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Office Hours: Before/after class, TBD, and by appointment

Tues 4<sup>th</sup> period; 10:40-11:30  
Thur 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> period; 10:40-12:35  
Anderson 101  
Office: 307 Anderson

## Legislative Politics POS 4424; Spring 2024 (1.5.24; Final)

*"...to make of the columns of The New York Times<sup>1</sup> a forum for the consideration of all questions of public importance and to that end to invite intelligent discussion from all shades of opinion." Adolph Ochs, 1896, publisher, NY Times*

### Goals of the Course

This is an important time to be studying the U. S. Congress. Even before the pandemic, politics in America had grown increasingly volatile and many worried that a heightened partisanship had made the national government incapable of governing. For its part Congress is a complex institution that is pulled in several different directions by a myriad of influences within and outside its chambers. 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) elections; (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? Has the balance of power shifted even more to 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?

### Reading Materials

#### ***Required Books***

Davidson, Oleszek, Lee and Schickler, Congress and its Members, 18<sup>th</sup> edition, 2022, CQ Press (**Oleszek**)

Mayhew, David, Congress: The Electoral Connection, Yale University Press, 1994 (**Mayhew**)

Medvic, Stephen, In Defense of Politicians, 2013, Routledge (**Medvic**)

*(I encourage you to obtain used or paperback editions)*

**There will be other articles as we go; I will either provide these or provide a link.**

As we will be discussing current events every week, several websites and newspapers may come in handy. As a UF student, you get free online access to the NY Times and the Wall St. Journal. SayfieReview.com and FloridaPolitics.com are free and offer great coverage of all things Florida. There is also fivethirtyeight.com, Ballotpedia.com, election.princeton.edu, Politifact.com, Politico.com, RealClearPolitics.com, Pollster.com. Absorb them all.

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<sup>1</sup> And by definition, The University of Florida in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## Policies and Grading

Food and drinks in class are fine. You are expected to clean up after yourselves. If you need to leave to use the restroom, please do so quietly. Please mute your phones. Attendance will not be taken. Your grade will reflect your performance in the following areas:

- **10% Class Participation** – this means active participation in our discussions, not just attendance
- **30% Midterm** – this will tentatively be in class on Thursday, March 7
- **30% Short Writing Assignments** – there will be at least 4 of these
- **30% Final Exam** – probably a take home exam due Wednesday, May 1 @ 9:30 am

## Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

I take academic dishonesty very, very, very, very seriously. If I find evidence of cheating or plagiarism or other academic dishonesty, I will personally initiate disciplinary action.

## Students with Special Needs

It is the responsibility of students needing special accommodation for this course to make an appointment to see me at the beginning of the semester. I will make every effort to meet your needs in accordance with UF Guidelines.

## Office Hours

Feel free to come to my office hours for any reason, academic or otherwise. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we'll find a time that is. I am also easy to reach by email or text and typically respond quite quickly; this is the best way to reach me. I also sometimes answer the cell phone and always return voice mails, especially if you let me know a convenient time. I personally keep very late hours.

## Section I In Search of Two Congresses – 2 weeks

*"Rarely do we find men who are willing to engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think." Dr. Martin Luther King*

Week 1	January 9 & 11	<b>What is this course about and what are the implications?</b> Discuss: Readings, Syllabus, Expectations, Grading, Introductions, etc. Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 1 and assigned articles
Week 2	January 16 & 18	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 2, Medvic, Chapter 1

## Section II A Congress of Ambassadors – 3 Weeks

*"Thinking is the hardest work known to man. This would account for why so few engage in it." Henry Ford*

Week 3	January 23 & 25	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 3, Medvic, Chapter 2
Week 4	Jan 30 & Feb 1	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 4, Medvic, Chapter 3
Week 5	February 6 & 8	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 5, Medvic, Chapter 4, Mayhew, Part 1

## Section III A Deliberative Assembly of One Nation – 4 Weeks

Week 6	February 13 & 15	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 6, Mayhew, Part 1
Week 7	February 20 & 22	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 7, Mayhew, Part 2
Week 8	February 27 & 29	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 8, Mayhew, Part 2
Week 9	March 5 & 7	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 9; Midterm in class 3/7

#### **Section IV Policy Making and Change in the Two Congresses – 6 Weeks**

Week 10	March 12 & 14	Spring Break
Week 11	March 19 & 21	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 10
Week 12	March 26 & 28	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 11-12
Week 13	April 2 & 4	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 12-13
Week 14	April 9 & 11	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 13-14
Week 15	April 16 & 18	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 14-15

#### **Section V Conclusion – 1 week**

Week 16	April 23	Reading – Oleszek, Chapter 16
Week 17	Final Exam Week	<b>Final Exam – probably a take home; hard copy due on Canvas by the end of the exam period, which is Wednesday May 1, 7:30-9:30 am</b>