POS 3424 - Congress and the Legislative Process

Section: 0W60

College of Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Course Information

Term: Spring 2026
Class Meeting Days: ASC
Class Meeting Location: Online
Modality: WW
Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Name: John Hanley
Office Location: 306I Howard Phillips Hall
Office Hours
In-person (306I Howard Phillips Hall) Monday 12:30-2pm; Online (Zoom) Wednesday 1:30-3pm
Email: John.Hanley@ucf.edu

Teaching Assistants

Olivia Pringle

Course Description

POS 3424 COS-POLS 3(3,0)Congress and the Legislative Process: PR: POS 2041 or C.I. Examination of the Congress as an institution undergoing dynamic change; emphasis upon recruitment of legislators, institutional and informal rules, the committee system, legislative procedures. Fall.

This course is a comprehensive survey of the contemporary U.S. Congress. We begin by analyzing the design of Congress, congressional elections, the connections between elections and governance, and how members of Congress represent their states and districts. We then turn to the organization of Congress, focusing on the interplay between political parties and congressional committees. We will take stock of the changes in the operation of the House and Senate, especially problems associated with extended debate in the Senate. We will then analyze the legislative process, congressional budgeting, interest group influence, and the interaction between the Congress and the White House. The place of Congress in the U.S. separation of powers system will be a theme throughout the course.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand and become conversant in the concepts, theories, institutions, programs that comprise and describe Congress.
- Critically assess alternatives in institutional and policy design through thoughtful use of empirical data. *Especially*: (1) conceptualize and develop measurement strategies to describe and test hypotheses about social phenomena; (2) develop causal explanations for the operation of American politics in a manner that facilitates the understanding of other political systems.
- Identify the appropriate venues and strategies for pressing claims in the political system. *Especially*: predict and explain the behavior of political actors with reference to their interests and environment.

Required Course Materials and Resources

Congress and Its Members

ISBN: 9781071981931
Authors: Davidson, Roger, et al.
Publisher: CQ Press
Publication Date: 2026
Edition: 20

Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

Review exercises (20) -- 33% of grade

For each module there will be one or two short, web-based exercises such as crossword puzzles and matching activities to help you review reading material. These will be graded.

Module quizzes (13) -- 33% of grade

Each module will include a quiz with multiple-choice and true/false questions. The quiz will open on the last day of the module and be available for 24 hours for full credit, and 24 hours late with a ten-percent penalty. The quiz is open book and open notes, but you may not consult with others or use the Internet (including AI) to take the quiz. Some or all quizzes may require use of the Respondus Browser —this will be announced at the beginning of the module in which this format will be employed. You may be required to provide written reasoning for your answers to one or more questions. The quiz will require you to understand and be familiar with the readings associated with the module, and any module supplemental material or videos.

Yellowdig (continual through term) -- 33% of grade

A group discussion will take place throughout the semester using the Yellowdig platform. Topics will be added to or removed from point-earning in response to participation and the present subject matter.

Course requirements and syllabus quiz -- 1% of grade

This is the federal/UCF financial aid validation exercise for the course. You may retake it as many times as you wish.

Grading Scale

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Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93.334-100%
A-	90-93.333%
B+	87.667-89.999%
B	83.334-86.666%
B-	80-83.333%
C+	77.667-79.999%
C	73.334-76.666%
C-	70-73.333%
D	60-69.999%
F	0-59.999%

Policies for Course Grade

Makeup Work Policy

Incomplete grades, changes in exam dates, and extensions of assignments will be approved only by the instructor, and only upon evidence of extenuating circumstances. Students participating in religious observances or university-sanctioned activities may receive extensions on assignments consistent with UCF and state policy.

Missed/Late Assignments

Review exercises can be done up to one week late with no penalty. Quizzes can be taken up to one day late, for a penalty of 10%. Yellowdig permits students to exceed by 35%, each week, the weekly point goal. Thus, you can work a little ahead on this assignment, or catch up somewhat if you have fallen behind. (Note: if you fall too far behind, you may not be able to fully recover the points missed within the time frame of the course).

By default, the "running" grade visible to students in Webcourses includes only assignments that have been completed or manually assigned a grade. Students are responsible for monitoring their completion of assignments and, by extension, for understanding the grade impact when missed assignments are ultimately entered as "0."

