

THE AMERICAN LEGISLATURE

POLS 3202

Spring 2020

Classroom: Brewster C-102

Class time: Tues. and Thurs., 2:00 to 3:15 p.m.

Office hours: Tues., Wed., and Thurs.

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Peter L. Francia

Office: Brewster A-101 and D-303

Telephone: 252-328-6126

E-Mail: franciap@ecu.edu

“There are two enemies to every bill proposed in Congress, the fools who favor it and the lunatics who oppose it.” – Anonymous

“With Congress, every time they make a joke it’s a law, and every time they make a law it’s a joke.” – Will Rogers

COURSE OVERVIEW

The focus of this course is the U.S. Congress. The class will examine five major subjects: (1) the early history and development of Congress; (2) congressional elections; (3) the styles, activities, and responsibilities of congressional members; (4) party leadership, committees, and the organization of Congress; and (5) governing and policymaking. During the semester, I encourage you to think critically about how each of the issues that we cover in the course relates to principles of democracy. Some questions to consider include: Why is public approval of Congress so low, but the re-election rates of individual members so high? Should representatives follow the wishes of their constituents or should they exercise their best judgment even if their best judgment is unpopular with their constituents? Is democracy better served with members of Congress spending time in their home districts with their constituents or working on legislation in Washington, D.C.? How much power do special interests have in shaping public policy? Are there reforms that would improve how Congress functions?

COURSE STRUCTURE

Classes begin with a lecture on the topic listed in the course outline. You should come to class prepared to ask questions and to participate in class discussions. Keeping up with the assigned weekly readings and attending class regularly throughout the semester will allow for more informed classroom dialogue and for more interesting debates, as well as improve your ability to contribute to and learn from the class interactions. I also encourage everyone to read a newspaper, watch the television news, and follow current events. Doing so will broaden your interest in this course and help you better understand the importance of the material we cover. To incorporate visual learning in the classroom, and to help generate additional thought on the subjects covered in the course, I often show video material in class. This includes televised news footage of various historical events, documentaries, and political films. On occasion, I may select documentaries and films that have an “R” rating. Please see me if you have any moral, religious, political, or other objections to viewing documentaries or films with an “R” rating.

REQUIRED READINGS

(1) *Congress and Its Members*, 17th ed., by Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler (CQ Press, 2020) and (2) selected readings on Blackboard.

OPTIONAL READINGS

(1) *Profiles in Courage* by John F. Kennedy [1956] (HarperCollins, 2006) and (2) *Congressional Elections*, 8th ed. by Paul S. Herrnson, Costas Panagopoulos, and Kendall L. Bailey (CQ Press, 2020).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND EVALUATION

The general learning objective in this course is for you to gain a broad understanding (i.e., the what, how, and why) of the U.S. Congress. To complete this class successfully, you will need to demonstrate factual, applied, and conceptual knowledge of the subjects covered in the course. I will expect you to be able to identify and define terms; interpret the significance of important events; apply theories and principles to hypothetical scenarios; compare and contrast concepts; construct solutions to contemporary problems; and assess the strengths and weaknesses of various different political arguments and perspectives. Please note that I will not share my partisan affiliation to anyone in the class and pledge to present both sides of every political argument as fairly as possible. My larger and ultimate learning objective in this course is to teach each of you *not what to think*, but rather *how to think* about politics and government.

Your final grade in the course will be based on class attendance, class participation, and your performance on four exams and an optional research paper. The weight assigned to each is:

- (1) Exam 1 on February 6 = 15% of your overall grade.
- (2) Exam 2 on March 5 = 20% of your overall grade.
- (3) Exam 3 on April 2 = 20% of your overall grade.
- (4) Exam 4 on April 30 = 25% of your overall grade.
- (5) You have the option to grade replace your lowest exam score by choosing to submit a 12-page research paper due on April 23. No extensions will be granted for the paper assignment.
- (6) Class attendance and participation is worth the remaining 20% of your overall grade.

Course averages will be converted to letter grades using the scale below:

Course Average	Grade	Course Average	Grade
93 and above =	A	73 to 76 =	C
90 to 92 =	A-	70 to 72 =	C-
87 to 89 =	B+	67 to 69 =	D+
83 to 86 =	B	63 to 66 =	D
80 to 82 =	B-	60 to 62 =	D-
77 to 79 =	C+	Below 60 =	F

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Class attendance is mandatory. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each lecture. It is your responsibility to make sure that you sign the attendance sheet if you are present in class. If you arrive excessively late to class or if you leave class early, you will receive only partial credit for attendance. Your class attendance grade will be based on the percentage of classes that you attend (e.g., a student who attends every class will earn a 100; a student who attends half of the classes will earn a 50, etc.). Students who are active participants during class discussions will receive a bonus point added to their overall course grade.

EXAM RULES AND POLICIES

Failure to be present for any of the scheduled exams will result in an automatic “0.” On all exam dates, please come prepared with an exam book and a pen. If you cannot attend the exam, you must contact me at least 30 minutes before I have administered the test. I will grant a make-up exam only for circumstances that I deem extraordinary or for circumstances that meet university guidelines. If you miss the exam because of an illness, you are still required to contact me before the exam. You must also present me with proper verification (see below).

