STATEMENT ABOUT THE COURSE: The subject of mid-term elections is inherently fascinating to any person interested in politics. This course will focus on congressional elections, although some time will devoted to gubernatorial elections. I want to make this course as informative, engaging, and as exciting as possible. You have the special opportunity of taking this course during the height of the 2014 congressional election season. Many candidates are locked in competitive races for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. How could the timing of this course be any better? Consequently, we are going to follow and discuss the day to day progress of various congressional campaigns of interest and importance right up to Election Day. Then, of course, we will engage in post-election analysis. Because this class is very small, we will have plenty of opportunity to get to know each other and discuss various aspects of congressional campaigns at length.

You will be responsible for reading half of the chapters in your textbook for the mid-term and the other half of the chapters for the final. I will cover much of the material in these chapters, but I am not going to bore you with tedious lectures, covering systematically practically all of the materials covered in these chapters by your author, Gary Jacobson. I will definitely cover the highlights in these chapters and make certain what I expect from you for the mid-term and final, but I want to spend most of the time living with you the developing moments in these 2014 congressional campaigns, reacting to news stories and putting them into perspective (i.e., tying them to academic findings on Congressional Campaigns and Elections).

To do this, I will be emailing to you the most current articles, editorials, blogs, polls, etc. that will provide insights into what is happening in key congressional campaigns across the nation. Many times the articles will be only hours old. I will comment on most of these materials and we will discuss their significance in class. Obviously, some of the articles may offend your partisan beliefs since some will slam Republicans, while others will slam Democrats. Please understand that, although most of us are partisans, we should act as scholars in our search for understanding congressional campaign politics, not as sensitive, not-so-open-minded partisans. Frankly, this may not be so easy for many of you not very comfortable with having your partisan beliefs challenged and even shaken by the facts. Actually, we will consult political fact checking sources on occasion to discover the extent to which claims in political ads, campaign speeches, etc. are true. What we will learn is that both Republicans and Democrats lie and distort in their political ads and say about anything to get elected. This is an electoral reality. The stakes are high in these campaigns and candidates and their supporters have often invested millions of dollars to win, so too often the attempts over the years to try to make campaigns more honest and principled have unfortunately failed to raise the level of integrity and civility in congressional campaigns.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Introductory Comments: Understanding Congressional Elections
   A. American congressional elections stand alone in world politics, but why?
   B. Setting the tone of the course
C. What basics about congressional elections I want you to learn in this course
D. What Internet sites are the best for gaining information about congressional campaigns and elections?
E. We are a product of “the funnel of causality” (chill out and abandon your partisan blinders and think like a political scientist while still retaining your partisanship – it can be done)

II. The Context of Congressional Elections
A. Overview
B. The constitutional setting
C. Congressional Districts
D. The Republican advantage in constitutional design has tended to make U.S. politics relatively conservative compared to most countries in the world
E. Election laws and congressional campaigns and elections
F. Congressional elections and political parties
G. Social and political factors
H. Summary and conclusions

III. Congressional Candidates
A. Overview
B. The advantages of incumbency are enormous
C. The disadvantages of challengers are enormous
D. Why incumbents rarely lose
E. Safe seats and polarization
F. What impact has this had on the effectiveness of public policy making?
G. Summary and conclusions

IV. Congressional Campaigns
A. Overview
B. Money in congressional campaigns
C. Independent, “voter education”, and “issue advocacy” campaigns
D. Campaign organizations
E. Campaign messages
F. Senate campaigns
G. Influencing turnout with increasingly sophisticated GOTV efforts
H. Summary

V. Congressional Voters
A. Overview
B. Turnout in congressional elections compared to other elections
C. Who are most likely to vote in congressional elections?
D. Partisanship and voting in congressional elections
E. Information, candidate recognition, and voting
F. Voter contact
G. Models of voting behavior
H. Incumbents v challengers
I. The most prevalent issues in congressional campaigns
J. Summary and conclusions

VI. The Linkage Between Congressional Elections and National Politics
   A. Political interpretations of congressional elections
   B. Models of aggregate congressional elections
   C. The dynamics of the presidential coattail effect?
   D. Looking back at House and Senate elections and their impact on the national political scene
   E. Summary and conclusions

VII. Elections, Representation, and the Politics of Congress
   A. Overview
   B. How representative are our representatives?
   C. Issues in representation in our democratic system
   D. The rise and fall and rise again of the clout of political parties
   E. Party “togetherness” and the rise of dysfunctional, polarized politics
   F. Why public opinion polls show that the public is very disgusted with Congress
   G. Looking ahead
   H. Summary and conclusions

Required Readings


Handouts and online articles “hot off the press”

Class Projects

Each student will be responsible for following and writing a 14-15 page paper on a particular congressional race of his or her choice. In your paper you will describe and analyze the candidates in the campaign, placing the campaign into an insightful political perspective. After Election Day you will finalize the paper and present an oral report on your particular race in class. During the course of the semester you will provide a progress report and we will discuss anything that is relevant about your congressional race.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend class regularly since lectures are an important source of information, especially since topics discussed in lectures are frequently not covered in the book or in the hand-outs. This is because I will be lecturing on breaking news regarding the 2014 congressional campaigns and political news in general that cannot be covered in previously published materials. I want to frequently comment on what is happening in the most contested U.S. Senate and U.S. Representative campaigns as they develop, putting the breaking events into an historical perspective. Students also will be expected to comment on their chosen election throughout the course. Students cannot miss more than six classes during
the course of the semester and get credit for this course. Excused absences (e.g., illness, death in the family) are exempt.

**Grading Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term</td>
<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper on your congressional campaign</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>400</td>
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</tbody>
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The numerical equivalents of letter grades are:

- 94-100 = A
- 91-93 = A-
- 88-90 = B+
- 82-87 = B
- 80-81 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 65-69 = D
- Below 65 = F

**COURSE EVALUATION**

During the last day of the semester, students will complete a confidential course evaluation in class rather than an online evaluation. This is because too many students fail to complete online course evaluations, reducing the value of the course evaluation.

**Modes of Assessment and Skills/Knowledge Being Assessed**

I do not want political science students to just think through “partisan blinders” about the 2014 elections. I want students to be able to assess the 2014 elections in a scholarly manner as political scientists. Student knowledge and critical thinking skills pertaining to the 2014 elections will be assessed through a midterm and final exam, a research paper/project on a selected 2014 race, and through their input in class discussions/reports. I will look at not only a student’s factual knowledge of the 2014 elections, but how sophisticated their conceptual or critical thinking skills are in placing the 2014 elections in perspective.

**In-Class Activities**

In-class activities will consist of standard lectures combined with a lot of class discussions on topics related to the 2014 elections. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading assignments, especially the assigned current articles from the Internet and other articles sent to them via email so they can participate meaningfully in class discussions. Class participation will be important in this class, as indicated under the grading policy. Students will be required to pick a 2014 election to follow and report on it in class on a regular basis.
Students with Special Needs - Disability Services

Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course - as outlined in the syllabus - due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action. Please telephone the office at 314-977-8885, or visit DuBourg Hall Room 36. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Americans With Disabilities Act

All provisions are honored by this instructor.

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic Integrity and Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, which can be accessed on-line at http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/ under “Quicklinks for Students” or in hard copy form in the Arts and Sciences Policy Binder in each departmental or College office.