

POS 4424: Legislative Politics

Fall Semester 2015

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Meeting Times: **MWF Period 4 (10:40am – 11:30am)**
Classroom: 2305 Turlington Hall
Office Hours: **W 11:45am – 1:00pm, Th 1:00pm – 3:00pm**
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 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 Congress operates (including differences between the House and the 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 role of Congress with respect to the executive and judicial branches of the federal government;
4. The causes and consequences of polarization, partisanship, and divided government;
5. The “electoral connection” and the demands of the constant campaign;
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. REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler: *Congress and Its Members*, 14th edition (Washington: CQ Press, 2013). ISBN 9781452239958.
[NOTE: The 15th edition of this book, published in 2015, is also acceptable. ISBN 9781483388885]
2. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds.: *Congress Reconsidered*, 10th edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE/CQ Press, 2013). ISBN 9781452227825.
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 9780465074730.

Highly recommended:

1. David Mayhew: *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). ISBN: 9780300105872

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 a number of 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 – articles from scholarly journals and periodicals – are available through the course reserve page on the course Canvas site, and/or through clickable links embedded in the reading schedule on this syllabus.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The course requirements consist of three exams, two short papers on the television series *House of Cards* (about 6 pages total), one class presentation and accompanying short abstract (about 2 pages), a final reform proposal (about 10 pages), and regular class attendance.

1. Exams: The first exam will consist of 30 multiple-choice questions worth ½ point each. The midterm exam and final exam will consist of 40 multiple-choice questions worth ½ point each. Exams will cover material both from assigned readings and from lectures. The midterm and final exams are partially cumulative, in that a relatively small amount of material from previous sections may reappear, if I believe the material is especially important or otherwise deserves reiteration. Exam dates follow:

First exam: **Friday, September 25th**

Midterm exam: **Friday, October 30th**

Final exam: **Thursday, December 17th**

2. House of Cards papers: Together we will watch the first episode 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 **Wednesday, September 9th**, and the second paper will be due on **Monday, November 23rd**.

3. Presentation and abstract: Each student will give one short presentation on the assigned reading for one day of the class, and will submit to me a short (about 2 pages) abstract of the reading for that day. You will also upload your abstract to the course Canvas site. We will work together to schedule dates for presentations after class begins.

4. Reform proposal: For the final paper for the course, each student will prepare a report proposing a specific set of reforms for the institution of Congress. These reforms might cover anything from elections (e.g., campaign finance) to institutional structure (e.g., the committee system) to procedural rules (e.g., holds and filibusters). You will work in consultation with me to choose an issue area to be addressed by your reforms. The final proposal should be no more than 10 pages, not counting references and supporting material. We will discuss the reform proposal at much greater length during the course of the semester, and I will provide you with additional resources for your writing, including a style guide and a grading rubric. The paper will unfold in four phases:

- Phase I:** Description of the area to be addressed by your reforms (~1 page): Due **Monday, September 21st**
Phase II: Review of sources and summary of reform options (~4-5 pages): Due **Monday, October 19th**
Phase III: Draft of full paper (~10 pages): Due **Monday, November 30th**
Phase IV: Final draft of full paper (~10 pages): Due **Monday, December 14th**

You will be required to meet with me *in person* at least once (and more if possible) to discuss your selection of a topic and the progress of your paper. We will sign up for one-on-one meetings early in the semester. All papers should be emailed directly to me at cgshields@ufl.edu and uploaded to Canvas. No hard copies are required.

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

6. Extra credit quizzes: At my discretion, I may offer some extra credit through occasional *unannounced* in-class quizzes.

V. GRADES AND GRADING DISTRIBUTION

The grading percentage for each item follows:

First Exam	... 15%	Presentation/Abstract	... 10%
Midterm Exam	... 20%	Attendance	... 5%
Final Exam	... 20%	Final Paper	... 20%
House of Cards Papers	... 10%	Total	... 100%

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	... 90-100	C+	... 74-76
A-	... 87-89	C	... 70-73
B+	... 84-86	C-	... 67-69
B	... 80-83	D	... 58-66
B-	... 77-79	E	... 0-57

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/>.

VI. 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.

VII. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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.

