

# POS4424 Legislative Politics

Fall 2016

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Office Hours: MW 9-10:30 and by appt

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This is an important time to be studying the U. S. Congress. Recent events and elections illustrate how volatile Congressional and American politics have become over the past several years. Divided government and hyper-partisanship 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, a number of relevant web sites, and your research paper assignment. The course syllabus includes our class outline and the required readings, many of which are available online. I have also created a course listserv.

**TEXTS**—Students are expected to purchase the following texts:

Davidson, Roger, Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee and Eric Schickler. 2016. *Congress and its Members*. 15<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 (6 or 7) of short (1-2 pages) written assignments. Each of you will also write a 10-12 page research paper that chronicles an important race in this fall's Senate election (more on this later).

There will be two exams. Each exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice and an essay question. The first exam is tentatively scheduled for Monday, October 17th and the second exam will be held on the last day of class, December, 7. The final grade will be apportioned as follows:

Short Written Assignments	10%
Research Paper	20%
Exam # 1	35%
Exam # 2	35%

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

## ***Congress: An Overview***

Topic: Judging the Congress

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

Davidson et al., Chapter 1.

Topic: A Changing Congress

Readings: Davidson et al. , Chapters 1 and 2.

Shepsle, "[The Changing Textbook Congress.](#)" @

Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection. ALL.

Klein, "[14 Reasons why this is the worst Congress ever.](#)" *Washington Post Online.* July 13, 2012. @

Summers, "[When gridlock is good.](#)" *Washington Post Online.* April 14, 2013. @

Cillizza, "[Are 'grand bargains' still possible?](#)" *Washington Post Online.* January 6, 2013. @

Packer, "[The Empty Chamber Just How Broken is the Senate?](#)" *The New Yorker online.* August 9, 2010. @

Wallach, "[The New Republican Congress's Governance Challenge: Sweating the Small Stuff.](#)" Brookings Institute Online. @

## ***Selection of Legislators***

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

Readings: Davidson et al. Chapters 3 and 4.

## ***The Legislator***

Topics: Membership Profiles , Members and Their Districts

Readings: Davidson et, Ch. 5.

Chaddock, "[Retiring senators: Why are so many calling it quits.](#)" *Christian Science Monitor Online*, February 22, 2010. @

Goldmacher, "[Why Would Anyone Want to run for Congress?](#)" *National Journal*, April 23, 2013. @

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 et al. pp. 110-111, 157-58.

Topic: The Committee System

Readings: Davidson ,et al. Chapter 7.

Topic: The Party System

Readings: Davidson et al. Chapter 6.

Cilliza. "[5 Reasons why being Speaker of the House ain't what it used to be.](#)" *Washington Post Online* .January 3, 2013. @

"Tell Newt To Shut Up!" ALL

## ***Executive-Legislative Relations***

Topic: Congress and the President

Readings: Davidson et al. Chapters 10 and 15

Ezra Klein, May, 2014. The [Green Lantern Theory](#) of the Presidency Explained. Vox 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 [et al.](#) 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 [et al.](#), Ch. 12.

Sargent, "[Obama says GOP obstruction of nominations in 'unprecedented'](#) What if he's right? [Washington Post online](#). June 4, 2013. @

Halloran, "[Skim Milk, States Rights and Political Clout: The High Court and Doma.](#)" [NPR online](#). March 27, 2013. @

### ***Congress and Organized Interests***

Readings: Davidson [et al.](#) Chapter 13

Lipton "[Tax Lobby Builds Ties to Chairman of Finance Panel.](#)" [New York Times online](#). April 6, 2013. @

[Horwitz and Grimaldi, "NRA-led gun lobby wields powerful influence over ATF, U.S. Politics."](#) [Washington Post Online](#). December 15, 2010. @

Eggen. "[Expecting final push on health-care reform, interest groups rally for big finish.](#)" [Washington Post Online](#). February 28, 2010.

### ***Congressional Decision-Making***

Topics: Individual Decision Making, Collective Decision Making

Readings: Davidson [et al.](#) Chapters 8, 9