

POS 4424: Legislative Politics

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Spring Semester 2017

Meeting Times: **MWF Period 6 (12:50pm - 1:40pm)**
 Classroom: [113 Little Hall](#)
 Office Hours: **Mon. & Wed. 2:00pm - 3:30pm¹**
 Office Location: [330 Anderson Hall](#)

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a class about the United States Congress, the “First Branch” of the American federal government. Congress is a unique institution among representative bodies in world democracies. It is the most active and most powerful of the world’s independent legislatures, and it is characterized by member autonomy and prestige well beyond that of any other legislature or parliament.

In recent years we have seen some of the lowest public approval ratings ever recorded for Congress as an institution, as well as repeated swings in party control of both the House of Representatives and Senate. At the same time, individual members continue to win re-election at rates exceeding ninety percent. How is this apparent paradox possible, and what does it mean for the legitimacy and efficacy of our chief representative institution?

In this class, we will learn the real story behind the institutional and electoral incentives that drive member behavior, the conflict between the demands of legislation and the demands of representation, how decisions made in the past have influenced the institution of Congress today, and how decisions made today might affect what the future of representative government in the United States will hold.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will develop the ability to think clearly and analytically about:

1. The structure and organization of Congress and the processes by which it operates, including differences between the House and Senate;
2. The committee system and the role of party caucuses/conferences and leadership in the internal procedures of Congress (i.e., how a bill *really* becomes a law);
3. The “electoral connection” and the demands of the constant campaign;
4. The role of Congress with respect to the executive and judicial branches of the federal government;
5. The causes and consequences of polarization, partisanship, and divided government;
6. Representation, constituencies, and the relationship between Congress and interest groups;
7. The delegate/trustee model and Fenno’s paradox (love the congressman/hate the Congress);
8. Cycles of power and the dynamics of congressional change over time.

III. IMPORTANT DATES

Wednesday, January 4th: First day of class.

Monday, January 16th: No class: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

Friday, March 3rd: Midterm exam.

Monday, March 6th - Friday, March 10th: No class: Spring break.

Wednesday, April 19th: Last day of class.

Wednesday, April 26th: Final exam.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler: *Congress and Its Members*, 15th edition (Washington: CQ Press, 2015). ISBN 978-1483388885.
2. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds.: *Congress Reconsidered*, 11th edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE/CQ Press, 2016). ISBN 978-1506328782.
3. Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein: *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided With the New Politics of Extremism*, (New York: Basic Books, 2013). ISBN 978-0465074730.

¹ These hours may be subject to change after the printing of this syllabus on Jan 3rd, 2017. I will notify the class via Canvas of any changes to my office hours during the semester.

Highly recommended:

1. David Mayhew: *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). ISBN: 978-0300105872

Mayhew's short book, first published in 1974, is foundational to modern scholarship on Congress. We will discuss Mayhew's influential arguments at length in class and many assigned readings will touch on his work both directly and indirectly. For the purposes of this class, it is not necessary to read the book to understand the arguments in it, but any student with an interest in graduate-level studies or in professional legislative work should read this book. It is an easy read and is available inexpensively from many sources.

One copy of each of the above books is available on two-hour reserve at Library West. Other assigned readings - i.e., articles from scholarly journals and periodicals - are available in the "Files" section of the course Canvas site, and/or through clickable links embedded in the reading schedule on this syllabus.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course requirements consist of two exams, two short papers on the television series *House of Cards*, a brief in-class roundtable presentation and accompanying position paper, four Canvas discussion posts, one introductory survey, and regular class attendance.

1. **Exams:** Exams will consist of a series of multiple choice and short answer questions covering material both from assigned readings and from lectures. The final exam is cumulative, in that some material from previous sections may reappear, if I believe it is especially important or otherwise deserves reiteration. Exam dates follow:

Midterm exam: **Friday, March 3rd, 2017.**

Final exam: **Wednesday, April 26th, 2017.**

2. **House of Cards Papers:** At the beginning of the course, outside of class time, you will watch three selected episodes of the television series *House of Cards*, after which you will submit a short (2-page maximum) assessment of what you think the show gets right and what you think it gets wrong about the work of Congress. Near the end of the course, you will write a second paper (about 4 pages) reassessing the accuracy of the show's portrayal of Congress and interrogating the ways in which what you have learned differs from the expectations you expressed in your first paper.

The first *HoC* paper will be due on **Friday, January 20th**, and the second paper will be due on **Friday, April 14th**. The episodes you should watch are **season 1, episodes 1 and 2**, and **season 2, episode 2**. For those who do not have access to Netflix, I have added DVD copies of the relevant seasons to the course reserves at Library West.