VIII. 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.*

IX. 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.

X. 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.

XI. COURSE SCHEDULE

Links to periodicals are embedded in the text of the schedule. Other required readings (journal articles, etc.) will be available through the course reserves link on the course Canvas site. You may also search for the article title in JSTOR 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*.

Course schedule begins next page →

PART 1: The Origins of the Modern Congress and Its Structure Today

Week 1

- Mon., Aug. 24 - Introduction
- CAIM, Ch. 1, "The Two Congresses," pp. 3-14.
- Wed., Aug. 26 - CR, Ch. 2, "The House in a Time of Crisis," pp. 27-58.
- Fri., Aug. 28 - WORSE, Ch. 1, "The New Politics of Hostage-Taking," pp. 3-31.

Week 2

- Mon., Aug. 31 - CAIM, Ch. 2, "Evolution of the Modern Congress," pp. 15-40.
- Wed., Sept. 2 - The Federalist Papers: #s 52, 53, 62, and 63.
- Robertson, David Brian. "Madison's Opponents and Constitutional Design." *American Political Science Review* 99.02 (2005): 225-243.
- Fri., Sept. 4 - *House of Cards*, "Chapter 1" (2013).
- Zelizer, Julian. "Washington, not exactly a 'House of Cards'?" *CNN.com* (Feb. 24, 2014).

Week 3

- Mon., Sept. 7 - **NO CLASS – Labor Day Holiday.**
- Wed., Sept. 9 - CAIM, Ch. 6, "Leaders and Parties in Congress," pp. 131-162.
- **First House of Cards paper due.**
- Fri., Sept. 11 - CR, Ch. 3, "Congresswomen's Pursuit of Power In a Partisan Environment," pp. 59-91.

Week 4

- Mon., Sept. 14 - CAIM, Ch. 7, "Committees: Workshops of Congress," pp. 163-204.
- Wed., Sept. 16 - CR, Ch. 8, "Fenno's Theory of Congressional Committees," pp. 193-221.
- Summers, Juana. "For congressional committees, it's all in the name." NPR (Feb. 17, 2015).
- Fri., Sept. 18 - CAIM, Ch. 8, "Congressional Rules and Procedures," pp. 205-244.

Week 5

- Mon., Sept. 21 - CR, Ch. 7, "Dynamics of Party Government in Congress," pp. 167-193.
- **Phase I of reform proposal due.**
- Wed., Sept. 23 - WORSE, Ch. 2, "The Seeds of Dysfunction," pp. 31-81.
- Fri., Sept. 25 - **FIRST EXAM**

PART 2: The Electoral Connection, Constituencies, and Representation

Week 6

- Mon., Sept. 28 - CR, Ch. 4, "Voters, Candidates and Issues in Congressional Elections," pp. 91-117.
- Wed., Sept. 30 - Mayhew, David et al. "Congress: The Electoral Connection: Reflections on its first quarter-century." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 34.02 (2001): 255-267.
- 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.
- Fri., Oct. 2 - CAIM, Ch. 3, "Going For It: Recruitment and Candidacy," pp. 241-264.

Week 7

- Mon., Oct. 5 - McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. "Does gerrymandering cause polarization?" *American Journal of Political Science* 53.3 (2009): 666-680.
- Wang, Sam. "The great gerrymander of 2012." The New York Times (Feb. 2, 2013).
- Wed., Oct. 7 - CAIM, Ch. 4, "Making It: The Electoral Game," pp. 65-102.
- Fri., Oct. 9 - Mansbridge, Jane. "Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent 'yes'." *The Journal of Politics* 61.03 (1999): 628-657.

Week 8

- Mon., Oct. 12 - CR, Ch. 5, "Partisanship, Money, and Competition," pp. 117-145.
- Wed., Oct. 14 - Thomsen, Danielle M. "Ideological Moderates Won't Run: How Party Fit Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress." *The Journal of Politics* 76.03 (2014): 786-797.
- ["Take The Money And Run For Office." This American Life, ep. #461 \(Mar. 30, 2012\).](#)
- Fri., Oct. 16 - CR, Ch. 6, "Parties, Members, and Campaign Contributions," pp. 145-167.

