

## **POLS 4424 LEGISLATIVE POLITICS**

Section 01 – T/TH 2:00 – 3:15 Bellamy 0004

**Discussion section Thursday 12:30 – 1:45**

### **Dr. Cherie Maestas**

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### **Office Hours**

Friday 1:30 – 3:00

Thurs. 3:30 – 5:00

or by appointment

## **OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES**

This is a fascinating and pivotal time to study the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. The competition for party control in many institutions has never been stronger. Political parties have raised and spent unprecedented sums in hopes of gaining control of U.S. Congress to further their policy agenda. Yet, at the same time, 90% of incumbents face little or no competition for their seat, leaving citizens with little choice of who represents them. Many people, including politicians, journalists, academicians and citizens have expressed concern over the influence of special interests in the legislative arena and the campaign process.

The purpose of this course is to study, in depth, the workings of legislatures in the United States and their members. This class is held concurrently with an upper division undergraduate course, but also includes a supplemental discussion section. The discussion section will be used for speakers, discussions of readings, and discussion of the semester project.

We will focus on understanding why and how legislatures function as representative bodies and how the institutional characteristics of legislatures facilitate or hinder that process. At the end of this course, you should be able to trace legislation through the policy process, understand the key influences that shape policy outcomes, and understand the decision pressures faced by elected officials.

### **Required Texts:**

Davidson, Roger H. and Walter J. Oleszek. 2005. *Congress and Its Members* Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Hamilton, Lee. 2004. *How Congress Works and Why You Should Care* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

### **Required Discussion Books:**

January: Redman, Eric. 2001 (1973) *The Dance of Legislation*. University of Washington Press

February: Kingdon, John W. 1989. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*. University of Michigan Press

March: Baumgartner, Frank and Bryan Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* University of Chicago Press.

April: Kousser, Thad. 2005. *Term Limits and the Dismantling of State Legislative Professionalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## GRADE COMPONENTS

Exams -	60%
Best 1 of 2 Midterm Exams -- 30%	
Final Exam -- 30%	
Research Project	20%
Attendance / Quizzes / Assignments	10%
Participation in Discussion Section	10%

Please note the official “drop” dates for the University (see schedule). After the drop date you must be passing the class with a “D” average or better to withdraw with a W. If you withdraw after this date and you are failing the class, you will receive an F.

### **Class Attendance, Quizzes and Short Assignments- 10%**

It is essential that you attend class on a regular basis and complete the reading assignments. To encourage this, 10% of your grade will be based on attendance plus occasional in-class quizzes and assignments. I will assess attendance and/or give short quizzes or assignments 8-10 times during the semester. You may drop your lowest two scores. **Since everyone gets to drop two “attendance” related grades, there are no make-ups given for missed quizzes or in-class exercises.**

Also note, **the exams will cover material from lecture and discussion section as well as the readings. You should not expect to score well on the exams if you have not attended class.** If you must miss a class, please make arrangements to get notes from a classmate.

Your participation in class discussions is expected and will be solicited. You will be called upon to react to or comment on material covered in lectures and readings so you should come to class prepared.

### **Discussion Section – 10%**

This class also meets as a discussion section periodically to discuss supplemental readings, discuss research projects, and to host speakers. The discussion section occurs during lunch, so feel free to bring something to eat. Dates for discussion of books are included in the tentative schedule. I am in the process of scheduling speakers and will let you know the dates as they are finalized. Your attendance and full participation is expected and is worth 10% of your final grade. Quizzes over readings are always a possibility, so come prepared.

### **Exams – 60%**

There are 3 required exams based on materials from lecture and readings. You will be given 2 midterm exams and one final examination. Tentative exam dates are given in the readings schedule. These dates could change, so be on time for in class announcements of date changes.

You may drop the lowest MIDTERM exam grade. The highest of the two midterm exam scores is worth 30% of your grade. Both midterms will be multiple choice exams.

