



POLS

3124Section H1
Fall 2026**THE ROAD TO CONGRESS** (CRN: 1046)Time: **MWF 11⁰⁰am to 11⁵⁰am**; Loc.: **X017 Oakes**; Credit: 3 hours

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Office Hours: M 12-1pm, 3-5:30pm, W 3-5:30pm, by email or appointment

Whether...safe or marginal,...congressmen must constantly engage in activities relating to reelection.
- David Mayhew

Course Description:*Prerequisite: POLS 1101*

This course covers congressional elections, exploring theoretical questions about the process and examining the empirical evidence available to answer those questions. In particular, roles of political parties, interest groups, and electoral rules are among the major items examined in the course.

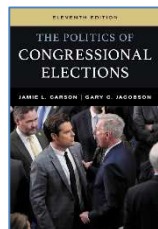
Required Readings:

ISBNs: 9781071970614



Theiss-Morse & Wagner, 2026.
Political Behavior of the American Electorate, 16th ed.

9781538176733



Carson & Jacobson, 2026.
The Politics of Congressional Elections, 11th ed.

Web Sites:

Google News/Politics

<https://news.google.com/news/section?&q=Politics>**POLITICO**<http://www.politico.com>

(We will likely also use several other sites as article sources)

Additional material: see <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/3124bib.htm>

ONLINE: Home – <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/3124.htm>, D2L (“eLearning”) – <https://ung.view.usg.edu>, Turnitin – <http://turnitin.com>

Course Objectives and Format:

Outcomes: Students will understand the **history and functioning** of congressional elections, explore **issues** involved in these elections from analytical and practical viewpoints, and be aware of other **actors** that influence, provide resources to, and regulate congressional elections.

This is a “half at a distance” course which will meet part of the week, with online activities filling out the week. We will use *D2L* online (also known as *eLearning*), but I like to keep things simple. We will not use any “modules”, etc. Unless otherwise noted, all activity and communication will take place via the announcement and discussion sections. In class, we will engage in as much **discussion** possible. To that end, *you need to read the assignments before their due date*. Be able to *discuss* and answer *questions* about them. The texts lay out the basics. We will start each new topic (see Schedule) with the appropriate readings. We will examine past elections and also follow 2026 developments to get a “current” view. Therefore, you must also *stay informed* of the progress of these events. We will follow current events mainly as covered in the *Google News* (<https://news.google.com/news/section?&q=Politics>) web site.

In addition to assigned readings, we will review *Google News/Politics* articles (or ones from other sources) most weeks. *You will present* and lead **discussions** of these online. Together, we will select articles that complement class topics¹. So in a real sense, you will help shape course content! Of course, you **all** are responsible for **all** assigned articles, text, and any other materials. In presenting articles, I would like you each to assume a particular role (e.g., candidates, party strategists, the press). This helps us gain particular insights into different perspectives on electoral and partisan issues. A list of roles appears at the end of this syllabus.

For **most weeks** (see Schedule), the class meets **Monday/Wednesday only**. **Online discussion replaces most Friday classes:** We will begin new topics and readings *after* each Wednesday class. You are **required** to post comments on that material to our D2L (“eLearning”) discussion site. You are **required** to post at least one **substantive response** (1. *not* just “I liked...”, or “I didn’t like” or similar words; 2. *analytical*, not judgmental) to discussion/notes I will post on D2L each week *and* at least one **substantive original comment**. Treat online discussions as required readings – you are responsible for and may be tested on them. There may be videos to view, or other activities assigned as part of these discussions.

