

**Political Science 3424**  
**The Legislative Process**  
**Dr. Todd Makse**  
**Spring 2022**

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00pm-3:15pm in PC 214  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-2:00pm (in person) and Wednesdays 1:00-2:30pm (on Zoom\*)  
Office: SIPA 405; Phone: 305-348-8451; Email: [tmakse@fiu.edu](mailto:tmakse@fiu.edu)

TA Information: Ms. Bethany Bowra; Email: [bbowr001@fiu.edu](mailto:bbowr001@fiu.edu)  
Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30-11:30am (on Zoom\*)

\*To request a Zoom meeting, please email the person you wish to meet with thirty minutes in advance (in case one of us is with another student) and you will be sent a link.

**Course Description:**

The purpose of the course is to understand the role of Congress in the American political system. The course will explore various aspects of Congress, including: the relationship between members of Congress and their constituents; Congressional elections; the policymaking process in Congress; and, the relations between the two chambers of Congress and other political actors. The class will encourage students both to consider the source of our knowledge about legislatures and to apply that knowledge to analyze contemporary events. We will read contemporary academic journal articles on legislative politics while keeping an eye on media coverage of the current Congress.

In each section of the course, class sessions will involve large amounts of discussion and active learning. Your mastery of class material will be demonstrated through several short writing assignments, one longer paper, a presentation, participation, and a final exam. It is essential that you complete readings on time and come to class prepared to discuss them. You are expected to have an introductory-level knowledge of American politics (POS 2041). If you have concerns over whether you are sufficiently prepared for this class, please speak to me.

**Textbook**

\**The United States Congress*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., by E. Scott Adler, Jeffery A. Jenkins, and Charles R. Shipan.

Other readings will be made available on Canvas. One of the goals of this course is also to expose you to primary sources—original academic research on legislative politics. These journal articles have more technical sections that you can skim. There is a file on Canvas that discusses how to approach these articles and their more technical aspects.

**Grading options:**

There will be two grading options for taking this course. If you select “Option A,” you will be expected to attend class every day, participate in class discussions and engage in active learning with a group you work with throughout the semester. If you select “Option B,” attendance and participation will not be required, and you will not be assigned to a

permanent group for group activities. Students who select Option B will complete a larger amount of work outside of class. You will select one of these options during the first week of class; except under extenuating circumstances, you won't be able to switch options mid-semester. Depending on which option you select, the grading components will be as follows:

### Grading Options

	Option A	Option B
Quizzes	Ungraded (see below)	Ungraded (see below)
Short Writing Assignments	20% (4 assignments X 5% each)	30% (6 assignments X 5% each)
Presentation	15% (Presented by your group during class time with Q&A session)	15% (Recorded and submitted by your group outside of class)
Article Memos	10% (One memo)	20% (Two memos)
Participation	20%	Not graded
Final exam	35%	35%

The grading scale for final grades will be as follows:

93-100 A	90-92 A-	87-89 B+	83-86 B	80-82 B-	77-79 C+
73-76 C	70-72 C-	67-69 D+	63-66 D	60-62 D-	59 and below F

### Grading criteria:

*Reading Quizzes:* There will be eight reading quizzes completed during the first five minutes class on the dates indicates in the syllabus. The quizzes are closed book, but you may bring one 4x6 index card of hand-written notes. (I will provide the index cards if needed). The quizzes are ungraded, but your index cards will be collected, and students who get five or more correct answers on the quiz will be permitted to use that index card on the final exam. A list of ten key topics for each quiz is provided on Canvas—the six multiple-choice questions will be on these topics and will focus on concepts and historical patterns, not on specific facts, dates, and names. There will be no makeup quizzes for late or absent students.

*Presentation:* At the end of the semester, you will give a 15-minute presentation in groups. Dates will be assigned in March and complete instructions will be posted on Canvas at that time. Students who select grading Option A will present during class and will participate in a Q&A section. Students who select Option B will submit a recording of their presentation.

*Short Writing Assignments:* There will be six assignments associated with in-class activities, typically involving problem solving, light research, and application of class concepts. These assignments are due, via Canvas submission, prior to class on the dates listed below. Option A students should bring a printed copy to class to use during class. One assignment (you

may use it on either one of these or on an article memo) may be turned in up to a week late without penalty. Other late submissions will receive half credit.

*Article Memos:* Throughout the semester, we will read a series of academic journal articles about Congress. The day before we discuss an article in class, you will submit a memo asking you to critically analyze the article and draw connections between the article and other class material. Option A students will write one memo, while Option B students will write two. Option A students will also be responsible for leading discussion in class about the article. Complete instructions for writing these memos can be found on Canvas. As noted above, you may submit one assignment (an article memo or short writing assignment) late without penalty. Other late memos will receive a 20% grade deduction.

*Participation (Option A students only):* If you select Option A, you must participate in class discussions and group activities on a regular basis. Quality of participation will be assessed holistically and graded on a letter scale. Any student who does not receive at least a B-minus participation grade will receive a five-point deduction from their final class grade (i.e., a B- is worth 16/20, while a C+ is worth 11/20).

*Attendance (Option A students only):* You have three “free” absences, no questions asked. Each additional absence (unless documented; see below) will result in a one-point deduction (out of 20) from your participation grade.

*Final Exam:* The final exam will be closed-book and will draw mostly on material covered in class lectures, discussions, and activities. A review sheet will be posted a few weeks before the final. A review session will be held during the last week of class.

