

# THE AMERICAN LEGISLATURE

## POLS 3202, Spring 2009

Classroom: Brewster D-110  
Class time: Tues. and Thurs. 11 a.m.–12:15 p.m.  
Office hours: Tues. 2–4 p.m., Wed. 10 a.m.–12  
p.m., Thurs. 2–4 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Peter L. Francia  
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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The focus of this course is the U.S. Congress. The class will examine five major subjects: (1) congressional elections; (2) the activities of congressional members; (3) the organization of Congress; (4) governing; and (5) policymaking. During the semester, I encourage you to think critically about how each of the issues that we cover in the course relates to principles of democracy. Some questions to consider include: Are congressional elections fair and do they provide voters with sufficient choices? Is democracy better served with members of Congress spending time in their home districts with their constituents or working on legislation in Washington, D.C.? How much power should congressional leaders have over other members of Congress? How much power do special interests have in influencing the legislative process and in shaping public policy? Are there reforms that would improve how Congress functions?

### READINGS

- (1) *Required*: Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, and Frances E. Lee, *Congress and Its Members*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (CQ Press, 2008).
- (2) *Required*: Paul S. Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and In Washington*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (CQ Press, 2008).
- (3) *Required*: Walter J. Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (CQ Press, 2007).
- (4) *Optional*: Paul S. Quirk and Sarah A. Binder (eds.), *The Legislative Branch* (Oxford University Press, 2005). Available in Joyner Library.

### EVALUATION

Your final grade in the course will be based on your exam performances and class participation. There is also an *optional* 10-12 page research paper that you may consider completing as part of your final grade. If you choose to write the paper (option #1), the criteria for your final grade will be:

- (1) A mid-term exam on February 26, 2009. The exam is worth 20% of your grade.
- (2) A 10-12 page research paper due on March 5, 2009 (topic #1) or April 16, 2009 (topic # 2). The paper is worth 30% of your grade.
- (3) A final exam on April 30, 2009. The exam is worth 30% of your grade.
- (4) Class attendance and participation is worth the remaining 20% of your grade.

If you choose *not* to write the paper (option #2), the criteria will be:

- (1) A mid-term exam on February 26, 2009. The exam is worth 35% of your grade.
- (2) A final exam on April 30, 2009. The exam is worth 45% of your grade.
- (3) Class attendance and participation is worth the remaining 20% of your grade.

## CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

All students must attend class. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each lecture. It is your responsibility to make sure that you sign the attendance sheet if you are present in class. If you arrive excessively late to class or if you leave class early, you will receive only partial credit for attendance. Your class attendance grade will be based on the percentage of classes that you attend (e.g., a student who attends every class will earn a 100; a student who attends half of the classes will earn a 50, etc.). I expect all students to complete the assigned readings before each class and to be ready to participate in each class discussion. Students who are active participants during class discussions will receive a bonus point added to their overall course grade.

### EXCUSED ABSENCES

I will excuse absences only for an incapacitating or contagious illness, unavoidable surgery, a death in the immediate family, or if you are a member of an ECU athletic team that requires you to travel and miss class. You must present me with some form of verification if you wish to have your absence excused. Acceptable forms of verification include the following: a doctor's note indicating the severity of your illness or that you required unavoidable surgery; an obituary; or official documentation from the athletic department indicating your travel schedule. You must present me with verification no later than one week after the absence.

### EXAM ATTENDANCE

Failure to be present for any of the scheduled exams will result in an automatic "0." On all exam dates, you are required to have an exam booklet and to be present in class at 11:00 a.m. If you cannot attend the exams, you must contact me before I have administered the test. I will grant make-up exams only for extraordinary circumstances. If you miss a test because of an illness, you are still required to contact me before the exam occurs. You must also present a note from your doctor that verifies your illness was serious enough to prevent you from taking the exam. If you have questions about a possible school closing due to severe weather or other reasons, please call the University Emergency Telephone Number at 252-328-0062.

### LATE PAPER POLICY

If you choose to submit a paper, it is due at the beginning of class on either March 5 (topic #1) or April 16 (topic #2). Because this assignment is optional, I will not accept any papers after the deadline unless there are circumstances that I deem extraordinary.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I will strictly enforce the university code of academic integrity in this course. According to the East Carolina University Honor Code, violations of academic integrity include the following:

- (1) Cheating. Unauthorized aid or assistance or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work.
- (2) Plagiarism. Copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and adopting same as one's own original work. *Please note that failure to recognize and cite the work of others in your research constitutes plagiarism.*

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (continued)

(3) Falsification. Statement of any untruth, either spoken or written, regarding any circumstances relative to academic work.

(4) Attempts. Attempting any act that if completed would constitute an academic integrity violation as defined herein.

For more information on university rules and procedures concerning academic integrity, please visit the web at <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/facultymanual/part4/44.htm>. If you violate the Honor Code, I will report the matter to the Academic Integrity Board for disciplinary action. The penalties for violating the university code of academic integrity range from failure in the course to expulsion from the university.

## CLASSROOM RULES

The classroom is a learning environment. I expect all students to observe some basic rules of courtesy, which include the following: (1) arrive to class on time and do not leave before class is dismissed; (2) turn off cell phones; (3) no eating during class; (4) do not read the newspaper, listen to music through headphones, etc., during class; (5) do not sleep during class; (6) do not carry on private conversations with others in the classroom while someone else is speaking; and (7) please be courteous to your classmates and respectful of your fellow students' views, comments, and questions. Failure to follow these rules will negatively impact your class attendance and participation grade.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

East Carolina University complies with the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA). If you have special needs for a covered disability, please visit the Department for Disability Support Services located in 138 Slay, or call 252-737-1016.