Exams	Written exercises	Other		90+ = A
Exam #1	15% Bibliography/Outline	5% Online Discussions	10%	80 to 89 = B
Exam #2	15% Project	10% Articles/Role-Playing	5%	70 to 79 = C
Final	15% Presentation	10% Participation/Attendance	5%	60 to 69 = D
	Revision	10%		Grand Total:
Total:	45%	35%	20%	100%

There are **two ‘mid-term’ exams and a final**. Each is 15% of your grade. They consist of two essay questions. A few days *before* the exam, I will give you four essay questions. On the *day* of the exam, I will select two of these questions for you to answer. *Please do not miss exams* (you know our schedule *now*, so plan your schedule well ahead). *I will not give makeups unless you 1) notify me or the department in advance (no exceptions); and 2) verify a family/medical emergency in writing*. **Note:** I will *not* give any makeups *after* the graded exams are *handed back* in class. A **group project** of 18-24+ pages (depending upon group size), due no later than *November 6th*, is another 10% of your grade. The format and topics are covered on our web site, but you must consult me before proceeding. To prepare you for the project, an **annotated bibliography** is due by *October 16th*, and an **annotated outline** is due by *October 23rd*. Together, these are worth 5% of your grade. A **revision** worth 10% of your grade is due *during the last two weeks* (see schedule). *Do not turn in late papers!* If I accept them (and I may not!), you will lose either 5% or 1 point of your paper grade (whichever is *greater*) for each *day* late. Your **online posts** are another 20% of your grade. Finally, a **presentation** of your project during the last two weeks is another 10%.

I do not **grade** on a curve (You earn what you earn...I *hope* you all earn “A”’s!). A typical class average is about a mid- to upper- “C” (“C” is *average* — *not* below average...“B” is *above* average). Just completing the requirements most likely earns a “C” (70-79). “B” (80-89) requires effort *beyond* just requirements. “A” (90-100) requires *extraordinary* performance. *Notes on “attendance”:* 1. The **UNG attendance policy** (see the latest UNG *Student Handbook*, or *Bulletin*) applies to this course; 2. Any D2L **announcements** are considered sufficient notice. So, *attendance matters*, and please check your email and D2L often.

Technical Support – IT Help Desk: email: helpdesk@ung.edu; Ph.: 706-864-1922; Visit: <https://ung.edu/information-technology/contact.php>

¹ Each week, we will select articles for discussion for the *following* week’s class. Links to articles will be posted in the appropriate D2L discussion topic.

Course Schedule:

Legend: **TMW** = *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 16th ed.; **CJ** = *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 11th ed.. **Numbers** following the names are chapter numbers. **Other names** refer to articles. **Italicized titles** refer to videos (see Additional material link, above). **Articles** = Google News articles (to be selected in class — see <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/3122.htm>). Items in **Bold type** are activities or assignments. [Light cells are class days], **D2L discussions**, **Exams**, **[Project]**, **Off days**.

Monday: Discuss, videos, other		Wednesday: Discuss, Role Playing		Outside: D2L discuss due noon Monday	
08/10	"Hello, my name is..."	08/12	"Refresher" lecture	08/14	"Refresher" lecture; Drop/Add ends
08/17	"Refresher" lecture; Discussion	08/19	Intro.: Cong. Elections: CJ1	08/21	Intro.: Political Behavior: TMW Intro
08/24	Discussion	08/26	Beliefs/Democracy: TMW1	Outside	Context: CJ2, TMW2
08/31	Discussion	09/02	Discussion; Role Play (RP) articles	Outside	Congressional Candidates: CJ3
09/07	—Labor Day—	09/09	Discussion; RP articles; Ex. Ques. Fri.	Outside	Turnout/Participation: TMW 3,4
09/14	Discussion	09/16	—Exam #1—	Outside	Congressional Voters: CJ5
09/21	Discussion	09/23	Discussion; RP articles	Outside	Partisanship: TMW5
09/28	Discussion	09/30	Discussion; RP articles	Outside	Public Opinion/Ideology: TMW6
10/05	Discussion; Project Workshop	10/07	Discussion; RP articles; Ex. Ques. Fri.	Outside	Congressional Campaigns: CJ4
10/12	Discussion; Workshop; Video: <i>Dark Money</i>	10/14	—Exam #2— [Withdraw ends 10/16]	Outside	Comm./Media: TMW7; Biblio. 5pm
10/19	Discussion; Project Workshop	10/21	Discussion; RP articles	Outside	Conclusion I: CJ6; Outline due 5p
10/26	Discussion	10/28	Discussion; RP articles	Outside	Conclusion I (cont.): CJ6
11/02	Discussion	11/04	Discussion; RP articles	Outside	Conclusion II: CJ7; Project due 5p
11/09	Discussion	11/11	—Out Partying...I mean...attending a conference—	Outside	Work on your projects!!
11/16	Presentations 1,2 (Rev. due 5pm, 12/1)	11/18	Presentations 3,4 (Rev. due 5pm, 12/1)	11/20	Presentations 5,6 (Rev. due 5pm, 12/1)
11/23	—Thanksgiving Break (Turkey! Football!! Relatives who stay too long!!! I can't wait!)—				
Cancellations: we pick up where we left off—and meet Fridays if needed. Final Exam: Dec. 02, 10:20am to 12:20pm					

