

POLS
4110
Section H1
Fall 2026

THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS (CRN: 1047)

Time: **TR 3³⁰pm to 4⁴⁵pm**; Loc.: **X015 Oakes**; Credit: 3 hours

Professor: Carl Cavalli; Office: 338 Hansford Hall

Phone: 706-864-1872; E-mail: carl.cavalli@ung.edu

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

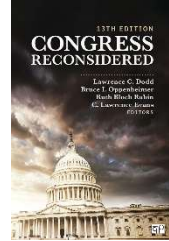
Course Description:

Prerequisite: POLS 1101

This course covers the U.S. Congress as an institution and explores its evolution and its place in the political process. The objective is to provide the student with both a historical and analytical perspective, asking “What was Congress intended to be?” and “How has it evolved?”, as well a contemporary view, asking “What is it today?”

Required Readings:

ISBNs: 9781071917190



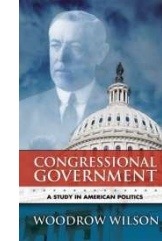
Dodd & Oppenheimer (eds). 2025. *Congress Reconsidered*, 13th ed.

9780815782230



Sundquist, James L. 1981. *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress*.

9780486148984



Wilson, Woodrow. 1885 (2006). *Congressional Government*.

Web Sites:



Google News/Politics

<https://news.google.com/news/section?&q=Politics>

POLITICO: Congress

<https://www.politico.com/news/congress>

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

Online: *The Federalist*, Nos. 51-65 (LI to LXV) (<https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text>)

ONLINE: Home – <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/4110.htm>, **D2L (“eLearning”)** – <https://ung.view.usg.edu>, **Turnitin** – <http://turnitin.com>

Course Objectives and Format:

Outcomes: Students will acquire an understanding of the **history and structure** of Congress, understand the congressional **policy-making process**, and understand the motivations and incentives that shape the **behavior** of members of Congress.

This is a hybrid 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 and current congressional activities 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., members of Congress, congressional leadership, the White House, the press). This helps us gain particular insights into different perspectives on congressional issues. A list of roles appears at the end of this syllabus.

For **most weeks** (see Schedule), the class meets **Tuesdays only**. **Online discussion replaces most Thursday classes**: We will begin new topics and readings *after* each Tuesday 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		
Exam #1	15% Bibliography/Outline	5% Online Discussions	10%	90+ = A
Exam #2	15% Project	10% Articles/Role-Playing	5%	80 to 89 = B
Final	15% Presentation	10% Participation/Attendance	5%	70 to 79 = C
	Revision	10%		60 to 69 = D
Total:	45%	35%	20%	Grand Total: 100%

There are **two ‘mid-term’ exams and a final**. Each is 15% of your grade. They consist of three essay questions. A few days *before* the exam, I will give you five essay questions. On the *day* of the exam, I will select three 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 21-28+ pages (depending upon group size), due no later than *November 13th*, 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 23rd*, and an **annotated outline** is due by *October 30th*. Together, these are worth 5% of your grade. A **revision** worth 10% of your grade is due *during finals week* (see the 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 week 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: **Dodd** = Congress Reconsidered, 13th ed.; **Sundquist** = The Decline and Resurgence of Congress; **Wilson** = Congressional Government. (see <http://faculty.ung.edu/ccavalli/4110.htm>). 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**.

Tuesday: Class discussion, articles, videos		Thursday/Outside: D2L discuss (due 12p Monday), Exams	
8/11	Introduction: "Hello, my name is..."; "Refresher" lecture	8/13	"Refresher" lecture continued; Drop/add ends Friday
8/18	"Refresher" lecture continued; Discussion	8/19	Patterns/Dynamics: Dodd 1,2; Sundquist 1
8/25	Evolution: Federalist 51-65; Sundquist 2	Online	Ascendancy I: Wilson I-III
9/01	Discussion; RP Articles Discussion; RP Articles	Online	Ascendancy II: Wilson IV-VI
9/08	Discussion; RP Articles	Online	Decline & Resurgence: Sundquist 7, 8,13
9/15	Discussion; RP Articles	9/17	—Exam #1 (Material through 9/15)—
9/22	Discussion; RP Articles	Online	Elections & Constituencies: Dodd 3, 4
9/29	Discussion; RP Articles	Online	Parties/Polarization I: Dodd 8, 9
10/06	Discussion; RP Articles	Online	Policy I: Dodd 10
10/13	Discussion; RP Articles	10/15	—Exam #2 (Material through 10/06)—
10/20	Discussion; RP Articles; Proj. Workshop; Withdraw ends 10/16	Online	Policy II: Dodd 11, 12; Cliffhanger; Bibliography due 5pm Friday.
10/27	Discussion; RP Articles; Project Workshop	Online	Policy III: Dodd 13; TrumpTakeover; Outline due 5pm Friday.
11/03	Discussion; RP Articles	Online	Can Cong. Govern? I: Dodd 16,17
11/10	Discussion; RP Articles	Online	Can Cong. Govern? II: Sundquist 14,15; Project due 5pm Friday.
11/17	Presentations I Revisions due by 5pm, 12/01	11/19	Presentations II Revisions due by 5pm, 12/01
11/24	—Thanksgiving Break (Turkey! Football!!! Relatives who stay too long!!! I can't wait!)—		
Cancellations: we pick up where we left off -- and meet Thursdays if needed. Final Exam: Thursday, 12/03, 3-5pm			

POLS 4110 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/tvaceinitiative/beyondblackandwhite/viewer.html#socratic>]

House Members	Senate Members	Outside Actors
Majority (Republican) Leadership	Majority (Democratic) Leadership	The White House
Minority (Democratic) Leadership	Minority (Republican) Leadership	Interest Groups
Committee Chairs and Other Members	Committee Chairs and Other Members	The Press and The Public

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>.

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