The grading scale for exams (which is different from the scale for final grades), is as follows:

90-100 A	85-89 A-	80-84 B+	75-79 B	70-74 B-	65-69 C+
60-64 C	55-59 C-	50-54 D+	45-49 D	40-44 D-	39 and below F

## **Class Policies**

*Absences:* Absences are only considered documented if you provide documentation (within one week of the absence) of either: (a) obligations such as athletic, military, or university-sponsored program obligations; (b) a serious medical condition that requires hospitalization or is deemed contagious (with an original, physical copy of a doctor’s note specifying this). Absences due to COVID policies are also considered documented: please see [repopulation.fiu.edu](http://repopulation.fiu.edu) for university policies. I understand that you may have to miss the occasional class session for other legitimate reasons (i.e., family issues, job interviews), but you have three undocumented absences without penalty, so you are responsible to manage these situations accordingly. Absences for religious holidays will also be deemed documented absences; please inform me if you plan to miss any classes for this reason.

*Lateness:* If you arrive late but within the first 15 minutes of class, it will be treated as 1/2 of an absence. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late for class, you will be marked absent.

*Classroom conduct:* I’m pretty lenient about the classroom. You don’t need to ask permission to eat, use the restroom, get a drink, or use a laptop. I do ask that you refrain from doing anything that is rude or clearly distracting to me or your classmates (e.g., excessive texting, sleeping, watching videos on a

laptop, incessant chatting, and **especially packing up before class is over**) and if you flagrantly disregard this request, you will be marked absent for the day.

*Makeup Exams:* I do not offer makeup exams without prior notice, except in **emergency** situations. If you have non-emergency reasons for missing an exam, please notify me at least one week ahead of time. If you have an emergency, please inform me as soon as you can afterwards. Also, please note that the format of makeup exams may differ from the format of the regular exam.

*Academic Misconduct:* Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, academic negligence or dishonesty. Plagiarism results when students neglect to acknowledge in footnotes, endnotes or other forms of documentation their use of the words and ideas of others. If you have questions about what constitutes proper citation, please speak to me.

*Disability Accommodations:* Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive appropriate accommodations if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. However, in order to receive accommodation, students with disabilities must register with the Disability Resource Center. This office will keep the student's written request, notify faculty who have a student with a disability enrolled in his or her class, and indicate what kinds of arrangements should be made. Please contact the DRC at the beginning of the semester.

*Availability:* Feel free to contact me by email with any concerns about the class or course material. I will make every effort to respond to all messages within 24 hours. Please send emails through your FIU email and check both your FIU email and Canvas daily.

## **Class Topics and Readings Schedule**

All dates are subject to change as necessary and will be communicated via Canvas announcements. Readings can be accessed via the hyperlinks below as long as you are on campus.

### **January 11-20: Class introduction (Quiz #1 in class on January 13)**

Adler et al, Ch. 1-2

### **January 25-February 1: Congressional Elections (Quiz #2 in class on January 25)**

\*Adler et al, Ch. 3

\*Writing Assignment #1 due January 25

\*Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless. 2005. [“To Run or Not to Run for Office: Explaining Nascent Political Ambition.”](#) *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 642-659. (Discuss in class on February 1)

**February 3-10: Representation I** (Quiz #3 in class on February 3)

\*Adler et al, Ch. 4

\*Alexander Hertel-Fernandez et al. 2019. ["Legislative Staff and Representation in Congress."](#) *American Political Science Review* 113: 1-18. (Discuss in class on February 8)

\*Writing Assignment #2 due February 10

**February 15-17: Representation II**

\*Tracy Sulkin. 2009. ["Campaign Appeals and Legislative Action."](#) *Journal of Politics* 71: 1093-1108. (Discuss in class on February 15)

\*Writing Assignment #3 due February 17

**February 22-24: Congressional Committees** (Quiz #4 in class on February 22)

\*Adler et al, Ch. 5

\*Kristina Miler. 2017. ["How Committees Shape Legislative Behavior: An Examination of Interests and Institutions."](#) *American Politics Research* 45(5): 813-39. (Discuss in class on February 24)

**March 8-10: Parties and Leaders in Congress** (Quiz #5 in class on March 8)

\*Adler et al, Ch. 6

\*Writing Assignment #4 due March 8

**March 15-17: The Policymaking Process I** (Quiz #6 in class on March 15)

\*Adler et al, Ch. 7

\*Craig Volden, Alan Wiseman, and Dana Wittmer. 2013. ["When Are Women More Effective Legislators than Men?"](#) *American Journal of Political Science* 57: 326-41. (Discuss in class March 17)

**March 22-24: The Policymaking Process II** (Quiz #7 in class on March 22)

\*Adler et al, Ch. 8

\*Writing Assignment #5 due March 22

**March 29-April 6: Lobbying and Miscellaneous Topics** (Quiz #8 in class on March 29)

\*Adler et al, Ch. 12

\*Writing Assignment #6 due March 29

\*Jennifer Victor. 2007. ["Strategic Lobbying. Demonstrating How Legislative Context Affects Interest Groups' Lobbying Tactics."](#) *American Politics Research* 35: 826-45. (Discuss in class March 31)

**April 8: No Class (MPSA Conference)**

**April 13-22: Class Presentations, Course Wrap-Up and Review Session**

**Final Exam: TBA (Will be posted on MyFIU)**