3. **Roundtable presentations:** You will present a brief discussion to the class on one of the issues in congressional politics listed below, structured as part of a larger argument to be prepared with a small group of classmates. The presentation should incorporate concepts from class readings within a debate-style framework, in which each group will take a "side" on a position statement relating to the topics below. I will provide a list of the position statements and further instructions on these roundtable presentations early in the semester.

There are six topics from which you may choose, with six presentation dates dispersed across the middle of the semester. You may choose your presentation date and your side of the argument, **with the caveat that these choices will be available on a first-come, first-served basis**. Dates and positions will be available for selection on Canvas following the drop-add period. The roundtable topics and dates follow:

1. **Friday, February 3rd:** Congress and the constant campaign.
2. **Friday, February 10th:** Descriptive versus substantive representation.
3. **Friday, February 17th:** Apportionment, redistricting, and gerrymandering.
4. **Friday, February 24th:** Party government in the House.
5. **Friday, March 17th:** Congress and the interest group system.
6. **Friday, March 24th:** Individual autonomy and the filibuster in the Senate.

4. **Position paper:** In accordance with your presentation topic, you must submit a 5-page position paper supporting your argument, synthesizing concepts from class readings and lectures with evidence developed on your own outside of class time. These papers will be due on the Monday following your presentation date. I will make available additional instructions and a grading rubric for these papers early in the semester.

5. **Canvas discussion posts:** This assignment comprises a series of four short posts on a current events topic, with approximately one-half of the class required to submit discussion posts every other week. After the drop-add period is over, I will divide the class by random assignment; the discussion posts will begin in Week 5 and end in Week 13. Separately, the first Canvas assignment is a brief, anonymous introductory survey which you must complete by **January 10th**.

6. **Attendance:** I expect you to attend class. I will take attendance regularly and will calculate 5% of your final grade on this basis. See the *make-up policies* below for information on excused absences.

7. At my discretion, I will make some **extra credit** available in the form of additional Canvas discussion posts and/or **unannounced** in-class quizzes. Additionally, there will be an extra credit opportunity associated with completing the **course evaluations** at the end of the semester. This short assignment will be worth 1 point (equal to 1%) of extra credit if the response rate for evaluations reaches 66%, 2 points if the response rate reaches 75%, and 3 points if the response rate reaches 90%. If the final response rate is below 66%, there will be no extra credit assignment.

VI. GRADES AND GRADING SCALE

The grading weights for each item follow:

Midterm Exam	... 25%	Attendance	... 5%
Final Exam	... 30%	Position Paper	... 15%
<i>House of Cards</i> Papers	... 10%	Roundtable Presentation	... 5%
Discussion Posts	... 10%	Total	... 100%

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

<u>A</u>	<u>A-</u>	<u>B+</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>B-</u>	<u>C+</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>C-</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>
100-90	89-88	87-86	85-80	79-78	77-76	75-70	69-68	67-60	59-0

Please note that a grade of C- or below in this class may not be a qualifying grade for major, minor, college, or general education requirements. Please see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/>.

VII. MAKE-UP POLICIES

My policies for excused absences and make-up work are consistent with university guidelines available at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. In general, written documentation is required for an excused absence, an extension on assigned work, or a make-up exam.

I will schedule make-up exams for authorized absences with advance written notice from the responsible official (e.g., athletic or academic advisor). You may make up an exam for an illness with a written doctor's note only. If you miss an exam for any other reason, you have twenty-four (24) hours from the scheduled start time of the exam to contact me by email and request authorization to take a **written essay exam** as a make-up. Failure to contact me within twenty-four hours will result in a zero for the exam.

VIII. DISABILITY RESOURCES

Students with disabilities should register with the Disability Resource Center by calling 352-392-8565, or by visiting the DRC website at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>, and providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive further instructions on requesting accommodations. Please register **as early as possible** in the semester.

IX. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I expect you to comply with all university policies pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. Please review the Academic Honesty policy at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/staff/policies.html#honesty>. The student honor pledge - "*On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment*" - is implicit in every exam or assignment you complete. However, I will make it explicit: Don't plagiarize and don't receive unauthorized help. If you do, you will receive a zero on the assignment or exam, you will not be permitted to redo it, you will have to explain yourself to me, I will lose respect for you, and your ability to pass this class will be seriously jeopardized. So don't do it.

