



**POS 3424**

## **The Legislative Process**

Section: U01

In Person

Spring Term 2026

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## **Course Meeting Information**

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The course meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:00pm – 1:15pm in Deuxieme Maison (DM) 190.

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## **Professor Information**

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Kevin Evans

**Roles:** Primary Instructor

**Email:** [keaevan@fiu.edu](mailto:keaevan@fiu.edu)

**Phone:** 305-348-2073

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays from 1pm – 3pm and by appointment

**Office Location:** SIPA II 510

**Department or Academic Unit:** Politics and International Relations

Francisco Jimenez

**Roles:** TA/LA

**Email:** [fjime036@fiu.edu](mailto:fjime036@fiu.edu)

**Phone:** NA

**Office Hours:** Thursdays from 2pm – 4pm and by appointment

**Office Location:** SIPA I 213 (Graduate Suite)

**Department or Academic Unit:** Politics and International Relations

## Course Prerequisites

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Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

## Course Description

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### Catalog Description

Examines the context and process of legislative decision-making, including the impact of elections, groups, bureaucracies, and the norms of legislative behavior. Evaluates legislatures in light of various theories of representation and conflict-management.

### Instructor's Description

This is a course on the U.S. Congress – one of the most powerful, unique, and interesting legislative institutions in the world. The title of the course may make the class seem narrow in its scope, but a wide range of factors both within and outside of Congress influence the legislative process. Therefore, we will study a diverse set of topics throughout the semester. Some of these topics include: representation, congressional districts, the committee system, political parties and their leaders, the lawmaking process, and how Congress interacts with the other institutions of government. The central theme that runs throughout the course is that members of Congress are constantly struggling with the tension created by being *locally* elected officials in charge of making *national* policy.

# Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

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- Understand the basic electoral, institutional, and procedural features of the U.S. Congress.
- Apply important political science concepts to understanding the dynamics of congressional politics.
- Demonstrate an ability to think critically and write clearly about the U.S. Congress.

## Course Goals

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The overarching goal of the course is to build the skills necessary for careful and insightful political analysis. Because of the powerful myths, partisan predispositions, and biases that shape our perceptions and assessments, this is a lofty goal. However, a steadfast focus on the importance of theory and evidence will help us reach a better understanding of political behaviors, practices, and institutions.

## Assignments & Assessments

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### In-Class Activities (ICAs) (15%)

On occasion, I will stop class and have students organize into small groups of 2-3 people. In these groups students will discuss a question relevant to our topic for the day, write a short response, and turn it in. After this has been completed, we will discuss some of the group responses as a class. While these activities will typically follow the small group format just described, some may be completed individually.

These activities are randomly selected to occur throughout the semester, which means that the probability of having one on any given day of lecture is the same as the previous. In other words, just because we had one the previous lecture does not mean that we are any less likely to have one in the upcoming lecture.

At the end of the semester a student's two lowest ICA scores will be dropped (meaning that two ICAs can be missed, regardless of the reason, without penalty). ICAs are graded on a "pass / no pass" basis and cannot be made up.

**Midterm Exam (30%) – Wednesday, February 18, 2026 (in class from 12pm – 1:15pm)**

The midterm will cover all the lectures, classroom discussions, and reading assignments up until that point. We will discuss the format of the midterm during the midterm review (please see the course schedule below).

**Cosponsorship Memorandum (20%) – Due on Monday, March 30, 2026 (by 12pm on Canvas)**

This assignment (5-7 pages) will ask students to act as a legislative staffer and provide a detailed memo recommending whether their member of Congress should cosponsor a bill.

A more detailed assignment sheet will be available on Canvas no later than Week 3 of the semester.

**Final Exam (35%) – TBD**

The final exam will focus heavily on the lectures, classroom discussions, and reading assignments from the midterm to the end of the semester. However, much of the material is cumulative in nature. Therefore, students should be comfortable with concepts from earlier in the class too. For instance, a student's understanding of elections (from the first half of the course) might inform a discussion of how the president and Congress interact (from the second half of the course).

We will discuss the format of the final exam during the final review (please see the course schedule below).

## **Grading**

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### **Grading Breakdown**

In-Class Activities (15%)

Midterm Exam (30%)

Cosponsorship Memorandum (20%)

Final Exam (35%)

*How to interpret your grade / grading standards*

Grades in the A range (100 to 93 = A; < 93 to 90 = A-) indicate that you have done an excellent job in the course. Obtaining this grade generally requires you to go beyond what is required for a given assignment, demonstrating particular creativity, diligence, or thoughtfulness. Grades in the B range (< 90 to 87 = B+; < 87 to 83 = B; < 83 to 80 = B-) are indicators of satisfactory completion of all required components of an assignment. I'd consider an 80-89 to be "good" to "very good," but not "excellent." Grades in the C range (< 80 to 77 = C+; < 77 to 70 = C) indicate that some components of an assignment were not adequately or appropriately completed, but that the overall effort is nevertheless of passing quality. Grades in the D (< 70 to 60 = D) or F (< 60 = F) range indicate work that does not meet the requirements of the assignment or that is not of passing quality.

