The University of Texas at Austin

Fall 2012

Government 370L

Congressional Elections

Class Logistics: Sean M. Theriault
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)

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 plusses 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.
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

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

Sept. 24: The Candidates
- Jacobson, Chapter 3

Sept. 26: Midterm I

Oct. 1-3: The Campaigns
- Jacobson, Chapter 4

Oct. 8: The Voters: Who are They?
- Jacobson, Chapter 5
- Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 4 and 5

Oct. 10: The Youth Vote

Oct. 15: Project Day

Oct. 17: The Voters: What They Do?

Oct. 22: The Role of Presidents and Parties in Congressional Elections
- Skim Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Chapters 6-8

Oct. 24: Midterm II

Oct. 29: Congressional Elections in a Historical Context
- Jacobson, Chapter 6

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 113th Congress and the 2014 Elections
- TBD.