Attendance

This is an online course. There are no sessions to attend.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Except as expressly authorized in the assignment instructions, all assignments are expected to consist of your own work. Should a submitted assignment be suspected of having been AI-generated, or should it exhibit clear indications of AI (such as erroneous references, failure to adhere to assignment guidelines, or heavy reliance on works and viewpoints external to our course), I reserve the power to use supplemental oral examinations to verify a student's comprehension of the assignment submitted and related module material. This examination will be conducted in person or via Zoom at a mutually convenient time, and the grade may be substituted for the overall grade for the module.

Disability Access & Accommodations

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing equal access to all students with disabilities (ADHD, learning disabilities, Autism, chronic medical conditions, physical disabilities, etc.). To receive consideration for reasonable disability-related course accommodations, disabled students must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and complete the steps required for SAS to review accommodation requests. More information can be found on the UCF Student Accessibility Services website under the Start Here tab or by contacting SAS directly (Ferrell Commons 185; sas@ucf.edu; Phone - 407-823-2371).

Approved accommodations are shared with course instructors via the SAS Course Accessibility Letter. Implementing certain accommodations may require discussion about specific considerations of the course design, course learning objectives, and the

individual academic and course challenges experienced by the student. While students with disabilities or chronic health needs are also encouraged to discuss any course concerns with professors in addition to contacting SAS, professors are not required to facilitate disability-related adjustments to the course unless the professor has received a Course Accessibility Letter from SAS that outlines approved accommodations.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Code of Conduct at Student Conduct and Integrity Office. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

1. Academic misconduct is defined as any submitted work or behavior that obstructs the instructor of record's ability to accurately assess the student's understanding or completion of course materials or degree requirements (e.g., assignment, quiz, and/or exam). Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance to complete an academic exercise; unauthorized communication with others during an examination, course assessment, or project; falsifying or misrepresenting academic work; providing misleading information to create a personal advantage to complete course/degree requirements; or multiple submission(s) of academic work without permission of the instructor of record.
2. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.
3. Commercial Use of Academic Material. Selling of course material to another person and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express permission of the University and the instructor of record. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, the instructor of record's slide deck, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, and handouts.
4. Soliciting assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements. The solicitation of assistance with an assignment, lab, quiz, test, paper, etc., without authorization of the instructor of record or designee is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to asking for answers to a quiz, trading answers, or offering to pay another to complete an assignment. It is considered Academic Misconduct to solicit

assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements, even if the solicitation did not yield actual assistance (for example, if there was no response to the solicitation).

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule*. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and respond to academic misconduct when necessary. Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an "F" letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or deferred suspension or separation from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a "Z" designated on one's transcript.

Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc.

Let's avoid all of this by demonstrating values of honesty, trust, and integrity. No grade is worth compromising your integrity and moving your moral compass. Stay true to doing the right thing: take the zero, not a shortcut.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at Let's Be Clear and UCF Cares.

For more information on access and community engagement, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – ONAC – Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – Student Accessibility Services & sas@ucf.edu
- Access and Community Engagement (including the Ginsberg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement, Military and Veteran Student Success, and HSI Initiatives)
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – Compliance, Ethics, and Risk Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- The Ombuds Office is a safe place to discuss concerns.

Reporting an Incident or Issue

If you believe you have experienced discrimination by any faculty or staff member, contact the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance via the ONAC website or at 407-823-1336. You can also choose to report using the UCF Integrity Line either anonymously or as yourself at 1-855-877-6049 or by using the online form. UCF cares about you and takes every report seriously. For more information see the Reporting an Incident or Issue Webpage.

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

Students who are deployed active-duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make arrangements.

Campus Safety

At UCF's Public Safety and Police, safety is the top priority. Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise, it's important to be familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In an emergency, always dial 911.

- Every UCF Classroom has an Emergency Procedure Guide posted on a wall near the door, which will show you how to respond to a variety of situations. This guide can also be found online here.
- In the event of an active threat, remember **AVOID, DENY, DEFEND**. Choose the best course of action and act immediately. Watch the video here to learn more.
    - **AVOID**. Pay attention to your surroundings and have an exit plan. Get as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as quickly as possible.
    - **DENY**. When avoiding is difficult or impossible, deny the threat access to you and your space. Lockdown by creating barriers, turning the lights off and remaining quiet and out of sight. Make sure your phone is silenced, but do not turn it off.
    - **DEFEND**. When you are unable to put distance between yourself and the threat, be prepared to protect yourself. Commit to your actions, be aggressive and do not fight fairly. Do whatever it takes to survive.
- For emergencies on campus, UCF will utilize the UCF Alert system. All UCF students, faculty, and staff are automatically enrolled to receive these email and text alerts, however, it's a good idea to frequently ensure your contact information is up to date.

