

Political Science 4605H
POLITICS OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS
Fall 2018 (38527)
Baldwin 302
TTh 2:00 - 3:15 p.m.

Dr. Jamie L. Carson
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*“The electoral politics of Congress deserve careful study for one simple reason:
how Congress works, how well it performs as a governing institution,
is inextricably bound to how its members win and hold office.”*
-- Gary Jacobson (1987)

Course Description

This honors seminar is intended as a broad survey of the literature on congressional elections. The central focus of the course will be the U.S. Congress, but much of what we discuss will have direct relevance for the study of elections more generally. We will focus on diverse topics such as the incumbency advantage, the role of strategic politicians, the impact of money in congressional elections, the effects of national and local tides on congressional races, and differences between House and Senate races. Along the way, we will pay attention to current political and scholarly controversies—as well as some “classics”—in terms of understanding factors affecting outcomes in congressional races. By the end of the course, you should have a better understanding of the nature of congressional elections.

Required Texts

- Boatright, Robert G. 2014. *Getting Primaried: The Changing Politics of Congressional Primary Challengers*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Jacobson, Gary C. and Jamie L. Carson. 2016. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 9th ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lee, Frances E. 2016. *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mayhew, David R. 2004. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Course Materials

The readings for the course will be drawn from the list of books above, in addition to scholarly articles each week. Required books are available for purchase from the usual sources or may be checked out from the library. Unless otherwise indicated, assigned articles can be downloaded from www.jstor.org or from the UGA library (<http://www.libs.uga.edu/ejournals/>). Please keep in mind that assigned readings or the course schedule may be altered at the discretion of the instructor.

General Expectations

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You are expected to attend class regularly, to show up on time, and be prepared to participate in discussions. You are responsible for all material in the readings and lectures, even if you are unable to attend class. It is your responsibility to remain aware of specific deadlines or dates posted on the syllabus and to be sure that assignments are completed on time.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

1. Attendance/Participation (20%)
2. Short Writing Assignment (10%)
3. Final Paper (20%)
4. Midterm Exam (25%)
5. Final Exam (25%)

In terms of final grades in light of the +/- grading system, an A will be given to anyone receiving 94 or more points, an A- to those receiving 90-93 points, a B+ to those receiving 87-89 points, a B to those receiving 83-86 points, a B- to those receiving 80-82 points, a C+ to those receiving 77-79 points, a C to those receiving 73-76 points, a C- to those receiving 70-72 points, a D to those receiving 60 to 69 points, and an F to anyone receiving fewer than 60 points in the course.

Attendance/Participation

Your grade in this area will be based on class attendance and the quality of your classroom participation. You are allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. After one absence, your attendance grade will be penalized unless you have a legitimate excuse for missing class. *Since this is an upper division honors seminar, each student will be expected to present the assigned material and lead the class discussion at least once during the semester starting in early September.* Students are expected to actively participate through asking questions and answering inquiries raised in class even on days they are not responsible for leading class discussion. Keep in mind that this class is a collaborative enterprise. For the seminar to be a useful learning experience, you *must* come to class and be prepared to participate in discussions.

Short Writing Assignment

Each student will be required to submit a short writing assignment on the day that you are responsible for leading class discussion. This assignment should briefly summarize and critically analyze the assigned readings. The paper should be approximately 2-3 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. *Be sure to spell check and read over your paper before submitting it for a grade.*

Final Paper

Everyone will be required to submit a final paper at the end of November. This assignment will analyze the outcome of the 2018 congressional elections in light of the explanatory theories discussed in class. These papers should be approximately 5-7 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. Final papers will be due on **November 27th**. *Your final grade on the project will be penalized if there are grammatical or spelling errors in the completed paper.*

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam in this course. Exams are closed book and will include a mix of identification, short answer, and essay questions. The final exam is cumulative and will include material covered in the class lectures and the assigned reading. *A blue book will be required for each exam.*

Incompletes and Make-Up Policy

A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., a university-sanctioned activity, religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be accepted **prior** to the exam when feasible to allow a make-up to be scheduled. As a rule, late assignments will not be accepted unless approval is obtained in advance from the instructor.

Miscellaneous

No “extra credit” will be assigned under any circumstances. *Final grades may only be changed in the event of a clerical error* (e.g., points summed incorrectly). Keep in mind that information pertaining to course grades cannot be discussed over the telephone or via email. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Instructor Availability

If you would like to speak with me outside of class, feel free to stop by my office during scheduled office hours. Occasionally I have meetings during the day and may be unavailable. To ensure that I am in my office on a given day, email me ahead of time to set up a specific time to meet if meeting during office hours is inconvenient.

Special Needs and Academic Honesty

Students with special needs that require accommodation should notify me and the Office for Disability Services as soon as possible so the appropriate arrangements can be made. All information as well as documentation is considered confidential. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The link to more detailed information about academic honesty can be found at: http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture_honesty.htm.

