POS 6427
Congress and the Legislative Process
Spring 2015
Tuesday 6:00- 8:50
Visual Arts Building, Room 217

Instructor: Nathan Ilderton
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Office Hours: Monday 3:00-5:00pm (West Campus), Thursday 3:00-5:00pm (Orlando Campus)
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Course Description:
This course is an overview of the important research and theories in the field of congressional politics. The class is designed to give students an understanding of how political scientists approach the study of the U.S. Congress, congressional elections, parties and polarization, and committees among other topics. Students will gain an understanding of the theoretical approaches to congressional research and an appreciation for the difficulties involved in scientifically studying political institutions.

Course Objectives:
- Students will gain an understanding of the dominant theoretical approaches, and a few alternative approaches to studying the U.S. Congress.
- Students will improve their ability to approach the study of politics theoretically in their own research.
- Students will improve their written research skills and their oral presentation skills.

Required Reading:
The weekly readings will be a combination of books and journal articles listed in the course calendar. All journal articles can be found via JSTOR.org. JSTOR can be accessed free on campus via the library. Please consult the library's website for instructions for off campus access.
The following books are available in the University Bookstore and should be acquired for this class.
- Jamie Carson. *New Directions in Congressional Politics.* (Routledge)
- David Mayhew. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. (Yale University Press)
- Diana Evans. *Greasing the Wheels* (Cambridge University Press)
- David Rohde. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform Congress.* (University of Chicago Press)
- Gary W. Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins. *Legislative Leviathan,* 2nd Edition (2007) (Cambridge University Press).
- Sean Theriault. *Party Polarization in Congress.* (Cambridge University Press).
- Jon Bond and Richard Fleisher. *The President in the Legislative Arena.* (University of Chicago Press)

Assignments, Exams, and Grading:
Course grades will be based on participation, work on a research paper, and one in class presentation.

Participation:
The participation grade will be based on two components: talking points submitted each week and participation in weekly discussions. This class will be taught seminar style, meaning that we will engage in a discussion of the weekly readings for the full class period. Your grade will be partially determined by your participation in this discussion. Students are expected to carefully read the assigned readings and be ready to discuss the readings in class.

Weekly Talking Point:
Each student will submit two theoretically-focused talking points on each week's readings. These are due by email (send them to Nathan.Ilderton@ucf.edu with the subject line: Talking Points Week #) by Wednesday at noon each week that the class meets. These talking points will help to shape the seminar discussions, so they should discuss the most interesting theoretical questions or arguments that the student has identified based on the week's readings. They should be submitted as one or more paragraphs outlining the question or argument. Students should submit exactly two talking points each week. Each talking point should refer to one or more specific sections of the weekly readings (with appropriate page references) and each talking point should be focused on a different chapter or article from the weekly readings. Talking points in excess of 200 words will have points deducted and talking points that arrive late will also have points deducted. Each talking point should be preceded by your name and the number of the talking point (for example John Smith's first talking point would be preceded by "John Smith 1:).

Talking points should be motivators for discussion during class. They can be critical of the readings, but should also offer constructive suggestions for improvement. They can try to motivate discussion by asking a question, but should also suggest answers to the question as well.

Each talking point will be scored on three dimensions (each worth up to 5 points for a possible total of 15 points where: 5 is excellent, 4 is good, 3 is adequate, 2 is below average, and 1 is poor):

(a) Theoretical Insight
(b) Creativity/Innovation
(c) Writing

Please note that I reserve the right to count off talking points grades in the event of an unexcused absence.

Research Paper:
Students will write a research paper on a topic related to congressional politics. This project will determine the bulk of students' grade in this class. A topic must be selected and discussed with

the instructor no later than office hours on February 19th. You should feel free to select any topic related to Congress that you wish, even one that will not be covered in class until after the February 19th deadline.

A draft of the paper is due electronically (via email) by class time April 16th. The final class (April 23rd) will be dedicated to the presentation of papers. Each member of the class will be given 10 to 12 minutes to present his or her paper. I will designate one of your class mates as a discussant and the discussant will have 5 minutes to give the paper author suggestions to improve their paper (you will also receive written comments from me). You will then have two weeks to revise your paper. Final papers will be turned in on April 30th, by 7:00pm (the designated final exam period for this class).

I would like these papers to provide you with a foundation to pursue your topics in future research (as a conference paper or possibly a chapter in a thesis, etc.). While I do not expect a final publishable product, these papers should be written in the style of a professional research article. I expect to see the following elements in your papers.

1. An introduction to your research topic.
2. A review of the previous literature on the topic.
3. A theory and testable hypotheses derived from the theory- this will be the most important part of this assignment.
4. Hypothesis tests- this does not have to involve the most advanced statistical methods you know, but some minimal examination of data is required.
5. Summary of your contribution to the literature.

Final grades will be calculated using the following formula:

Talking Points: 30%
Participation: 10%
Paper:
    First Draft: 10%
    Presentation: 15%
    Final Draft: 35%
    Paper Total: 60%

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:
You will get out of this class what you put into this class. You need to attend every week and keep up with the reading to be successful. As you can see above I have worked in penalties for unexcused absences. I will withdraw these penalties only if you have a documented excused absence.

Student Engagement and Financial Aid
As of Fall 2014, all faculty are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete the syllabus quiz by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course, but no later than January 16th. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

The syllabus quiz is a five question multiple choice quiz and can be found on the class' webcourses site under the "Quizzes" tab. The only purpose of the syllabus quiz is to satisfy the financial aid requirement for this class. It will not be included in the calculation of your final grade.