EXCUSED ABSENCES AND VERIFICATION

I will excuse absences, including those on exam dates, for the following reasons: (1) participation in an authorized activity as an official representative of the university (this includes athletic events, university-sponsored performances, or academic conferences); (2) participation in other activities deemed by the Dean of Students to warrant an excused absence; (3) an extreme personal emergency; (4) the death of an immediate family member; (5) participation in a religious holiday; and (6) health reasons such as an incapacitating or contagious illness or unavoidable surgery. If your absence meets any of the criteria mentioned above, I will need you to present me with some form of verification no later than one week after the absence if you wish to have your absence excused. Some acceptable forms of verification include the following: a note from Student Health Services; a note from a doctor or medical office; an obituary; or official documentation from the athletic department indicating your travel schedule.

* Note: Do NOT schedule non-emergency doctor’s appointments (such as an annual check-up visit or a dental visit) or any other personal commitments during our class time. Serious students plan their personal schedules around their academic schedules, not the other way around.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education shared by all at East Carolina University. Consistent with this principle, I expect all students to complete their academic work honestly. I will not tolerate any student’s involvement in *cheating, plagiarism, falsifying work, submitting the same assignment for more than one course, or other acts that would be in violation of the university’s academic integrity standards*. If I become aware of or suspect a potential academic integrity violation, I will meet with the student under suspicion following the procedures outlined in the university’s academic integrity policy. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has occurred, I reserve the right to assign a grade penalty up to and including an “F” for the assignment or the course. If it also comes to my attention that the student involved in such an incident has had a prior academic integrity violation, or if there are other aggravating circumstances, I will refer the case directly to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Should the Academic Integrity Board determine that the accused student committed an academic integrity violation, the penalties, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, may include a grade penalty and up to suspension from the university. For more information, please see: <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section2.pdf>.

CLASSROOM RULES

The classroom is a learning environment. I expect all students to observe some basic rules of courtesy and respect, which include the following: (1) arrive to class on time and do not leave before class is dismissed; (2) do not pack up your things early; it is disruptive to others around you; (3) turn off cell phones and keep them put away during class; (4) no laptop use during video screenings; (5) no reading the newspaper or listening to music through headphones during class; (6) no sleeping during class; (7) no carrying on private conversations with others in the classroom while someone else is speaking; and (8) please be courteous to your classmates and respectful of your fellow students' views, comments, and questions. Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints, and this can only happen if we respect each other and our differences. Failure to follow these rules will negatively affect your class attendance grade. Repeated or extreme offenses could result in your expulsion from the class.

E-MAIL

E-mail is a valuable tool for me to communicate announcements and information to the entire class. Please check your ECU e-mail at least once a day (weekends excluded). E-mail is also a good way for you to contact me. Please feel free to use e-mail to set up one-on-one meetings with me if my office hours conflict with your schedule. If you have specific questions about the course material, I am happy to answer them through e-mail; however, I would encourage you to set up a one-on-one meeting with me if you are having general difficulty with your understanding of the course material. I am also happy to answer any specific questions concerning academic or career advising through e-mail, but again I would encourage you to set up a one-on-one meeting with me if you need more general academic or career advice. Please do not use e-mail to request information already listed in the syllabus, such as an exam date or the weight assigned to a specific exam.

APPOINTMENTS

My office hours are listed on the first page of this syllabus. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, please see me after class or contact me by telephone or e-mail to schedule an appointment. Please note that I have two offices, Brewster A-101 and Brewster D-303. Typically, I work from my main office, Brewster A-101; however, on some occasions, I may be working from my office at the Center for Survey Research in Brewster D-303. Every Monday and Wednesday at noon, I am also happy to have lunch with anyone who wishes to join me. If you wish to schedule a lunch, please contact me at least one day in advance.

INFORMATION ABOUT UNIVERSITY CLOSINGS

If you have questions about a possible school closing due to severe weather or other reasons, please call the University Emergency Telephone Number at 252-328-0062 or visit the ECU emergency alert website (<http://www.ecu.edu/alert>). In the event that the university has not canceled classes, but you commute to campus from a considerable distance and believe driving conditions may be hazardous, I will consider excusing your absence.