Course Schedule (Assigned readings are to be completed by the dates listed below.)

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| 8/14 | Introduction |
| 8/16 | The Electoral Connection
Mayhew, <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection</i> (pgs. 1-77) |
| 8/21 | Mayhew, <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection</i> (pgs. 81-180) |
| 8/23 | Electoral Accountability in Congress
Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan. 2002. “Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members’ Voting.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 96(March): 127-140.
Jacobson and Carson, <i>The Politics of Congressional Elections</i> (pgs. 1-34) |
| 8/28 | Carson, Jamie, Gregory Koger, Matthew Lebo, and Everett Young. 2010. “The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress.” <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 54(July): 598-616. |
| 8/30 | <i>No Class, American Political Science Association Meeting (Boston)</i> |

- 9/4 **Congressional Primaries**
 Pyeatt, Nicholas. 2015. "Party Unity, Ideology, and Polarization in Primary Elections for the U.S. House: 1956-2012." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 40(4): 651-676.
- 9/6 Boatright, *Getting Primaried* (pgs. 1-101)
- 9/11 Boatright, *Getting Primaried* (pgs. 103-225)
- 9/13 **Strategic Politicians**
 Jacobson, Gary C. 1989. "Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections, 1946-86." *American Political Science Review* 83(September): 773-793.
- 9/18 Maestas, Cherie D. Sarah Fulton, L. Sandy Maisel, and Walter J. Stone. 2006. "When to Risk It? Institutions, Ambitions, and the Decision to Run for the U.S. House." *American Political Science Review* 100(May): 195-208.
- 9/20 **The Incumbency Advantage in Congress**
 Cox, Gary and Jonathan Katz. 1996. "Why Did the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections Grow?" *American Journal of Political Science* 40(May): 478-497.
 Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 35-47)
- 9/25 Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, Jr., and Charles Stewart, III. 2000. "Old Voters, New Voters, and the Personal Vote: Using Redistricting to Measure the Incumbency Advantage." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(January): 17-34.
 Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 47-61)
- 9/27 Carson, Jamie L., Erik J. Engstrom, and Jason M. Roberts. 2007. "Candidate Quality, the Personal Vote, and the Incumbency Advantage in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 101(May): 289-301.
- 10/2 Jacobson, Gary C. 2015. "Its Nothing Personal: The Decline of the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Politics* 3(July): 861-873.
- 10/4 **Midterm Exam**
- 10/9 **Money in Congressional Elections**
 Green, Donald Philip, and Jonathan S. Krasno. 1988. "Salvation for the Spendthrift Incumbent: Reestimating the Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 32(November): 884-907.
 Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 61-70)
- 10/11 Jacobson, Gary C. 1990. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections: New Evidence for Old Arguments." *American Journal of Political Science* 34(May): 334-362.
 Green, Donald Philip and Jonathan Krasno. 1990. "Rebuttal to Jacobson's New Evidence for Old Arguments." *American Journal of Political Science* 34(May): 363-372.
- 10/16 Goodliffe, Jay. 2001. "The Effect of War Chests on Challenger Entry in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(October): 830-844.
 Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 73-76)

- 10/18 Gimpel, James G., Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz. 2008. "The Check Is in the Mail: Interdistrict Funding Flows in Congressional Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 52(April): 373-394.
Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 77-110)
- 10/23 **Congressional Campaigns**
Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (pgs. 1-111)
- 10/25 Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (pgs. 112-209)
- 10/30 **Media and Elections**
Druckman, James N. and Michael Parkin. 2005. "The Impact of Media Bias: How Editorial Slant Affects Voters." *Journal of Politics* 67(November): 1030-1049.
Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 110-121)
- 11/1 Levendusky, Matthew S. 2013. "Why do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers?" *American Journal of Political Science* 57(July): 611-623.
Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 121-134)
- 11/6 **Election Day**
Jacobson, Gary C. 2017. "The Triumph of Polarized Partisanship in 2016: Donald Trump's Improbably Victory." *Political Science Quarterly* 132(1): 9-41.
- 11/8 *Discussion of Election Results*
- 11/13 **Senate Elections**
Lublin, David I. 1994. "Quality, Not Quantity: Strategic Politicians in U.S. Senate Elections, 1952-1990." *Journal of Politics* 56(February): 228-241.
Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 134-140)
- 11/15 Johnson, Gbemende, Bruce I. Oppenheimer, and Jennifer L. Selin. 2012. "The House as a Stepping Stone to the Senate: Why Do So Few African American House Members Run?" *American Journal of Political Science* 56(April): 387-399.
- 11/22 *No Class, Thanksgiving Break*
- 11/24 *No Class, Thanksgiving Break*
- 11/27 **Political Film: "The Candidate"**
***Final Paper Due**
- 11/29 "The Candidate" (cont.)
- 12/4 *No Class, Friday Class Schedule in Effect*
- 12/11 **Final Examination, 3:30-6:30 p.m.**