

**THE AMERICAN LEGISLATURE**  
POLS 3202  
Fall 2023

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Classroom: Howell Science Complex, E-301	Instructor: Dr. Peter L. Francia
Class time: Tues. & Thurs., 12:30 to 1:45 p.m.	Office: Brewster A-101
Office hours: Tues. & Thurs., 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., or by appointment	Telephone: 252-328-6126 E-Mail: franciap@ecu.edu

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*“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 rate 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 follow what is happening in the news and in 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*, 18<sup>th</sup> ed., by Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, Eric Schickler, and James Curry (Sage, 2022) and (2) *Profiles in Courage* by John F. Kennedy [1956] (HarperCollins, 2006).

## OPTIONAL READINGS

(1) *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*, by Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein (Basic Books, 2016) and (2) selected readings on Canvas.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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 with 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.

## EVALUATION

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 September 21 = 15% of your overall grade.
- (2) Exam 2 on October 24 = 25% of your overall grade.
- (3) Exam 3 on November 30 = 15% of your overall grade.
- (4) Exam 4 on December 12 = 30% 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 November 30. No extensions will be granted for the paper assignment.
- (6) Class attendance and participation are worth the remaining 15% 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

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THIS COURSE**

This course is designated as a *General Education* course for the social sciences (GE:SO). Courses in the Social Sciences introduce students to the study of the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of individuals and groups. These courses provide students with the knowledge necessary to solve problems in the Social Sciences and in scholarly fields that apply the methods used in the Social Sciences. They introduce students to the theoretical, analytical, and methodological techniques and perspectives of Social Sciences that advance the understanding of individual and group behavior. Scholarly study in the Social Sciences provides students with the foundation for understanding real-world problems necessary for meaningful participation in society. Courses in the Social Sciences develop the intellectual abilities, knowledge, and skills that students need to become broadly informed, to participate in interdisciplinary scholarship, and to be successful in their professional specialization. *The following program learning outcomes define the Social Science Competency.*

Students who have completed the General Education Social Sciences requirements can:

- (1) Apply discipline specific knowledge in the social sciences to explain the key factors that shape social institutions, structures, and processes that shape human behavior and social interaction.
- (2) Explain how cultural and historical contexts influence individual behavior, society or culture.
- (3) Apply discipline specific theories and modes of inquiry in the social sciences to analyze social contemporary behavioral or cultural issues.

## **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. I ask that you please 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.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Class attendance is an essential part of success in this course. There will be exam questions based specifically on the material that I discuss in my lectures and on the video material that I show in class. Coming to class also exposes you to questions from your classmates. This often helps in clarifying any challenging concepts from the course material. There is an attendance grade as well. 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.

## **CLASSROOM RULES**

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; (3) silence on your cell phones before class begins; (4) no laptop use during video screenings; (5) no earbuds, air-pods, or other listening devices; and (6) 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. For more extreme violations of classroom behavior, the ECU Faculty Manual (Part 5) states that "students who do not follow reasonable standards of behavior in the classroom or other academic setting may be removed from the course by the instructor following appropriate notice."

## **CONTINUITY OF INSTRUCTION**

In the event of a health-related crisis, weather-related disruption, or campus emergency that would prevent us from meeting face-to-face, class may be moved to an online format for up to two weeks. I will provide details via e-mail and Canvas on exactly how we will proceed if something like that occurs. All necessary course materials, including my lectures (in Power Point slides), will be made available on Canvas. If you have poor internet access, please contact me within 48 hours of the announcement of the online move to work out a plan for you to receive the material for the course.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is the cornerstone value of the intellectual community at East Carolina University. Academic integrity is required for all students to derive optimal benefits from their educational experience and their pursuit of knowledge. Violating the principle of academic integrity damages the reputation of the university and undermines its educational mission. ECU students are responsible for promoting academic integrity within the ECU community by upholding integrity in their own work and by reporting any suspected violation. A student knowing of circumstances in which an Academic Integrity Violation (AIV) may have occurred (or is likely to occur) should bring this knowledge to my attention. An AIV is defined as any activity that exhibits dishonesty in the educational process or that compromises the academic honor of the university. Examples include, but are not limited, to the following:

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (continued)

**Cheating:** Unauthorized aid or assistance or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work.

**Plagiarism:** Copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and adopting the same as one's own original work.

**Falsification/Fabrication:** The statement of any untruth, either spoken or written, regarding any circumstances related to academic work. This includes any untrue statements made with regard to a suspected Academic Integrity Violation.

