

# POS4424 Legislative Politics

Spring 2013

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Office Hours: M, W, F 8:30-10:00 and by apt

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This is an important time to be studying the U. S, Congress. The 2010 mid-term and the 2012 elections illustrate how volatile Congressional and American politics have become in recent years. Divided government aside, the problems facing America require at least some action from the Congress and the president. That will not be easy. Congress is a complex institution that is pulled in several different directions by a myriad of influences within and outside its walls. Throughout the semester, we will look at how those influences shape the Congress' ability to represent the American people while working with the President and others to govern wisely. Among the topics we will consider are: (a) recruitment and election of members; (b) congressional organization; (c) executive-legislative relations; (d) legislative policy-making; and (e) congressional reform. In doing that, a number of issues will be addressed, including:

- \* What kinds of changes have occurred in the basic operations of the Congress in recent decades? What are the implications of those changes for the quality of congressional life?
- \* What forces operate in congressional elections? How have congressional elections changed in recent years? What changes, if any, need to be made in how congressional elections are financed and contested?
- \* What should be the respective roles of Congress and the President?
- \* To what extent is the Congress able to produce effective public policies that are responsive to the needs and demands of the American people? What institutional characteristics contribute to and detract from Congress' ability to govern and govern wisely?
- \* What changes are needed to make Congress a viable democratic institution? To what extent, and in what ways, are those changes likely to occur in the first decades of the new century?

THE COURSE WEB PAGE—I have created a web page for this course at the address listed above. It includes links to the course syllabus and a number of relevant web sites. I have also created a course listserv.

TEXTS—Students are expected to purchase the following texts:

Davidson, Roger, Walter Oleszek, and Francis Lee. 2011. Congress and its Members. 13<sup>th</sup> ed. (CQ Press)

Maraniss, David and Michael Weisskopf. 1998. "Tell Newt to Shut Up!" (Touchstone)

Mayhew, David. 1994. Congress: The Electoral Connection, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Yale University Press)

I have (or will) also created links (labeled @) to a series of articles on the on-line version of the course syllabus.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS\EXPECTATIONS

1. Students with disabilities requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Anyone with a disability should feel free to see the professor during office hours to make the necessary arrangements.

2. Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussion.

3. The level of readings for this course is moderately heavy. I expect you to read all of the assignments (on schedule) and be prepared to discuss those materials in class.

4. Current events in Washington provide an exciting backdrop for the course. The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Washington Times, The Wall Street Journal, The PBS Newshour, and the Sunday talk shows are excellent sources of information on current political developments.

5. Throughout the term each of you will be asked to write a series (7-9) of short (1-2 pages) written assignments. There will be two exams. Each exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice and essay questions. The first exam is tentatively scheduled for Monday, February 25 and the second exam will be held on the last day of class. The final grade will be apportioned as follows:

Short Written Assignments 20%

Exam # 1 40%

Exam # 2 40%

Incompletes are only given in rare and deserving cases and at the discretion of the instructor. Student who believe that they will not be able to complete all the requirements for the course in due time have to discuss an "I" (Incomplete) grade with the instructor. Students will have to sign an "Incomplete Contract" (available at <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/forms/>) and complete all their requirements by a set date. Students should be aware that "I" grades become punitive after one term.

Grading Scale:

90-100	A	87-89	A-
84-86	B+	80-83	B
77-79	B-	74-76	C+
70-73	C	67-69	C-
64-66	D+	60-63	D
57-59	D-	Below 57	E

Please note: a C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule, or College Basic distribution credit. For more information, go to:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

6. Students are expected to comply with UF's Academic Honesty Guidelines. Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty will receive the appropriate sanctions. For more information, go to: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php>

### COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

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#### *Congress: An Overview*

Topic: Judging the Congress

Readings: Rieselbach, 1994, "Congressional Reform" (class handout)

Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 1.

Topic: A Changing Congress

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee Chapters 1 and 2.

Shepsle, "The Changing Textbook Congress." @

Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection. ALL.

#### *Selection of Legislators*

Topics: Districting and Apportionment, Nomination Politics, Campaign Finance, The Voter, Election Outcomes, Campaign Reform

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee, Chapters 3 and 4.

Murray, "Candidacy Fosters a Debate on Race," July 6, 2006, Washington Post online. @

#### *The Legislator*

Topics: Membership Profiles, Members and Their Districts

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee, Ch. 5.

Term Limits: The Cato Institute, A case for limits. @

Rep Henry Hyde (R) A case against term limits @

### *Organizing Congress*

Topics: Informal Norms, Informal Groups

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee pp. 133-134, 191-192.

Topic: The Committee System

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee, Chapter 7.

Topic: The Party System

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee, Chapter 6.

Paul Kane, October 27, 2010, "The Rise, fall, and rise of John Boehner,"  
Washington Post Online edition. @

"Tell Newt To Shut Up!" ALL

### *Executive-Legislative Relations*

Topic: Congress and the President

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee, Chapters 10 and 15

Robert M Cheney. June 17, 2011. "A Primer on the Libya/War Powers  
Resolution Compliance Debate." Brookings Institute Online. @

James A. Baker and Lee H. Hamilton. June 9, 2011. "Breaking the War  
Powers Stalemate." Washington Post Online. @

Topic: Congress and the Bureaucracy

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek and Lee, Chapter 11.

Hedge and Johnson. July, 2002. "The Plot that Failed: The Republican  
Revolution and Congressional Control of the Bureaucracy." Journal of Public  
Administration Research and Theory. UF e-journals.

## *Congress and the Courts*

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Ch. 12.

## *Congressional Decision-Making*

Topics: The Role of Lobbyists, Individual Decision Making , Collective Decision Making

Readings: Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapters 8, 9 and 13.

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