Financial Aid Accountability

All instructors are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete this activity by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Class Schedule

I. Organizational Meeting and Constitutional Background

1/9-1/23 Module 1: Course introduction and Evolution of the Modern Congress

- Davidson et al., chapters 1-2

- Herbert J. Storing, ed. *The Anti-Federalist*. Letter from the Federal Farmer to the Republican, #7; and Melancton Smith address, pp. 338-47. [P]
- Federalist papers 10, 35, 57 [P]
- Smith, Aaron, and Sono Shah. 2021. “Though not especially productive in passing bills, the 116th Congress set new marks for social media use.” Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/01/25/though-not-especially-productive-in-passing-bills-the-116th-congress-set-new-marks-for-social-media-use/

II. Congressional Elections and Representation

1/24-30 Module 2: Recruitment, Incumbency, and Campaign Finance

- Davidson et al., Chapter 3 and pp. 69-85.
- Ryan Grim and Sabrina Siddiqui. 2013. “Call Time For Congress Shows How Fundraising Dominates Bleak Work Life,” *Huffington Post*.

1/31-2/6 Module 3: Voting and the Representative

- Davidson et al., pp. 85-135
- Richard Fenno. *Home Style: Members in Their Districts*, pp. 136-169.
- David Mayhew, *The Electoral Connection* (excerpts published in *The American Congress Reader*, edited by Steven Smith and Jason Roberts).

III. Congressional Organization: Parties and Committees

2/7-2/13 Module 4: Leaders and Parties in Congress

- Davidson et al., Chapter 6
- Sean Illing. 2020. “Mitch McConnell’s shameless pursuit of power, explained.” *Vox.*

2/14-2/20 Module 5: Committees, Workshops of Congress

- Davidson et al., Chapter 7
- John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, "Congressional Committees in a Continuing Partisan Era," in Dodd and Oppenheimer, *Congress Reconsidered*, 9th ed., pp. 217-40. [P]

2/21-2/27 Module 6: Congressional Rules and Procedure

- Davidson et al., Chapter 8
- Joshua Huder. 2017. "The Housification of the Upper Chamber." *Legbranch.com*. http://www.legbranch.com/theblog/2017/12/21/the-housification-of-the-upper-chamber-the-115th-senate-is-basically-unrecognizable

2/28-3/6 Module 7: Decision Making in Congress

- Davidson et al., Chapter 9

IV. Congress and Policy-making

3/7-3/13 Module 8: Congress and the President

- Davidson et al., Chapter 10
- Sarah A. Binder. "Elections and Congress's Governing Capacity," *Extensions*, Fall 2005.

3/14-3/27 Module 9: Congress, the Bureaucracy, and the Courts

- Davidson et al., Chapters 11-12
- Max Rust. 2020. "How Trump Reset the Federal Judiciary," *Wall Street Journal.*

3/28-4/3 Module 10: Congress and Organized Interests

- Davidson et al., Chapter 13
- Richard L. Hall and Frank W. Wayman, “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees,” in *The American Congress Reader*, Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen, eds., pp. 401-13.

4/4-4/10 Module 11: Congress, Budgets, and Domestic Policy Making

- Davidson et al., Chapter 14
- James McBride et al. 2023. “The National Debt Dilemma” *Council on Foreign Relations.* https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/national-debt-dilemma
- Drew Desilver. 2020. “The U.S. budget deficit is rising amid COVID-19, but public concern about it is falling.” *Pew Research Center.* https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/13/the-u-s-budget-deficit-is-rising-amid-covid-19-but-public-concern-about-it-is-falling/
- Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. 2025. “The 30-Year Cost of OBBBA.” https://www.crfb.org/blogs/30-year-cost-obbba

4/11-4/17 Module 12: Congress and National Security Policies

- Davidson et al., Chapter 15
- Aaron Wildavsky. 1966. “The Two Presidencies.” *Trans-Action* IV.
- George F. Will. 2014. “Obama is defying the Constitution on war.” *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/george-will-obama-needs-congress-to-approve-this-war/2014/09/17/26de9d3e-3dc9-11e4-b0ea-8141703bbf6f_story.html

4/18-4/24 Module 13: The Two Congresses and the American People

- Davidson et al., Chapter 16

Thursday, April 30 – Optional Final Exam due