

Political Science 4605H
POLITICS OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS
Fall 2022 (54430)
Baldwin 302
TTh 2:20 - 3:35 p.m.

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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 edition. 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.

Course Requirements and Grading

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

1. Attendance (10%)
2. Participation (10%)
3. Short Writing Assignment (10%)
4. Final Paper (20%)
5. Midterm Exam (25%)
6. 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 and 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 this 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 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 2022 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 **November 29th**. *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. If you miss an exam due to illness, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss options for rescheduling. *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. 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). In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. 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.

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 or crisis support: (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) (<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.

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

8/18	Introduction
8/23	The Electoral Connection Mayhew, <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection</i> (pgs. 1-77)
8/25	Mayhew, <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection</i> (pgs. 81-180)
8/30	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. 1-36)
9/1	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.

- 9/6 **Congressional Primaries**
Hassell, *The Party's Primary* (pgs. 1-87)
- 9/8 Hassell, *The Party's Primary* (pgs. 88-191)
- 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.
- 9/15 Canon, David T. 1993. "Sacrificial Lambs or Strategic Politicians? Political Amateurs in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4): 1119-1141.
- 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. 37-49)
- 9/22 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)
- 9/27 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.
- 9/29 Jacobson, Gary C. 2015. "It's Nothing Personal: The Decline of the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Politics* 3(July): 861-873.
- 10/4 **Midterm Exam**
- 10/6 **Nationalized Elections**
Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States* (pgs. 1-123)
- 10/11 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)
- 10/18 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.
- 10/20 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)

- 10/25 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)
- 11/1 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 **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.
- 11/8 **Election Day**
Carson, Jamie, Spencer Hardin, and Aaron Hitefield. 2021. "You're Fired! Donald Trump and the 2020 Congressional Elections." *The Forum* 18(4): 627-650.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2020-2103>
- 11/10 *Discussion of Election Results*
- 11/15 **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)
- 11/17 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 **Research Day**
- 11/24 *No Class, Thanksgiving*
- 11/29 **Representation**
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.
****Final Papers Due****
- 12/1 Thomsen, Danielle and Aaron King. 2020. "Women's Representation and the Gendered Pipeline to Power." *American Political Science Review* 114(4): 989-1000.
- 12/6 *No Class, Friday Class Schedule in Effect*
- 12/13 **Final Exam** (3:30-6:30 p.m.)

Reflections on 20+ Years of College Teaching

Here are some simple lessons that will take you far in class (and in life more generally) and it is best to start practicing them now as they will definitely pay off later:

1. This one seems obvious but learn how to write an effective email. First, begin with a proper greeting such as “Dear Dr. [Last Name] or Professor.” Don’t begin with “Hey!” It’s just rude.
2. On a related point, keep your emails short and to the point. We don’t need to know every detail of your life. But, most importantly, be direct and provide some context. If I have no idea who you are or what you are asking for, I may not respond very quickly.
3. If you have a legitimate excuse for missing an exam or the due date for an assignment, I am willing to work with you up to a point. If you have to miss an exam or turn in a paper late because your high school buddy is getting married and you want to leave town early to attend the rehearsal dinner, that unfortunately doesn’t qualify.
4. The date of the final exam is set by the university, and I can’t do anything about it so plan accordingly. Also, taking an exam early is never an option so please don’t ask to do so. On a similar note, please tell your parents not to buy you a plane ticket home before the actual end of the semester so we can avoid any awkward discussions in December.
5. Proofread everything you email or submit for a grade. It really does make a difference.
6. Always consult the syllabus before quickly firing off an email with a question that is likely already addressed in the syllabus (such as when an assignment is due or when the next exam is scheduled). It will ultimately save everyone time in the end.
7. Expect a reasonable turnaround time when you do email me. I’m always amazed when someone emails me at 12:30 a.m. on a Friday or Saturday night and seems surprised when I don’t email them back until Monday. Professors have lives too and we don’t spend all of them waiting for emails to come in.
8. Don’t be afraid to ask questions in class. Most of us love to talk and we actually get paid to teach and answer your questions. We really don’t mind at all.
9. But don’t ask for extra credit, especially after not competing most of the work during the course of the semester. That is one of my biggest pet peeves of all.
10. At some point, you may need one or more professors to write you a recommendation letter for a job application, an internship you are interested in, or for a scholarship that you’d like to apply for. Keep the above suggestions in mind before you ask for one because our letters can be brutally honest in terms of focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals we are writing about. Employers and those screening applicants for various positions expect that from us.
11. Finally, if you continue to come to my class after the first day, that means you have accepted the terms of the contract (i.e., the syllabus), regardless of whether you have read it fully. Keep in mind that the terms of the syllabus are not negotiable.