**Political Science 4605  
POLITICS OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS Spring 2020 (54331)**Baldwin 311  
T/TR 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Instructor: Aaron A. Hitefield

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Office: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

**Course Description**

This course is intended as a broad survey of the literature surrounding 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, differences between House and Senate races, and similar electoral systems in other contexts. Leaving this course, you should have a better understanding of the nature of congressional elections.

**Required Texts**

Jacobson, Gary C. and Jamie L. Carson. 2020. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 10th ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hopkins, Daniel J. 2018. *The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized*. 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 or news articles each week. Required books are available for purchase from the usual sources (Amazon.com or the UGA Bookstore) or may be checked out from the library. Unless otherwise indicated, assigned articles can be downloaded from www.jstor.org or 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 (5%)
2. Campaign and Rhetoric Assignment (10%)
3. Georgia Congressional Election Project (20%)
4. First Exam (20%)
5. Second Exam (20%)
6. Final Exam (25%)

In terms of final grades in light of the +/- grading system, an A will be given to anyone receiving 93 or more points, an A- to those receiving 90-92 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 for attendance/participation will be based on class attendance and the quality of your classroom participation (discussion groups). You are allowed two unexcused absences without penalty. After two absences, your attendance grade will be penalized unless you have a legitimate excuse for missing class.

***Campaign and Rhetoric Assignment***

Each student will be required to submit a short analysis of campaign rhetoric and campaign activity found in a recent Congressional election. A template with a practice assignment, as well as an assignment guide will be posted on ELC. These short assignments will be due on **March 5, 2020**.

***Georgia Congressional Election Project***

Everyone will be required to submit a final election project near the end of the semester. This project will assess a student’s ability to summarize information, analyze data, explore archival data, and create conclusions. A template with a practice assignment, as well as an assignment guide will be posted on ELC. These election projects will be due on **April 9, 2020**.

***Exams***

There will be two midterms and a final exam in this course. Exams are closed book and will include both short answer and essay questions. The final exam is cumulative and will include material covered in the class lectures and the assigned reading. Tests will be handed out during class, as will any additional paper needed. Note: the instructor will provide all test paper.

***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***

Any decision to use “extra credit” will be up to the discretion of the instructor. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations will be announced to the class by the instructor if any changes occur (e.g., snow days). Reminder: for privacy purposes, no information pertaining to course grades or final grades can be discussed over the telephone or via email.

***Instructor Availability***

My scheduled office hours will be posted on ELC. To ensure quality and efficient meetings, students must email me ahead of time to set up a specific time to meet within my scheduled office hours, as well as inform me of the topic of the meeting so I can plan accordingly.

***Disability Accommodation Policy 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.

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**Course Schedule**

**Notice:** Assigned readings are to be completed by the dates listed below

**PART 1: Structure and Candidates**

**Course Introduction, Constitution, and Election Structure**

* **Jan 7 — Class Introductions —Syllabus Overview**
  + Briefly Read/Review Article 1: Sections 1-4 of the U.S. Constitution <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/articlei>
* **Jan 9 — NO CLASS (Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting)**
* **Jan 14 — Structure of Congressional Elections**
  + Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections—*Chapters1 and 2

**The Constitution and The Electoral Connection**

* **Jan 16 — Mayhew (Part 1)**
  + Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (pgs. 1-77)
* **Jan 21 — Mayhew (Part 2)**
  + Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (pgs. 81-180)
* **Jan 23 — Evidence of the Electoral Connection**
  + Carson, Jamie L. And Jeffery Jenkins. 2011. “Examining the Electoral Connection Across Time.” Annual Review of Political Science 14: 25-46.

**Let’s Meet the Candidates!**

* **Jan 28 — Congressional Candidates**
  + Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections—*Chapter 3
* **Jan 30 — Strategic Politicians/Quality Challengers and Competition**
  + Rohde, David W. 1979. “Risk-Bearing and Progressive Ambition: The Case of Members of the United States House of Representatives.” *American Journal of Political Science* 23(1): 1-26.
  + Jacobson, Gary C. 1989. “Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections, 1946-86.” *American Political Science Review* 83(3): 773-793.
* **Feb 4 — Strategic Politicians/Quality Challengers and Competition**
  + Banks, Jeffery S. and Roderick Kiewiet. 1989. “Explaining Patterns of Candidate Competition in Congressional Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* 33(4): 997-1015.
  + 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(2): 195-208.
* **Feb 6 — The Incumbency Advantage and the Personal Vote**
  + Cox, Gary and Jonathan Katz. 1996. “Why Did the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections Grow?” *American Journal of Political Science* 40(2): 478-497.
* **Feb 11 — The Incumbency Advantage and the Personal Vote**
  + 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(2): 289-301.
  + Jacobson, Gary C. 2015. “It’s Nothing Personal: The Decline of the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections.” *Journal of Politics* 3(3): 861-873.
* **Feb 13 — Primaries and General Elections (Part 1)**
  + Brady, David W., Hahrie Han, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2007. “Primary Elections and Candidate Ideology: Out of Step with the Primary Electorate?” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32(February): 79-105.
  + Hall, Andrew B. 2015. “What Happens When Extremists Win Primaries?” *American Political Science Review* 109(1): 18-42.
* **Feb 18 — Review Session & Primaries and General Elections Continued**
  + Lawless, Jennifer and Kathryn Pearson. 2008. “The Primary Reason for Women’s Underrepresentation? Reevaluating the Conventional Wisdom.” *Journal of Politics* 70(January): 67-82.
  + Pyeatt, Nicholas. 2015. “Party Unity, Ideology, and Polarization in Primary Elections for the House of Representatives: 1956-2012.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 40(4): 651-676.
* **Feb 20 — Test 1 (Over Part 1)**

