

Political Science 4605H
POLITICS OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS
Fall 2020 (38527)
Baldwin 302
TTh 2:20 - 3:35 p.m. (UPDATED)

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

- Hassell, Hans J. G. 2018. *The Party's Primary: Control of Congressional Nominations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hopkins, Daniel. 2018. *The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jacobson, Gary C. and Jamie L. Carson. 2020. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 10th ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- 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 of the course schedule may be altered at the discretion of the instructor.

General Expectations in Light of the Current Pandemic

Everyone has a critical role to play as we work together to protect the health and safety of every member of the Bulldog Nation. I expect all students to behave professionally in this course. You are expected to attend class, either in person or via Zoom, and be prepared to participate in discussions (I will reach out via email and ELC about which days you can attend in person). You are responsible for all material in the readings and lectures, even if you are unable to attend class in person. 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. Check your email regularly so that you do not miss important information, and also check the University [COVID-19 website](#) for updates and resources.

Face Coverings. Like other buildings on campus, in Baldwin Hall, face coverings in all public spaces, including classrooms, are **mandatory** for everyone. Wearing a face covering is in addition to and not a substitute for also maintaining six feet social distancing. Anyone not using a face covering when required will be asked to wear one or must leave the area.

Keeping a Safe Distance. In all public spaces in Baldwin Hall (including stairwells, classrooms, halls, offices, bathrooms, and labs), please maintain six feet between you and others. The seating capacity in your classroom has been modified to allow for social distancing—*only five students will be allowed to attend class on a given day with the rest participating online.* Please sit in designated, marked seats. Do not remove signage or re-arrange furniture, even if it appears that furniture is not being used. To help maintain distance, please keep right, where possible. If you enter/exit through the front doors of Baldwin, please follow the signs (and traffic) directing you through a specific set of doors.

Do Not Congregate. If you want to spend some time chatting with someone, please take it outside or online. We are also requesting that you enter and exit Baldwin without delay, staying outside of the building as long as practicable before your class begins and then leaving once your class is finished.

Keeping it Clean. Cleaning and disinfecting of public spaces are important to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Classrooms are only being cleaned once-per-day. There are sanitation wipes/buckets and stands in proximity to your classroom. *Prior to heading in to class,* you should take a wipe from the station and wipe down all high-touch surfaces associated with your seat. You should help further slow the spread of the virus by frequently washing your hands. Bathrooms will be cleaned frequently during the day. On occasions that bathrooms are closed for cleaning, you may need to use those on other floors or in other buildings. Please be conscious of the density of traffic in bathrooms and practice social distancing.

Course Requirements and Grading

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

1. Participation (20%)
2. Short Writing Assignment (20%)
3. Midterm Exam (30%)
4. Final Paper (30%)

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.

Participation

Your grade for this aspect of the course will be based on the quality of your class participation, whether in person or online via Zoom discussions. *Since this is an upper division honors seminar, each student will be expected to present the assigned material and lead the class discussion 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 this face-to-face/remote hybrid seminar to be a useful learning experience, you *must* 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 3-4 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 after Thanksgiving. This assignment will analyze the outcome of the 2020 congressional elections in light of the explanatory theories discussed in class. These papers should be approximately 8-10 pages in length in a typed, double-spaced format with one-inch margins. Final papers will be due on **December 1st** and can be emailed to me. *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 take-home midterm exam in this course that will be distributed on **October 8th** and will be due a week later on **October 15th**. The midterm will draw upon material from both lectures and the readings. Since you can reference this material when completing the exam, you will be graded more strictly than if this were an in-class exam. In lieu of a final exam, you will be completing a final 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. 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). The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Instructor Availability

I will not be holding regular office hours this semester in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but will be available on Tuesdays after class and by appointment for discussions via Zoom. If you'd like to meet other than Tuesday afternoons, just email me to set up a time that is convenient for both of us.

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.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

- If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
 - UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).
 - If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
 - Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.
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Course Schedule (Assigned readings are to be completed by the dates listed below.)

- 8/20 **Introduction via Zoom**
- 8/25 **The Electoral Connection**
Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (pgs. 1-77)
- 8/27 Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (pgs. 81-180)
- 9/1 **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." *American Political Science Review* 96(March): 127-140.
Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 1-36)
- 9/3 Carson, Jamie, Gregory Koger, Matthew Lebo, and Everett Young. 2010. "The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(July): 598-616.
- 9/8 **Congressional Primaries**
Hassell, *The Party's Primary* (pgs. 1-87)
- 9/10 Hassell, *The Party's Primary* (pgs. 88-191)
- 9/15 **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.
- 9/17 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.
- 9/22 **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. 37-49)

- 9/24 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. 49-67)
- 9/29 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.
- 10/1 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.
- 10/6 **Nationalized Elections**
Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States* (pgs. 1-123)
- 10/8 Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States* (pgs. 124-239)
- 10/13 **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. 67-73)
- 10/15 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.
****Midterm Exams Due**
- 10/20 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)
- 10/22 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. 85-110)
- 10/27 **Media and Elections**
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. 121-125)
- 10/29 Arceneaux, Kevin, Johanna Dunaway, Martin Johnson, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. 2020. "Strategic Candidate Entry and Congressional Elections in the Era of Fox News." *American Journal of Political Science* 64(2): 398-415.
Jacobson and Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (pgs. 125-146)
- 11/3 **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.

- 11/5 *Zoom Discussion of Election Results*
- 11/10 **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. 147-152)
- 11/12 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.
- 11/17 **Representation**
 Bafumi, Joseph and Michael C. Herron. 2010. "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and their Members in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 104(3): 519-542.
- 11/19 Grimmer, Justin. 2013. "Appropriators not Position Takers: the Distorting Effects of Electoral Incentives on Congressional Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(July): 624-642.
- 11/24 **Research Day**
- 11/26 *No Class, Thanksgiving*
- **All remaining classes will be held online via Zoom**
- 12/1 **Redistricting and Electoral Competition**
 Carson, Jamie, Michael Crespin, and Ryan Williamson. 2014. "Re-evaluating the Effects of Redistricting on Electoral Competition, 1972-2012." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 14(2): 162-174.
 ***Final Paper Due** (Please Email Paper to carson@uga.edu)
- 12/3 Cottrell, David. 2019. "Using Computer Simulations to Measure the Effect of Gerrymandering on Electoral Competition in the U.S. Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 44(3): 487-514.
- 12/8 *No Class, Friday Class Schedule in Effect*
- 12/10 **Reading Day**