## APPOINTMENTS

My office is located in the Brewster Building, Room A-119. My office hours are from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. every Wednesday. If you cannot meet with me during office hours, please see me after class or contact me by telephone or e-mail to schedule an appointment. If you need to reach me after 4:00 p.m., please use e-mail.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **Week 1. Overview of Congress**

January 13, 2009. Course overview, requirements, and expectations

January 15, 2009. The two Congresses

(Required reading: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 1; optional reading: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 1)

### **Week 2. Evolution of Congress**

January 20, 2009. Early history of Congress

January 22, 2009. Powers of Congress

(Required reading: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 2; optional readings: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapters 2-3)

## COURSE OUTLINE (continued)

### **Week 3. Rules for Running**

January 27, 2009. Formal rules

January 29, 2009. Becoming a candidate

(Required readings: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 3; *Congressional Elections*, Chapter 2; optional reading: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 6)

### **Week 4. Congressional Campaigns**

February 3, 2009. Documentary: *Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore?*

February 5, 2009. The campaign for resources

(Required readings: *Congressional Elections*, Chapters 1, 3, and 6; optional reading: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 4)

### **Week 5. Political Parties and Interest Groups in Congressional Elections**

February 10, 2009. The parties campaign

February 12, 2009. The interests campaign

(Required readings: *Congressional Elections*, Chapter 4-5; optional reading: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 5)

### **Week 6. Congressional Elections**

February 17, 2009. General election strategies and voting behavior

February 19, 2009. Documentary: *Taking on the Kennedys*

(Required readings: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 4; *Congressional Elections*, Chapter 7)

### **Week 7. Review and Exam**

February 24, 2009. Review for exam

\*February 26, 2009. **Mid-term Exam**

### **Week 8. Hill and Home Styles**

March 3, 2009. Hill styles

\*March 5, 2009. Home styles; **10-12 page paper due (topic #1)**

(Required reading: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 5)

### **Week 9. Spring Break (March 10 and March 12, 2009)**

### **Week 10. Congressional Leaders and Committees**

March 17, 2009. Leaders of the House and Senate

March 19, 2009. Party caucuses, committees, and informal groups

(Required readings: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 6-7; optional readings: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapters 7-9)

### **Week 11. Passing a Bill: House Rules and Procedures**

March 24, 2009. How a bill becomes law

March 26, 2009. Bill referrals, committee actions, and rules

(Required reading: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 8; *Congressional Procedures*, Chapters 1 & 3)

## COURSE OUTLINE (continued)

### **Week 12. Passing a Bill: Senate Procedures**

March 31, 2009. Procedures in the Senate / Congress and the President

April 2, 2009. Movie: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (first half of the movie)

(Required readings: *Congressional Procedures*, Chapters 4-8; *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 10; optional reading: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 11)

### **Week 13. Congress and the Courts**

April 7, 2009. Movie: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (second half of the movie)

April 9, 2009. Judicial appointments and the politics of congressional confirmations

(Required reading: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 12; optional reading: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 14)

### **Week 14. Lobbying and Policy**

April 14, 2009. Lobbying Congress

\*April 16, 2009. Federal budget and domestic policy; **10-12 page paper due (topic #2)**

(Required readings: *Congressional Procedures*, Chapter 2; *Congress and Its Members*, Chapters 13-14; optional readings: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 10 and Chapter 13)

### **Week 15. National Security**

April 21, 2009. Congress and national security policies

April 23, 2009. Documentary: *The True Story of Charlie Wilson*

(Required readings: *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 15; *Congressional Elections*, Chapter 10; optional reading: *The Legislative Branch*, Chapter 12)

### **Final Exam.**

\*April 30, 2009. **Final exam** scheduled from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

## **10-12 PAGE PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

Choose one of the following two topics.

(1) The former governor of North Carolina, Mike Easley, has decided to challenge Richard Burr for his U.S. Senate seat in 2010. Compare and contrast the “campaign for resources” and the “campaign for votes” for Easley and Burr. What interest groups are likely to support Easley? What interest groups are likely to support Burr? What expenses will both campaigns likely incur? Which voters should Easley target? Which voters should Burr target? What issues should Easley stress? What issues should Burr stress? What general strategies should the Easley and Burr campaigns follow? Assess which candidate would be likely to win this election. Please include references to all relevant course readings and outside sources.

Due March 5, 2009.

OR

(2) Some scholars argue that the House of Representatives functions better with a strong Speaker of the House. Others disagree. Summarize the major arguments of this debate by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a strong Speaker. After considering both sides of the argument, please offer your own assessment of how much power the Speaker of the House should have. Include any relevant historic examples to support your argument. Please include references to all relevant course readings and outside sources.

Due April 16, 2009.

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*Tips for Preparing the Paper:*

- The best outside sources are academic books and journal articles (e.g., *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, etc.). You may use Internet or web sources for your research, but I strongly encourage you to rely more heavily on academic sources.
- To earn a passing grade, your paper should include a minimum of five different sources. Please note that any papers without citations or a proper bibliography are guilty of plagiarism. These papers will receive an automatic “F” and may be subject to additional disciplinary action.
- All papers should be double-spaced with one inch margins.
- A well-written paper requires a thesis or an argument. You should state your thesis in the beginning or introduction of the paper. Readers should have a good idea of what the entire paper will show by the end of the second page or earlier.
- The introduction should tell the reader what exactly you are going to say in the paper. The introduction also should arouse the interest of the reader.
- The body of the paper should provide evidence that convinces the reader of your central argument. Citations from books, articles, and other sources are necessary to make your argument as convincing as possible.
- The conclusion should summarize your major arguments and consider any implications related to your thesis. It should also tie together your central points in a coherent manner.