**PART 2: Campaigns, Campaign Resources, and Elections in Context**

**Money and Media**

* **Feb 25 — Money in Congressional Elections (Part 1)**
  + Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections—*Pg. 87-115
* **Feb 27** — **Money in Congressional Elections (Part 2)**
  + Green, Donald Philip, and Jonathan S. Krasno. 1988. “Salvation for the Spendthrift Incumbent: Re-estimating the Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* 32(4): 884-907.
  + Jacobson, Gary C. 1990. “The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections: New Evidence for Old Arguments.” *American Journal of Political Science* 34(2): 334- 362.
* **Mar 3 — Media and Elections**
  + Druckman, James N. and Michael Parkin. 2005. “The Impact of Media Bias: How Editorial Slant Affects Voters.” *Journal of Politics* 67(4): 1030-1049. Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 110-121)
  + Levendusky, Matthew S. 2013. “Why do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers?” *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3): 611-623.

**Campaigns and the Electorate**

* **Mar 5 — Congressional Campaigns and Rhetoric (Part 1)**
  + ***CAMPAIGN AND RHETORIC ASSIGNMENT DUE TODAY***
  + Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections—*Pg. 115-146
* **Mar 10 — Congressional Campaigns and Rhetoric (Part 2)**
  + Fenno, Richard. Jr. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” The American Political Science Review 71(3): 883-917.
  + Druckman, James N., Martin J. Kifer, and Michael Parkin. 2009. “Campaign Communications in U.S. Congressional Elections” American Political Science Review 103(3): 343-366.
* **Mar 12 — Senate Elections**
  + Lublin, David I. 1994. “Quality, Not Quantity: Strategic Politicians in U.S. Senate Elections, 1952-1990.” *Journal of Politics* 56(1): 228-241.
  + Jacobson and Carson— *The Politics of Congressional Elections—*Pg. 147-152; 240-256
* **Mar 17 — Who Votes?!**
  + Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections—*Chapter 5.

**Elections in Context**

* **Mar 19 —Parliamentary Elections—Guest Lecturer**
  + **Readings assigned by guest lecturer**
* **Mar 24 — Review Session & Judicial Elections—Guest Lecturer**
  + **Readings assigned by guest lecturer**
* **Mar 26 — Test 2 (Over Part 2)**

**PART 3: Nationalization, National Conditions, and Electoral Implications**

* **Mar 31 — Nationalization (Part 1)**
  + Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States—*Chapters 2 and 3.
* **Apr 2 — Nationalization and Engagement (Part 2)**
  + Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States—*Chapters 4, 5, and 6.
* **Apr 7 — Voter Behavior, Identities, and Nationalization (Part 3)** 
  + Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States—*Chapters 7, 8, and 9.
* **Apr 9 — Additional Evidence for Nationalization and its Effects.**
  + ***GENERAL ELECTION ASSIGNMENT DUE TODAY***
  + Carson, Jamie L., Joel Sievert, and Ryan D. Williamson. N.d. “Nationalization and the Incumbency Advantage.” Political Research Quarterly, Forthcoming.
  + Sievert, Joel and Seth C McKee. 2019. “Nationalization in U.S. Senate and Gubernatorial Elections.” American Politics Research, 47(5): 1055-1080.
* **Apr 14 — Polarization and National Conditions**
  + Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections—Pg.* 193-240
* **Apr 16 — NO CLASS (Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting)**
* **Apr 21 — Polarization and National Conditions (Part 2)**
  + Hirano, Shigeo, James M. Snyder, Stephen D. Ansolabehere, and John M. Hansen. 2010. “Primary Elections and Partisan Polarization in the U.S. Congress.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 5(2): 169-191.
  + Jones, David R. 2010. “Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections.” American Journal of Political Science 54(2): 323-337.
* **Apr 23 — Polarization and National Conditions (Part 3)**
  + McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2009. “Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?” American Journal of Political Science 53(3): 666-680
* **Apr 28 — Implications, Conclusions, and Final Review**
  + Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections—Chapter 7*
  + Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States—*Chapter 10

**FINAL EXAM**

* **April 30—FINAL EXAM, 3:30-6:30 p.m. (Over Parts 1, 2, and 3)**