POLS 3124 Roles:

Article presentations and other class discussions will use *Socratic Dialogues*, requiring class members to assume various roles during discussions.

What is a Socratic Dialogue? The Socratic Dialogue format uses role playing, hypothetical case studies, and a roving inquisitor to compel panelists to confront what they would do in situations where the “right” choice is not clear. The question “What would you do?” is different from “What do you think?” in that it drives a participant to reveal how he or she would confront a specific problem. The exercise is designed to identify the perceptions and decision-making processes of all sides and to enable participants to better understand both their own positions and the imperatives driving others’ actions. As panelists wrestle with the hypothetical situations, the drama created helps illuminate complex issues in an enlightening way. [Viewer’s Guide, Beyond Black and White: Affirmative Action in America. 1999. PBS. [WWWdocument]. URL <http://www.pbs.org/pov/tvraceinitiative/beyondblackandwhite/viewer.html#socratic>]

These are suggestions for ‘characters’ to assume when presenting articles and leading discussion in class:

House Candidates	Senate Candidates	Campaign Specialists	Outside Actors
Republican House Candidates	Senate Republican Candidates	Republican Campaign Strategists	Interest Groups
Democratic House Candidates	Senate Democratic Candidates	Democratic Campaign Strategists	The Press and The Public

Each class member must either select one of these roles or suggest another one subject to approval.

STAY INFORMED: UNG Political Science and International Affairs on social media! Blog: <http://blog.ung.edu/psia-news/>



CHEAT = FAIL. Cheating (including A.I. use – see below) or plagiarizing will result in an automatic zero for the exam or assignment, a zero for participation and attendance, AND forfeiture of all extra credit. At my discretion, it may ALSO result in academic integrity charges and an “F” for the course.

UNG student code of conduct: Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) use is prohibited unless approved by instructors. This includes ChatGPT, Grammarly, Microsoft Copilot, and all other A.I., and applies to all exams and written/online work. Any Turnitin A.I. score of 50% or more will be submitted to D2L’s Copyleaks. If Copyleaks also returns a score of 50% or more, I will initiate Academic Integrity procedures.

UNG Integrity Code: “I will not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, evade the truth or tolerate those that do.”

All students in this class are bound by the above Integrity Code. For information on Academic Integrity as defined by UNG, see the *UNG Undergraduate Catalog* (http://catalog.ung.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=252#Academic_Integrity_Policy). See also <http://www.plagiarism.org/>.

Plagiarism in any form is a violation of UNG Academic Integrity policies and will not be tolerated:

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com site.

UNG Early Intervention required statement:

As part of UNG’s Early Intervention commitment to your academic success, I may refer you to university services designed to help you succeed. Please understand that such referrals are not a form of punishment – they are intended to help you. In turn, I expect you to take advantage of the offer.

For additional policies, see: <http://ung.edu/academic-affairs/policies-and-guidelines/supplemental-syllabus.php>

Accessibility Statement: If you need this document in another format, please email me (carl.cavalli@ung.edu) or call 706-864-1872.

Find more information here: <https://ung.edu/web-communications/web-accessibility/accessible-documents.php>.



Accommodations for disabilities: <https://ung.edu/student-accessibility-services/>

The University of North Georgia is committed to equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an accommodation, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and the Office of Student Accessibility Services. In this case, contact Student Accessibility Services, in the Stewart Student Success Center, Room 233 (706-867-2782, accessibility-dah@ung.edu).