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 class please inform me prior to the class. If you cannot inform me ahead of time, please inform me within one business day of the missed class. Date and time of makeup any make work will be determined by the instructor on a case by case basis. I reserve the right to change the format of makeup work at my discretion.

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.

<u>Week 1 (January 15th): Course Intro</u>

<u>Week 2 (January 22nd): Theoretical Perspectives</u>

- *New Directions*, Chapter 1
- David Mayhew. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*
- Kenneth Shelpse and Barry Weingast. 1994. "Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 19 (May): 149-179.

<u>Week 3 (January 29th): Elections: Candidates</u>

- *New Directions*, Chapter 2

- Mayhew, David. 1974. "The Case of the Vanishing Marginals." *Polity* 6: 295-317
- Jacobson, Gary . 1987. "The Marginals Never Vanished: Incumbency and Competition in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (Feb) 126- 141.
- Bond, Jon, Cary Covington, and Richard Fleisher 1985. "Explaining Challenger Quality in Congressional Elections." *Journal of Politics* (June) 510-29.
- Carson, Jamie. 2005. "Strategy, Selection, and Candidate Competition in U.S. House and Senate Elections." *Journal of Politics* (Feb) 1-28.
- Jamie L. Carson, Erik J. Engstrom and Jason M. Roberts. 2007. "Candidate Quality, the Personal Vote, and the Incumbency Advantage in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 101 (May) 289-301.

Week 4 (February 5th): Elections: Money and the Structure of Elections

- *New Directions*, Chapter 3
- Jacobson, Gary. 1978. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections." *American Political Science Review* (June) 72: 469-491.
- Abramowitz, Alan. 1991. "Incumbency, Campaign Spending, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Politics* 53 (February): 34-56.
- Peverill Squire. 1995. "Candidates, Money, and Voters. Assessing the State of Congressional Elections Research." *Political Research Quarterly* , 48 (December): 891-917
- David R. Jones. 2010. "Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (April): 323-337.

Week 5 (February 12th): Constituents and Representation

- Warren Miller and Donald Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57 (March) 45-56.
- Fenno, Richard. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies." *American Political Science Review* 71 (September): 883-917.
- James Stimson, Michael MacKuen, and Robert Erickson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89: 543-65.
- Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, David C. Kimball, Scott R. Meinke and Katherine Tate. 2003. "The Effects of Political Representation on the Electoral Advantages of House Incumbents." *Political Research Quarterly* 56 (September): 259-270.
- Stephen Ansolabehere and Philip Edward Jones. 2010. "Constituents' Responses to Congressional Roll-Call Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (July) 583-597.

Week 6 (February 19th): Committees

- *New Directions*, Chapter 5
- Tim Groseclose and Charles Stewart. 1998. "The Value of Committee Seats in the House, 1947-91." *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (April): 453-74.
- Thomas W. Gilligan and Keith Krehbiel. 1990. "Organization of Informative Committees by a Rational Legislature." *American Journal of Political Science* 34 (May) 531-564.
- Scott Abler and John Lapinski. 1997. "Demand-Side Theory and Congressional Committee Composition: A Constituency Characteristics Approach." *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (July): 895-918.

Discuss Paper Topic With Dr. Ilderton by February 19th

Week 7 (February 26th): Distributive Politics

- Evans, Diana. *Greasing the Wheels*
- Kenneth Bickers and Robert Stein. 1996. "The Electoral Dynamics of the Federal Pork Barrel." *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (November) 1300-26.

Week 8 (March 5th): Party Leadership

- *New Directions*, Chapter 4
- Rohde, David. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House.*

March 12th: No Class-Spring Break

Week 9 (March 19th): Parties and the Floor

- Gary W. Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins. *Legislative Leviathan*, 2nd Edition
- John Kingdon. 1977. "Models of Legislative Voting." *Journal of Politics* 39 (August): 563-95.
- Stephen Ansolabehere, James M. Snyder, Jr. and Charles Stewart III. 2001. "The Effects of Party and Preferences on Congressional Roll-Call Voting." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26 (November): 533-572.

Week 10 (March 26th): Polarization

- Theirault, Sean. *Party Polarization in Congress*
- Alan Abramowtz and Kyle Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics* 70 (April): 542-55.
- Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2009. "Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?" *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (July): 666-80.

Week 11(April 2nd): Presidential-Congressional Relationship

- *New Directions*, Chapter 10
- Jon Bond and Richard Fleisher. *The President in the Legislative Arena.*

Week 12 (April 9th): Nominations and Confirmations

- Glen Krutz, Richard Fleisher, and Jon Bond. 1998. "From Abe Fortas to Zoe Baird: Why Some Presidential Nominations Fail in the Senate." American Political Science Review 92 (December): 871-82.
- Wendy Martinek, Mark Kemper, and Steven Van Winkle. 2002. "To Advise and Consent: The Senate and Lower Federal Court Nominations, 1977-1998." Journal of Politics 64 (May): 337-61.
- Sarah Binder and Forrest Maltzman 2002. "Senatorial Delay in Confirming Federal Judges, 1947-1998." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (January) 190-99.
- Nolan McCarty and Rose Razaghian. 1999. "Advise and Consent: Senate Responses to Executive Branch Nominations, 1885-1996." *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (October): 1122-43.

Week 13 (April 16th): No Class Meeting

Assignment: Complete First Draft of Paper

Paper Drafts Due Electronically by 9:00pm

Week 14 (April 23rd): Student Presentations

Final Papers Due: Thursday, April 30th by 7:00pm

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. 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, Student Resource Center Room 132, 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.