**Multiple Submission:** The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work for credit more than once without authorization from the faculty member who receives the later submission.

**Violation Assistance:** Knowingly helping or attempting to help someone else in an act that constitutes an Academic Integrity Violation.

**Violation Attempts:** Attempting any act that, if completed, would constitute an Academic Integrity Violation as defined herein.

Information about ECU's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section2.pdf>.

## USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

I will allow advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) on assignments in this course, but only if you obtain permission from me in advance. Unless given permission to use those tools, each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools.

If permission is granted to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2), they must be properly documented and credited. Students should seek out the appropriate source (e.g., MLA, APA, etc.) and cite in the most correct format according to the style guide. Note, online style guides are being updated continually to include new sources such as ChatGPT.

If a tool is used in an assignment, students must also include a brief (2-3 sentences) description of how they used the tool, in addition to citing the use of any tool used.

## 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 regularly. 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 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. 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. I am also happy to have coffee with anyone after class who wishes to join me. Just ask.

## 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, please contact me and I will consider excusing your absence.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138. For additional information, please review ECU's policy on accommodation requests at <https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students/dss-guidelines/#AccommodationRequests> or call 252-737-1016. Additional DSS student resources can be found at <https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students>.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **Week 1. Overview of Congress**

August 22. Course expectations and the basics of Congress

August 24. The two Congresses

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

### **Week 2. Historical Foundations of Congress**

August 29. Early history of Congress

August 31. Evolution of the modern Congress / Checks and balances

- Required reading for Week 2: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 2
- Recommended reading for Week 2: Canvas, "From the Old Congress to the New" (Jack N. Rakove)

### **Week 3. Theories of Representation and House Districting and Running for Office**

September 5. Theories of representation

September 7. Apportionment and re-districting

- Required reading for Week 3: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 3

### **Week 4. Fundraising and Outside Money**

September 12. Campaign finance law, part 1

September 14. Campaign finance law, part 2

Required reading for Week 4: *No reading this week. But, you need to come to class!*

### **Week 5. The Campaign for Congress**

September 19. Candidate-centered system and the campaign for votes

September 21. EXAM 1 (covers all material from weeks 1-5)

- Required reading for Week 5: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 4

### **Week 6. Hill Styles, Home Styles, and Casework**

September 26. Hill styles and Home styles

September 28. Communicating with and assisting constituents

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

### **Week 7. Congressional Leaders**

October 3. Leadership positions and the Speakerships of Thomas Reed and Joe Cannon

October 5. The Class of '74, the Gingrich Revolution, and polarization

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

### **Week 8. Congressional Committees**

October 10. NO CLASS (Fall break)

October 12. Types of committees and policy making in committee

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

### **Week 9. Congressional Rules, Procedures, and Bargaining**

October 17. Rules and procedures in the House and Senate

October 19. Decision making in Congress

- Required reading for Week 9: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 8-9

### **Week 10. Congress and the President**

October 24. EXAM 2 (covers all material from weeks 1-9)

October 26. Legislative-executive conflict and cooperation

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

### **Week 11. Congress and the Bureaucracy / Congress and the Courts**

October 31. Congressional control of the bureaucracy

November 2. The Supreme Court as policymaker and legislative check on the judiciary

- Required reading for Week 11: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 11-12

### **Week 12. Congress and Organized Interests**

November 7. Lobbying activities

November 9. Access and influence

- Required reading for Week 12: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 13
- Recommended reading for Week 12: Canvas, “Interests, Constituents, and Policy Making” (Frances E. Lee)

**Week 13. Budgetary and Domestic Policy**

November 14. Domestic policy making

November 16. Congressional budgeting

- Required reading for Week 13: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 14

**Week 14. National Security**

November 21. Congress and national security policies

November 23. NO CLASS (State holiday)

- Required reading for Week 14: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 15
- Recommended reading for Week 14: Canvas, “Foreign Affairs and War” (Christopher J. Deering)

**Week 15. Assessing Congress**

November 28. Congressional reforms

November 30. EXAM 3 (covers all material from weeks 10-15); optional paper is due.

- Required reading for Week 15: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 16
- Recommended reading for Week 15: Canvas, “House Reform” (Burgat and Kosar)

**Week 16. Final Exam**

December 12. The final exam for POLS 3202 is cumulative (weeks 1-15) and is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.



## **OPTIONAL 12-PAGE RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

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: November 30

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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.mcalester.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.