legislation you write for the simulation.
3. Amendment (10%): a proposed amendment to a bill chosen for debate in the simulation session.
4. Constituent Newsletter (35%): a newsletter written to your constituents describing what bills were passed or not passed in the legislative session, your role in the session, and how you served constituents interests during the committee and legislative session.

The grading scale for final grades is as follows:

A: 89.5% or above
B: 79.5% to 89.4%
C: 69.5% to 79.4%
D: 59.5% to 69.4%
F: 59.4% or below

Final grades are just that, final. I will not reconsider them except in a case where I made a computational error in calculating them (I have taught for several years and have yet to miscalculate a final grade). Please do not email or call me asking for a grade change for another reason, it will not happen.

Attendance Policy:
Attendance at lectures is recommended, but not required. I will not be taking roll. However, you are reminded that you are responsible for lecture material on exams and that a portion of your grade will come from unannounced in class quizzes. Further, there is no substitute for attending class and engaging in the course materials for full comprehension. In the past, the students who did best in the course were the ones who regularly attended class sessions.

Makeup Work:
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 miss a scheduled exam please inform me prior to the exam period. If you cannot inform me ahead of time, please inform me within one business day of the scheduled exam period that you need to make up the exam either via phone or email. Date and time of makeup exams will be determined by the instructor on a case by case basis. I reserve the right to change the format and questions of makeup exams at my discretion.

Webcourses
A webcourse section has been created for this class and is accessible through the myUCF web portal at my.ucf.edu. This space will be used to post the syllabus, lecture notes, grades, and important class notices.

Class Topics and Reading Assignments:
Students are expected to complete the assigned reading by the beginning of each week. Please note that I reserve the right to change the lecture and readings schedule as necessary to adequately cover all topics. I also reserve the right to add or subtract readings from the course. Any changes to the schedule or assigned readings will be announced in class. All readings not listed as chapters in a textbook can be found in the course pack.

Week 1: Introduction; The Two Congresses
August 21st, 23rd
Readings: DOL Chapter 1

Week 2: Origins and Development of Congress; The Electoral Connection.
August 28th, 30th
Readings: DOL Chapter 2

Week 3: Congressional Elections: Context, Candidates
September 4th, 6th
Readings: Jacobson: Chapters 1, 2, 3
Suggested: DOL Chapter 3

Week 4: Congressional Elections: Candidates (continued), Campaigns,
September 11th, 13th
Readings: Jacobson Chapter 3, 4
Quiz

Week 5: Congressional Elections: Campaigns (continued), Voters
September 18th, 20th
Readings: Jacobson Chapter 4, 5
Suggested: DOL Chapter 4
Quiz

Week 6: Congressional Elections: National Politics. Representation
September 25th, 27th
Readings: Jacobson Chapter 6, DOL Chapter 5
Member Profile Due September 27th

Exam 1: Tuesday, October 2nd

No Class October 4th Due to On Campus Football Game

Week 8: Unorthodox Lawmaking, Parties
October 9th, 11th
Readings: DOL Chapter 6

Week 9: Parties (continued), Committees
October 16th, 18th
Readings: DOL Chapter 7
Bill Due October 18th

Week 10: Committees (Continued), Rules, Norms, and Procedures
October 23rd, 25th
Readings: DOL Chapter 8
Quiz

Week 11: Decision Making and Roll Call Voting.
October 30th, November 1st
Readings: DOL Chapter 9
Amendments Due October 30th

Week 12: Congress and the President.
November 6th, 8th
Readings: DOL Chapter 10
Quiz

Week 13: Congress and the Bureaucracy and the Courts.
November 13th, 15th
Readings: DOL Chapter 11 and 12
Quiz
Constituent Newsletter Due November 15th

Week 14: Congress and Organized Interests.
November 20th
Readings: DOL Chapters 13

No Class November 22nd, Thanksgiving

Week 15: Congress and Policymaking
November 27th, 29th
Reading: DOL Chapter 14, 15
Quiz

Exam 2: During Final Exam Period, Tuesday, December 11th, 1:00-3:50 pm

UCF Creed and Academic Honesty
Integrity, scholarship, community, creativity, and excellence are the core values that guide our conduct, performance, and decisions.

Integrity
I will practice and defend academic and personal honesty.

Scholarship
I will cherish and honor learning as a fundamental purpose of my membership in the UCF community.

Community
I will promote an open and supportive campus environment by respecting the rights and contributions of every individual.

Creativity
I will use my talents to enrich the human experience.

Excellence
I will strive toward the highest standards of performance in any endeavor I undertake.

As reflected in the UCF creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values, and so are very serious academic offenses. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the university. I reserve the right to report all instances of plagiarism and cheating to the proper administrative offices for the university to consider appropriate punishments. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the University's Rules of Conduct (see http://www.osc.sdes.ucf.edu/).

Students with Disabilities

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 who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Ferrell Commons Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Unauthorized Use of Class Notes

Third parties may be selling class notes and other materials from this class without my authorization. Please be aware that such class materials may contain errors, which could affect your performance or grade. Use these materials at your own risk.