The expectation of academic integrity extends to faculty and instructors as well. I repeat here the UF Faculty Honor Pledge: *We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.*

X. RESPECTFUL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

This is a class about politics. Classroom discussion may touch on political and social issues which are often controversial and sometimes quite sensitive. Please be prepared for this possibility. Furthermore, be willing to open your mind to different ways of viewing the world that arise from the wide range of geographic, socioeconomic, religious, and racial and ethnic backgrounds - not to mention from different personal experiences with politics and the political system - that are represented at a major state university. This rich assortment of diverse life experiences is one of the great advantages of undergraduate study at a large university like UF.

As your instructor, I will maintain a respectful attitude toward all students during classroom discussion, and I will never discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other category protected by law, university policy, or common human decency. I expect the same from all of my students. I reserve the right to remove you from my classroom and assign an attendance grade of zero for unacceptable violations of these norms.

XI. EVALUATIONS

I expect all students to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are open during the last two weeks of the semester. Evaluations help me in my own assessment of the course and in my future academic pursuits. I take them seriously and I ask you to do the same. See section IV, item 7 for information on the extra credit opportunity associated with completing the evaluations.

XII. COURSE SCHEDULE

Links to periodicals are embedded in the text of the schedule. Other required readings (journal articles, etc.) are available in the "Files" section of the course Canvas site. You may also search for the article title on the [UF library site](#) or [Google Scholar](#).

Shorthand for required texts: "CAIM" = Davidson et al., *Congress and Its Members*; "CR" = Dodd and Oppenheimer, *Congress Reconsidered*; "WORSE" = Mann and Ornstein, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*.

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Week 1

- Wed., Jan. 4th - Course Introduction
 - CR, Preface, pp. *xiii-xviii*
- Fri., Jan. 6th - CAIM, Ch. 1, "The Two Congresses," pp. 3-14.

Week 2

- Mon., Jan. 9th - Dodd, Lawrence C. "Congress as Public Mirror," in *Thinking About Congress* (2011), pp. 3-42.
- Wed., Jan. 11th - CAIM, Ch. 2, "Evolution of the Modern Congress," pp. 15-40.
 - *The Federalist Papers: #s 51, 52, 53, 62, and 63.*
- Fri., Jan. 13th - Robertson, David Brian. "Madison's Opponents and Constitutional Design." *American Political Science Review* 99.02 (2005): 225-243.

Week 3

- Mon., Jan. 16th - **NO CLASS. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.**
- Wed., Jan. 18th - Mayhew, David et al. "Congress: The Electoral Connection: Reflections on its first quarter-century." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 34.02 (2001): 255-267.
- Fri., Jan. 20th - Carson, Jamie L., and Erik J. Engstrom. "Assessing the Electoral Connection: Evidence from the early United States." *American Journal of Political Science* 49.4 (2005): 746-757.
 - **First House of Cards paper due.**

Week 4

- Mon., Jan. 23rd - CAIM, Ch. 3, "Going For It: Recruitment and Candidacy," pp. 41-64.
- Wed., Jan. 25th - CR, Ch. 3, "Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections" (Erikson and Wright), pp. 61-88.
- Fri., Jan. 27th - WORSE, Ch. 1, "The New Politics of Hostage-Taking," pp. 3-31.

Week 5

- Mon., Jan. 30th - CR, Ch. 4, "Partisanship, Money, and Competition: Elections and the Transformation of Congress Since the 1970s" (Jacobson), pp. 89-118.
 - ["Take The Money And Run For Office." *This American Life*, ep. #461 \(Mar. 30, 2012\).](#)
- Wed., Feb. 1st - CAIM, Ch. 4, "Making It: The Electoral Game," pp. 65-102.
- Fri., Feb. 3rd - Karpowitz, Christopher F., et al. "Tea time in America? The impact of the Tea Party movement on the 2010 midterm elections." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44.02 (2011): 303-309.
 - [Matthews, Dylan. "Why the French got rid of midterm elections." *Vox.com* \(Nov. 4, 2014\).](#)
 - **ROUNDTABLE 1: Congress and the constant campaign.**

Week 6

- Mon., Feb. 6th - Mansbridge, Jane. "Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent 'yes'." *The Journal of Politics* 61.03 (1999): 628-657.
- Wed., Feb. 8th - CR, Ch. 6, "Black-Latino Relations in Congress: Examining Inter-Minority Group Relations in Institutional Context" (Hero and Preuhs), pp. 139-162.
- Fri., Feb. 10th - **ROUNDTABLE 2: Descriptive versus substantive representation.**