DISABILITY SERVICES

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a covered disability must go to the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 to verify the disability before any accommodations can occur. The telephone number is 252-737-1016.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1. Overview of Congress

January 14, 2020. Course expectations and the basics of Congress

January 16, 2020. The two Congresses

- Required reading for Week 1: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 1

Week 2. Historical Foundations of Congress

January 21, 2020. Early history of Congress

January 23, 2020. Evolution of the modern Congress

- Required reading for Week 2: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 2; also Blackboard: “From the Old Congress to the New” (Jack N. Rakove)

Week 3. Apportionment and Running for Congress

January 28, 2020. Districting in the House and gerrymandering

January 30, 2020. Becoming a candidate / Rules of the nomination system

- Required reading for Week 3: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 3; optional reading: *Congressional Elections*, Chapters 1-2

Week 4. Campaign for Resources

February 4, 2020. Overview of federal campaign finance law

February 6, 2020. **Exam #1**

- Required reading for Week 4: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 4, pp. 72-81; optional reading: *Congressional Elections*, Chapter 6

Week 5. The Campaign for Congress

February 11, 2020. Voting behavior in congressional elections and campaign strategies

February 13, 2020. Case studies of congressional campaigns

- Required reading for Week 5: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 4, pp. 81-104; optional reading: *Congressional Elections*, Chapters 7-9

Week 6. Hill Styles, Home Styles, and Casework

February 18, 2020. Hill styles and Home styles

February 20, 2020. Communicating with and assisting constituents

- Required reading for Week 6: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 5; also Blackboard: “David McIntosh and Lindsey Graham: Constituency Connections” (Richard F. Fenno, Jr.)

Week 7. Congressional Leaders

February 25, 2020. Leadership positions and the Speakerships of Thomas Reed and Joe Cannon

February 27, 2020. The Class of '74, the Gingrich Revolution, and polarization

- Required reading for Week 7: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 6; also Blackboard: “The Polarization of Contemporary American Politics” (Christopher Hare and Keith Poole)

Week 8. Congressional Committees

March 3, 2020. Types of committees and policy making in committee

March 5, 2020. **Exam #2**

- Required reading for Week 8: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 7

Week 9. Spring Break (No class on March 10 and March 12, 2020)

Week 10. Congressional Rules and Procedures

March 17, 2020. Rules and procedures in the House

March 19, 2020. Rules and procedures in the Senate

- Required reading for Week 10: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 8

Week 11. Legislative Strategies and the Influence of the President

March 24, 2020. Legislative decision making and bargaining

March 26, 2020. Congress and the President

- Required reading for Week 11: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 9-10

Week 12. Congress and the Courts

March 31, 2020. Checks and balances / Supreme Court nominations

April 2, 2020. **Exam #3**

- Required reading for Week 12: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 12

Week 13. Congress and Organized Interests

April 7, 2020. Lobbying activities

April 9, 2020. Access and influence

- Required reading for Week 13: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 13; also Blackboard: "Interests, Constituents, and Policy Making" (Frances E. Lee)

Week 14. Budgetary Policy and Assessments of Congress

April 14, 2020. Guest speaker

April 16, 2020. Congress and the national budget

- Required reading for Week 14: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 14

Week 15. National Security

April 21, 2020. Congress and national security policies

April 23, 2020. Documentary: *The True Story of Charlie Wilson*

- Required reading for Week 15: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 15; also Blackboard: "Foreign Affairs and War" (Christopher J. Deering)
- Reminder: The optional paper is due on April 23, 2020.

Week 16. Final Exam

April 30, 2020. The final exam for POLS 3202 is scheduled from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Brewster C-102.

OPTIONAL 12-PAGE RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Choose one of the following two topics:

(1) Democrat Cal Cunningham will be challenging Republican Thom Tillis for his U.S. Senate seat in 2020. Drawing on Paul Herrnson's book, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, compare and contrast the "campaign for resources" and the "campaign for votes" for Cunningham and Tillis. What interest groups are likely to support Cunningham? What interest groups are likely to support Tillis? What expenses will both campaigns likely incur? Which voters should Cunningham target? Which voters should Tillis target? What issues should Cunningham stress? What issues should Tillis stress? What general strategies should the Cunningham and Tillis campaigns follow? Assess which candidate is likely to win this election.

(2) In *Profiles in Courage*, John F. Kennedy singles out eight U.S. senators for special praise. In the first half of your paper, please discuss Kennedy's definition of "courage" and what he views as the proper job of an elected representative. In the second half of your paper, select and profile a recent member of the U.S. Senate or the U.S. House (elected to the U.S. Congress after the publication of the book in 1956) who would meet Kennedy's approval as a "profile in courage." Please provide specific details in your profile similar to how Kennedy did his.

DUE DATE: April 23, 2020

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Preparing the Paper:

- Remember the rule: "show, don't tell." Citations from books, articles, and other sources are necessary to make your claims as convincing as possible.
- The best outside sources are university press books, academic journals (such as the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Historical Review*, etc.), and primary data sources (polling data; campaign finance data) and historical documents. Newspaper and magazine articles are also good sources for your research. I highly recommend utilizing the resources available at the Joyner Library website (see <https://library.ecu.edu/>), such as JSTOR and the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.
- To earn a passing grade, your paper must include citations and a proper bibliography. Papers without citations and a bibliography are guilty of plagiarism. These papers will receive an automatic "F" and may be subject to additional disciplinary action.
- All papers must follow the *APSA Style Manual for Political Science*, which can be downloaded at: <https://www.maclester.edu/las/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2012/09/APSAStyleGuide.pdf>.
- All papers should be organized with headings and subheadings, as well as double-spaced with one-inch margins in 12-point Times New Roman font. Page numbers also should be included.