The final exam will be a cumulative. The final exam will have a combination of essay, short answer and multiple choice questions. All students must take the final exam.

*Make Up Exams:* Make-up exams are given only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a *documented* illness or family emergency. If you must miss an exam due to a University sponsored activity, you must provide documentation *prior to the exam* for approval.

### **Research Project – 20%**

The purpose of the research project is to give you the opportunity to explore the legislative process through researching a particular policy or policy area. Details on this assignment will be provided in class and on the Blackboard class website.

## **CLASS POLICIES**

### **Courtesy in the Classroom**

This class has a large number of students so attention to classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. Please, no cell phones, talking during lectures, reading newspapers, etc. during class. If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about kids or other family members, keep it on “vibrate.” Please be on time for class and stay until the end. Entering and leaving is distracting to me and to other students. If you must enter late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Repeated disruption of class may lead to penalties that reduce your final grade.

Class discussions of political issues can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. I ask all of you to respect the opinions of your fellow students, even if you do not agree with them. In simple terms, that means not interrupting other students while they are speaking and not verbally attacking them for their beliefs. While I believe that it is essential to connect theory to current events, I will cut short debates of current events that do not enhance the understanding of course concepts.

### **Cheating**

Don't do it. The penalties for cheating in my class are severe and simply not worth the risk. **Academic dishonesty on even the smallest quiz or assignment can result in you failing this course and facing University disciplinary action.** Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. If you have questions about University policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Academic Honor System at <http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/2003codes/honor.html>

### **Students with Disabilities**

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, may require some special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor **as soon as possible** to make the necessary accommodations. Students should (1) register with the Student Disability Resource Center and (2) bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating the required accommodations. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other course materials are available in alternate form upon request.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Please note, readings, assignments and test dates may be adjusted during the semester. Changes to schedules will be announced in class.

Week of:	Reading Assignments and Schedule of Exams D&O = Davidson and Oleszek's <i>Congress &amp; Its Members</i> H = <i>Hamilton's How Congress Works</i>	Notes
Jan 9	Introduction and Overview H Chapter 1 "The Role of Congress" H Chapter 2 "The Impact of Congress"	
Jan 16	H – Chapter 3 "How Congress Works" H – Chapter 4 "Criticisms of Congress" <b>Discussion Section – Project Planning</b>	
Jan 23	D & O Chapter 1 "The Two Congresses" D & O Chapter 2 "Evolution of the Modern Congress"	
Jan 30	D & O Chapter 3 "Going for It: Recruitment Roulette" <b>Discussion Section – Redman</b>	
Feb 6	Movie Day D & O Chapter 4 "Making It: The Electoral Game"	
Feb 13	Review <b>Exam 1</b>	
Feb 20	D & O Chapter 5 "Being There: Hill Styles and Home Styles" D & O Chapter 6 "Leaders and Parties in Congress" <b>Discussion Section: Kindon</b>	Last Day to Withdraw with a W
Feb 27	D & O Chapter 7 "Committees: Workshops of Congress"	
Mar 6	Spring Break	Spring Break ☺
Mar 13	D & O Chapter 8 "Congressional Rules and Procedures" <b>Discussion Section: Kousser</b>	
Mar 20	D & O Chapter 9 "Decision Making in Congress"	
Mar 27	D & O Chap 10 "Congress and the President"	

April 3	Review <b>Exam 2</b> <b>Discussion Section: Baumgartner and Jones</b>	
April 10	D & O Chapter 11 “Congress and the Bureaucracy” D & O Chapter 12 “Congress and the Courts”	
April 17	D & O Chapter 13 “Congress and Organized Interests”	
April 24	H Chapter 5 “How Congress Could Work Better” H Chapter 6 “Civic Participation”  <b>Discussion Section: Project Discussion</b>	RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE LAST DAY OF CLASS
	Final exam Section 01 Thursday, 7:30a.m. – 9:30a.m.	