Week 7

- Mon., Feb. 13th - CAIM, Ch. 5, "Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles," pp. 103-130.
- Wed., Feb. 15th - McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. "Does gerrymandering cause polarization?" *American Journal of Political Science* 53.3 (2009): 666-680.
 - [Ingraham, Christopher. "America's most gerrymandered congressional districts." *The Washington Post* \(May 15, 2014\).](#)
 - [Wang, Sam. "The great gerrymander of 2012." *The New York Times* \(Feb. 2, 2013\).](#)
- Fri., Feb. 17th - **ROUNDTABLE 3: Apportionment, redistricting, and gerrymandering.**

Week 8

- Mon., Feb. 20th - CR, Ch. 2, "Lending and Reclaiming Power: Majority Leadership in the House Since the 1950s" (Aldrich and Rohde), pp. 29-60.
- Wed., Feb. 22nd - CR, Ch. 7, "The Dynamics of Party Government in Congress" (Smith and Gamm), pp. 163-188
- Fri., Feb. 24th - CAIM, Ch. 6, "Leaders and Parties in Congress," pp. 131-162.
 - **ROUNDTABLE 4: Party government in the House.**

Week 9

- Mon., Feb. 27th - CAIM, Ch. 7, "Committees: Workshops of Congress," pp. 163-204.
 - Summers, Juana. "For congressional committees, it's all in the name." NPR (Feb. 17, 2015).

- Wed., Mar. 1st - WORSE, Ch. 2, "The Seeds of Dysfunction," pp. 31-81.
 - WORSE, Ch. 3, "Beyond the Debt-Ceiling Fiasco," pp. 81-106.

Fri., Mar. 3rd - **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 10

Mon., Mar. 6th - Fri., Mar. 10th: NO CLASS. Spring break.

Week 11

Mon., Mar. 13th - CAIM, Ch. 13, "Congress and Organized Interests," pp. 367-398.

Wed., Mar. 15th - Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12.03 (2014): 564-581.
 - Draper, Robert. "Inside the power of the NRA." *The New York Times* (Dec. 12, 2013).

Fri., Mar. 17th - **ROUNDTABLE 5 - Congress and the interest group system.**

Week 12

Mon., Mar. 20th - CR, Ch. 1, "The New World of U.S. Senators" (Sinclair), pp. 1-28.

Wed., Mar. 22nd - CAIM, Ch. 8, "Congressional Rules and Procedures," pp. 205-244.

- Kane, Paul. "Reid, Democrats trigger 'nuclear' option; eliminate most filibusters on nominees." *The Washington Post* (Nov. 21, 2013).

Fri., Mar. 24th - CR, Ch. 13, "Filibusters and Majority Rule in the Modern Senate" (Koger), pp. 311-330.

- **ROUNDTABLE 6 - Individual autonomy and the filibuster in the Senate.**

Week 13

Mon., Mar. 27th - CAIM, Ch. 9, "Decision Making in Congress," pp. 245-273.

Wed., Mar. 29th - CAIM, Ch. 10, "Congress and the President," pp. 275-308.

- Epps, Garrett. "Imperfect Union: The Constitution didn't foresee divided government." *The Atlantic* (Nov. 18, 2014).

Fri., Mar. 31st - CAIM, Ch. 11, "Congress and the Bureaucracy," pp. 309-340

Week 14

Mon., Apr. 3rd - CR, Ch. 8, "Legislating in Polarized Times" (Binder), pp. 189-206.

Wed., Apr. 5th - CR, Ch. 9, "Moderate Polarization and Policy Productivity in Congress: From Harding to Obama" (Dodd and Schraufnagel), pp. 207-236.

Fri., Apr. 7th - CAIM, Ch. 2, "Congress and the Courts," pp. 339-362.

Week 15

Mon., Apr. 10th - Dodd, Lawrence C. "Congress in a Downsian World: Polarization Cycles and Regime Change." *The Journal of Politics* 77.2 (2015): 311-323.

Wed., Apr. 12th - Downs, Anthony. "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy." *Journal of Political Economy* 65.2 (1957): 135-150.

Fri., Apr. 14th - CAIM, Ch. 16, "The Two Congresses and the American People," pp. 462-483.

- **Second House of Cards paper due.**

Week 16

Mon., Apr. 17th - WORSE, Ch. 4, "Bromides to Avoid," pp. 107-130 and Ch. 5, "Fixing the Party System," pp. 131-162.

Wed., Apr. 19th - WORSE, Ch. 6, "Reforming U.S. Political Institutions," pp. 163-178 and Ch. 7, "Navigating the Current System," pp. 179-201.

- CR, Ch. 18, "Congress in the Age of Trump: The 2016 National Elections and Their Aftermath" (Dodd and Oppenheimer), pp. 451-478

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, April 26th, 12:30pm.