Week 9

- Mon., Oct. 19 - 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.
- Campbell, James E., et al. "Evaluations of the 2014 midterm election forecasts." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48.02 (2015): 295-300.
- [Matthews, Dylan. "Why the French got rid of midterm elections." Vox.com \(Nov. 4, 2014\).](#)
- **Phase II of reform proposal due.**
- Wed., Oct. 21 - CAIM, Ch. 13, "Congress and Organized Interests," pp. 367-398.
- Fri., Oct. 23 - 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 \(Dec. 12, 2013\).](#)

Week 10

- Mon., Oct. 26 - CAIM, Ch. 5, "Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles," pp. 103-130.
- Wed., Oct. 28 - WORSE, Ch. 3, "Beyond the Debt-Ceiling Fiasco," pp. 81-106.
- Fri., Oct. 30 - **MIDTERM EXAM**

PART 3: Modern Legislative Politics and the Dynamics of Political Change

Week 11

- Mon., Nov. 2 - CAIM, Ch. 9, "Deliberation in Congress," pp. 245-274.
- Wed., Nov. 4 - CAIM, Ch. 10, "Congress and the President," pp. 275-308.
- Fri., Nov. 6 - **NO CLASS – Homecoming.**

Week 12

- Mon., Nov. 9 - Cohen, Jeffrey E. "Presidents, polarization, and divided government." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41.3 (2011): 504-520.
- [Epps, Garrett. "Imperfect Union: The Constitution didn't foresee divided government." The Atlantic \(Nov. 18, 2014\).](#)
- Wed., Nov. 11 - **NO CLASS – Veterans' Day Holiday.**
- Fri., Nov. 13 - CAIM, Ch. 11, "Congress and the Bureaucracy," pp. 309-340

Week 13

- Mon., Nov. 16 - CR, Ch. 1, "The New World of U.S. Senators," pp. 1-27.
- Wed., Nov. 18 - CR, Ch. 9, "Filibustering and Parties in the Modern Senate," pp. 221-237.
- [Kane, Paul. "Reid, Democrats trigger 'nuclear' option; eliminate most filibusters on nominees." The Washington Post \(Nov. 21, 2013\).](#)
- Fri., Nov. 20 - CR, Ch. 11, "The Politics of Confirming Federal Judges," pp. 265-286.

Week 14

- Mon., Nov. 23 - CAIM, Ch. 12, "Congress and the Courts," pp. 341-366.
- **Second House of Cards paper due.**
- Wed., Nov. 25 - **NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday.**

Fri., Nov. 27 - **NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday.**

- Work on reform proposals over break!

Week 15

Mon., Nov. 30 - CAIM, Ch. 16, "The Two Congresses and the American People," pp. 462-483.

- **Phase III of reform proposal due.**

Wed., Dec. 2 - Grant, J. Tobin, and Nathan J. Kelly. "Legislative productivity of the U.S. Congress, 1789–2004." *Political Analysis* 16.3 (2008): 303-323.

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

Fri., Dec. 4 - CR, Ch. 16, "The Modern Congress," pp. 401-437

Week 16

Mon., Dec. 7 - WORSE, Ch. 4, "Bromides to Avoid," pp. 107-130 and Ch. 5, "Fixing the Party System," pp. 131-162.

Wed., Dec. 9 - WORSE, Ch. 6, "Reforming U.S. Political Institutions," pp. 163-178 and Ch. 7, "Navigating the Current System," pp. 179-201.

- Class wrap-up and final exam review.

Fri., Dec. 11 - **NO CLASS – Reading Day.**

Mon., Dec. 14 - **Phase IV of reform proposal due.**

FINAL EXAM (Group 18B): Thursday, December 17th, 10:00am-12:00pm

XII. FURTHER READING

Students interested in further study of Congress and legislative politics, especially those who may pursue graduate school or a career on Capitol Hill, may find some of the following classic works useful. All are available through UF libraries and online retailers.

1. Richard Fenno, *Home Style: House Members In Their Districts* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978).
2. Morris Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone to the Washington Establishment*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
3. Calvin Jillson, *Constitution Making: Conflict and Consensus in the Federal Convention of 1787* (New York: Agathon Press, 2002).
4. Gerhard Loewenberg, *On Legislatures: The Puzzle of Representation* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011).
5. William Lee Miller, *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1996).
6. Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969, 1998 [revised edition]).
7. Julian E. Zelizer, *On Capitol Hill: The Struggle to Reform Congress and Its Consequences, 1948-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