## **Expectations of the Course**

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This section provides **expectations, policies, and rules specific to the course**. For more information on university-wide policies and resources, please see the [Student Handbook](#) and the university's [Policies and Procedures Library](#).

### **Decorum**

I expect all classroom discussion to be respectful.

### **Re-grading Policy (midterm and cosponsorship memo only)**

Students who wish to have their assignments reevaluated, except for mathematical errors, will need to provide detailed justification in writing as to why their grade should be reevaluated (this must be done within one week of the assignment being returned). I will then re-grade *the entire assignment/exam*. The student's grade *may go up or go down* because of the reevaluation. Students should feel free to talk with me if they want advice on how to improve their performance in the course.

## **Artificial Intelligence Policy**

Please see the Academic Integrity section below.

## **Missed or Late Course Requirements Policies**

### *In-Class Activities*

These cannot be made up. The lowest two are dropped at the end of the semester to account for missed class time due to illness or serious extenuating circumstances.

### *Midterm*

If a student misses the midterm exam, they can take a make-up midterm exam for any reason. Students in need of a make-up midterm exam may be required to take a different exam than the original. The make-up will likely be entirely essay based. I would recommend avoiding this option if possible. If a student needs to take a make-up midterm, they should contact me as soon as they know. The make-up midterm will take place during Week 9.

### *Cosponsorship Memorandum*

Students can turn in the memorandum late, but it will be subject to a late penalty of one letter grade (the equivalent of 10 points on a 100-point scale). For example, a memorandum that would have received an A- (say 90/100) would receive a B- (80/100) if turned in late. No late memoranda will be accepted after Monday, April 13, 2026, at 12pm (two weeks after the initial due date and time). This penalty will only be removed in the case of documented illness or other extenuating circumstances.

### *Final*

The final exam should be taken at the scheduled time and date. Due to the time crunch at the end of the semester, it is very difficult to provide make-up final exams. As a result, make-up final exams will only be provided in the case of documented illness or other extenuating circumstances. Students in need of a make-up final exam may be required to take a different exam than the original. The make-up will likely be entirely essay based. If a student needs to take a make-up final exam, they should contact me as soon as they know. The make-up final exam *must* take place by no later than Tuesday, April 28, 2026.

## **Illness**

If you do not feel well, please do not come to class and contact me via email as soon as you are able. The make-up policies are outlined in the section above. Please take every precaution to keep yourself and others healthy.

Missing excessive days may lead to failing the class or a grade of incomplete. For me to assist you in achieving your goals, it is important for you to contact me as soon as you experience any events that might disrupt your course participation.

## **Academic Integrity**

Students need to make themselves familiar with FIU's rules about academic misconduct as described in the [Student Handbook](#). Cheating and other forms of misconduct can result in severe penalties, which can include a failing grade and/or expulsion from the university.

The library website also has some [interactive tools](#) to help you understand how to avoid plagiarism. Any time that you are using someone else's ideas – whether in a direct quotation or paraphrase – you need to cite and reference them properly (please see the section on in-text parenthetical citations in the cosponsorship memorandum's assignment sheet for more details). All direct quotations must be placed in quotation marks.

Using content generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) third-party service or site (like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Co-Pilot, Grammarly, etc.) is not prohibited in this course, but it is discouraged. Any program that allows students to offload thinking may be detrimental to the learning process. Students should carefully consider the consequences of avoiding the kind of work that helps them build useful skills for the future. Ultimately, *students are responsible for any work they submit in the course*, and they are expected to uphold the highest academic standards.

## **Students with Disabilities**

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Students in need of special accommodations in the course need to register with the [Disability Resource Center](#). FIU offers a wide range of services to help students with

disabilities. These services include but are not limited to: permission to receive extra time on exams, sign language, note takers, readers, and research assistants.

## **Emergency Aid**

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If you find yourself in a time of unexpected crisis, FIU has a number of programs that might be able to help (please [see here](#) for more information on emergency aid, counseling services, academic support, health services, financial aid and scholarships, access to food, etc.).

## **Textbook and Course Materials**

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### **Congress Reconsidered, Thirteenth Edition**

**Required/Recommended:** Required

**Authors:** Lawrence C. Dodd, Bruce I. Oppenheimer, C. Lawrence Evans, and Ruth Bloch Rubin

**Publisher:** CQ Press

**Publication Date:** 2025

**Copyright Date:** 2025

**ISBN 10:** 1071917196

**ISBN 13:** 9781071917190

**Chapters/Pages:** All (except for Chapter 9)

### **Congressional Experience, Fourth Edition**

**Required/Recommended:** Required

**Authors:** David E. Price

**Publisher:** Routledge

**Publication Date:** 2021

**Copyright Date:** 2021

**ISBN 10:** 0367627078

**ISBN 13:** 9780367627072

**Chapters/Pages:** All (except for Chapters 8 and 10)

### Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for \$20.50 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the [Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop](#).

## Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

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This section lists the full references of other required readings for the course. The readings listed in this section will be available in PDF format on the course's Canvas page under Home > Readings and do not need to be purchased. Please see the Schedule of Topics / Course Schedule below for more information on when each reading should be completed.

- Cooper, Joseph, and David W. Brady. 1981. "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn." *American Political Science Review* 75(2): 411–25. doi: 10.2307/1961374.
- Fenno, Richard F. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71(3): 883–917. doi: 10.2307/1960097.
- "Full Text of the U.S. Constitution." *National Constitution Center*. <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/full-text> (January 4, 2026). Articles I, II, III, and Amendments.
- Hall, Richard L., and Frank W. Wayman. 1990. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review* 84(3): 797–820. doi: 10.2307/1962767.
- Hassell, Hans J. G., and Samuel Kernell. 2016. "Veto Rhetoric and Legislative Riders." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 845–59. doi:10.1111/ajps.12217.

- Krehbiel, Kieth. 1998. "A Theory." In *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 20-48.
- McCubbins, Mathew D., and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1): 165–79. doi: 10.2307/2110792.
- McKay, Amy M. 2018. "Fundraising for Favors? Linking Lobbyist-Hosted Fundraisers to Legislative Benefits." *Political Research Quarterly* 71(4), 869-880. doi: 10.1177/1065912918771745.
- Sinclair, Barbara. 2012. "Making Nonincremental Policy Change through Hyperorthodox Procedures: Health Care Reform in 2009-2010." In *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 186–234.
- Smith, Steven S., Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan Vander Wielen. 2011. "Appendix: Introduction to the Spatial Theory of Legislating." In *The American Congress, Seventh Edition*, Cambridge University Press, 405-416.
- "The Federalist Papers: No. 10." *The Avalon Project*. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/fed10.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp) (January 4, 2026).
- "The Federalist Papers: No. 51." *The Avalon Project*. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/fed51.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed51.asp) (January 4, 2026).

## Schedule of Topics

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### Course Schedule

(I reserve the right to add readings, cut readings, or modify the schedule. I will let you know in advance of any changes to the schedule).

- Week #1 (1/5 & 1/7): Introduction, Modern Trends, Two Congresses
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 1
  - Experience: Ch. 1
- Week #2 (1/12 & 1/14): Representation, the Constitution, and Madison's Republic

- [The U.S. Constitution](#): Articles I, II, III, and Amendments (available online)
  - [Federalist 10](#) and [Federalist 51](#) (available online)
- Week #3 (1/21): The Evolution of Congress
  - **No class on 1/19 (MLK holiday)**
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 2, 3
- Week #4 (1/26 & 1/28): Elections – Recruitment, Candidacy, and the Electoral Game
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 4, 5
  - Experience: Ch. 2, 3
- Week #5 (2/2 & 2/4): Elections (Continued) – Hill Styles and Home Styles
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 6
  - Experience: Ch. 4, 9
  - Fenno on House members in their constituencies (available on Canvas)
- Week #6 (2/9 & 2/11): Parties and Leaders
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 7, 8
  - Experience: Ch. 6
  - Cooper and Brady on institutional context and leadership style (available on Canvas)
- Week #7 (2/16 & 2/18): Midterm Review and Midterm
  - No assigned readings
  - **MIDTERM REVIEW (2/16)**
  - **MIDTERM (2/18)**
- Week #8 (2/23 & 2/25): **Spring Break (NO CLASS)**
  - No assigned readings

- Week #9 (3/2 & 3/4): Committees
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 11
  - Experience: Ch. 5
- Week #10 (3/9 & 3/11): Legislative Process (Rules and Procedures)
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 12, 13
  - Sinclair on hyper-unorthodox procedures (available on Canvas)
- Week #11 (3/16 & 3/18): Legislative Process (Voting and Deliberation, Spatial Theory of Voting)
  - **Last day to drop with DR (3/16)**
  - Experience: Ch. 7
  - Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen on spatial theories (available on Canvas)
  - Krehbiel on pivotal politics (available on Canvas)
- Week #12 (3/23 & 3/25): Congress and the President
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 15, 17
  - Hassell and Kernell on veto rhetoric (available on Canvas)
- Week #13 (3/30 & 4/1): Congress, the Bureaucracy, and the Courts
  - **COSPONSORSHIP MEMORANDUM DUE (3/30 by 12pm on Canvas)**
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 14, 16
  - McCubbins and Schwartz on oversight (available on Canvas)
- Week #14 (4/6 & 4/8): Congress, Interest Groups, and the Budget
  - Reconsidered: Ch. 10
  - Hall and Wayman on lobbying (available on Canvas)
  - McKay on fundraisers (available on Canvas)
- Week #15 (4/13 & 4/15): Ideas for Reform

- Reconsidered: Ch. 18
- Experience: Ch. 11, 12
- **FINAL REVIEW (4/15)**
- Finals Week
  - **FINAL EXAM: TBD**
- Summer Reading! (Experience: Ch. 8, 10)