

**The University of Texas at Austin**  
Fall 2012  
**Government 370L**  
**Congressional Elections**

Class Logistics:  
Unique #: 38843  
Meeting Time: MW, 3-4:15  
Meeting Place: WEL 2.312

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Office Hours: W (10-11 and 1-3)

TA: Kristie Kelly

### **Course Description**

This course takes an in-depth look at congressional elections. In addition to talking about the congressional elections in 2012, we'll develop a framework to understand the critical link among voters, candidates, and Congress. The first half of the course will discuss campaigning and the second half of the course will deal with election outcomes and their consequences on policy making. The readings for the class will include both contemporary journalistic accounts of the election and analytic frameworks from political scientists. An energetic classroom requires student participation. If need be, I'll compel you to participate.

### **Special Needs**

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. If they certify your needs, I will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

### **Grades**

Grades will be determined according to the following formula:

- 20% Attendance and Class Participation. Throughout the class you will have random attendance quizzes. There will be no excuses for missing attendance quizzes.
- 20% Midterm Exam I (September 26)
- 20% Midterm Exam II (October 24)
- 20% Midterm Exam III (November 28)
- 20% Course Project. Each student will follow a state that has an interesting House race and an interesting Senate race. The project's assessment will take the form of various papers, comprising around 8 total pages of written material, throughout the semester.

Because of the demand for this class, I will not give a Q-drop to a student unless he or she is passing the course. I frown on issues of academic dishonesty and will severely punish any student caught plagiarizing, cheating, or engaged in unethical classroom practices. I will not accept late assignments. I will not accept excuses for missing pop quizzes. I do not offer make-up exams. All grade disputes must be type written and turned in within 1 week of receiving the grade. I will use pluses and minuses in this class, with the 0.7 and 0.3 at cutoffs. So, an 82.9 is a B- and an 83.1 is B; an 86.9 is a B and an 87.1 is a B+.

### **Course Readings**

The course readings consist of the following:

- A course packet available at Speedway Copy and Printing (in Dobie Mall). All readings in the Course Packet are designated as a hollow circle.
- Gary Jacobson. 2012. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson Longman.
- ❖ Paul R. Abramson, John H. Aldrich, and Dave W. Rohde. 2012. *Change and Continuity in the 2008 and 2010 Elections*. CQ Press.
- Sean M. Theriault. 2008. *Party Polarization In Congress*. Cambridge University Press.

# Course Outline and Reading List

## Aug. 29 – Sept. 5: Course Introduction & The Basics

- The Constitution of the United States, Article I
- Federalists 52, 53, 62, and 63

## Sept. 10 and 12: Understanding Congress

- Jacobson, Chapters 1 and 2
- David R. Mayhew. 1987. “The Electoral Connection and the Congress” in *Congress: Structure and Policy*, eds. Mathew D. McCubbins and Terry Sullivan. New York: Cambridge University Press. <Originally published in 1974.>

## Sept. 17-19: The Current Context & The Project

- TBD.

## Sept. 24: The Candidates

- Jacobson, Chapter 3
- Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox. 2004. “Why Are Women Still Not Running for Public Office?” Issued by the Brookings Institute.

## Sept. 26: Midterm I

## Oct. 1-3: The Campaigns

- Jacobson, Chapter 4
- Eliza Newlin Carney. August 7, 2010. “Six Myths about Campaign Money.” *National Journal*.

## Oct. 8: The Voters: Who are They?

- Jacobson, Chapter 5
- ❖ Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 4 and 5

## Oct. 10: The Youth Vote

- Martin P. Wattenberg. 2007. Excerpts from *Is Voting for Young People?* Pearson: New York.

## Oct. 15: Project Day

## Oct. 17: The Voters: What They Do?

- Donald R. Wolfensberger. 2000. “Chapter 16: The Future of Deliberative Democracy” in *Congress and the People: Deliberative Democracy on Trial*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- R. Douglas Arnold. 1990. Chpt. 10, “Citizens’ Control of Government” in *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

## Oct. 22: The Role of Presidents and Parties in Congressional Elections

- ❖ Skim Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 6-8
- Paul S. Herrnson. 2008. Chapter 8, “The Parties Campaign,” in *Congressional Elections*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

## Oct. 24: Midterm II

## Oct. 29: Congressional Elections in a Historical Context

- Jacobson, Chapter 6
- Burnham, Walter Dean. 2003. Selection from *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* in *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, eds., Ann G. Serow and Everett C. Ladd. Baltimore, MD: Lanahan Publishers, Inc.
- Michael G. Franc. 2011. “Reagan’s Lasting Realignment.” *National Review*.

## Oct. 31: Recent Congressional Elections

- ❖ Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 9-11

## Nov. 5: 2010 Elections

- ❖ Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 12

## Nov. 6: Election Day!

## Nov. 7: 2008 Election Results

## Nov. 12 and 14: Party Polarization

- Jacobson, Chapter 6
- Theriault, All

## Nov. 19: Project Day

## Nov. 26: Review

## Nov. 28: Midterm III

## Dec. 3 and 5: The 113<sup>th</sup> Congress and the 2014 Elections

- TBD.