

POS 4931 / IDS 4930: Florida Legislative Politics

Spring 2024

January 8 - May 6, 2024

Asynchronous Online

Instructor: Dr. Teresa Cornacchione

Office Location: 234 Pugh Hall

Office Hours: M/W/F 2:00-3:00PM; OR by appointment

Zoom Office Hours: [Spring 2024 Office Hours](#)

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the workings of the Florida Legislature and the landscape of current Florida Politics. Florida represents a large state with an increasingly interesting and dynamic political environment. The state faces many challenges, in a variety of areas, including health, environmental, education, and criminal justice. This course is 100% online and is asynchronous in design. Students may work at their own pace, but must complete assignments by the designated due date for the module.

Readings

There are no required textbooks to purchase for this course. All readings/course materials will be available on Canvas.

Assignments

Your grade in this course will be based on 5 components. Each assignment within these categories is worth 100 points. The description and weighting of these components is listed below.

Current Event Discussion Posts	10%
Lecture Quizzes	10%
Perusall	20%
Committee and Policy Area Report	20%
Legislative Tracking Report	40%

Discussion Board Posts on Current Events: In order to assess your grasp of course content, you will be required to share three (3) current events related to Florida politics/the Florida Legislature, and pose a discussion question on the event. You are also required to respond to at least two (2) of your classmate's posts. There are three benchmarks for posting. You should not think of these as due dates - but rather as last possible opportunities to complete the assignment. I strongly suggest you complete the posts prior to these dates. More information is available on Canvas.

- Post 1 must be made no later than Feb. 1
- Post 2 must be made no later than March 21
- Post 3 must be made no later than April 15

Lecture and Reading Quizzes: To ensure that you are fully participating in the course, you will complete five (5) module quizzes pertaining to the lecture videos and readings for a particular module. Additional details are available on Canvas.

Perusall Readings: You are required to read and annotate any six (6) of the academic readings in Perusall (those marked with a **p**) Perusall is interactive software that allows you to read and annotate a text along with your peers. You can highlight, ask questions, and respond to your classmates' comments and questions. You can earn extra credit for completing more than the required six Perusall readings.

Committee and Policy Area Report: Here, you will select a specific legislative committee and policy area -that is of interest to you. You will write a 2-3 page report on the committee's purpose, leadership, agenda for this current session, etc. As part of this report, you are required to view at least 2 committee meetings. These committee meetings may be viewed on the [Florida Channel](#) - a link to the recording is usually available on the committee's webpage. Complete assignment details are listed on Canvas. Assignment due **March 22, 2024 @11:59PM.**

Legislative Tracking Report: Your biggest assignment will be a legislative tracking report. You will select one bill of interest in this legislative session (**do not select memorials or commemorative legislation**). This assignment is laddered, meaning you will be turning in drafts of sections prior to turning in the final report. Each component draft is worth 5% of your grade, and the final draft is worth 25% of your final grade, with a combined total of 50% of your final grade. Complete assignment details are on Canvas. Below is a breakdown of the components of the assignment:

Step	Due Date
1: Bill identification and explanation of choice	Jan. 30 @ 11:59 PM
2: Bill description (in layman's terms) and impact (economic, societal, etc.)	Feb. 13 @ 11:59 PM
3: Synopsis of research on this policy topic	March 1 @ 11:59 PM
4: Synopsis of similar legislation attempted in other states	March 20 @ 11:59 PM
5: Conclusion draft with overview of bill's history, from introduction to status by the end of the semester, and likely predictions of the final status of the bill	April 17 @11:59PM.

COMPLETE LEGISLATIVE TRACKING ASSIGNMENT DUE April 24, 2024 @11:59 PM

Extra Credit: Typically, I am not a fan of extra credit. If you make an effort throughout the semester, you should not need extra credit. HOWEVER, there may be occasions when I will offer extra credit to the ENTIRE class to attend a guest lecture, view a program, etc. I will not offer individual extra credit.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will only be accepted with instructor approval and may be subject to a 1-letter grade deduction per day late, up to a maximum of three days late. After the assignment is 3 days late, I will no longer accept it.

Grading Scale

I adhere to the University letter-to-grade conversion chart for all exams, papers, assignments, quizzes, and final grades. Grades ending in 0.5 or higher are rounded up to the nearest whole percentage point.

93 or above=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-	0-59=F

Grade Changes: I am certainly open to and actively encourage you to challenge me both in class as well on disputed test questions/essay points – sometimes, I make mistakes and sometimes, it is possible that more than one answer or perspective is correct. If you present an empirically-defensible case as to why your answer/assumptions are also correct (for which I originally took off points), I will gladly give back partial or full credit, depending on the quality of your argument.

However, at the end of the semester, there are inexorably a handful of students who send me a late-night email requesting (and sometimes incoherently demanding) that I raise their final grade, whether from a D+ to a C-, or a B+ to an A- or anywhere in between. Two remarks on this rather bold and questionable strategy.

1. I try to be charitable in terms of the grading scheme already – both the attendance and participation grades (30% of your final grade) are designed to give your grade a “cushion.”
2. Secondly, the “But I NEED a/an (insert grade here)”, or “can you *just* raise my grade x-number of points” arguments reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of grades. Implicit in this statement is the assumption that grades are capriciously handed out on the instructor’s whim or fancy and are not based on the student’s demonstrated mastery of the material. Grades reflect your mastery of the course material. There are many things YOU can do to enhance your mastery of the material, and consequently, your grade.
 - Complete all module assignments
 - Read materials
 - Ask questions
 - Do not procrastinate on assignments.

I will not respond to emails asking for extra points, or for grades to be bumped up. If a student wishes to dispute a grade on an assignment or test, the student must request an appointment or come during office hours and present a compelling case as to why extra points should be awarded.

Email Policy

Please include your first and last name and course information in the subject line of your email. When I receive your email, I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner, usually within 48 hours. Though you may receive a reply sooner than that, you should not expect an immediate response. Please treat all email correspondence with your instructor as you would treat any other professional exchange.

Accordingly, I expect emails to be respectful and polite, to use correct grammar and complete sentences. I reserve the right to summarily delete rude, disrespectful, and/or poorly written emails without reply. Please note that I have structured the course and office hours to best assist you in mastering the materials. Please utilize office hours, in-class time, and your syllabus to answer any doubts you may have. Finally, I will contact you via your UF designated email address via Canvas, so please see to it that your account is set such that you are able to receive these communications.

Academic Honor Policy

UF students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. Requirements, expectations, and violations can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1617/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>.

It is your responsibility to know university policies and procedures, and to hold yourself to the highest standards.

Academic Accommodations

In keeping with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University of Florida policy, students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: 1. Register with and provide documentation to the Disability Resource Center; and 2. Bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. The syllabus and other materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to UF students with disabilities, contact the:

Disability Resource Center

001 Reid Hall

DRC@ufsa.ufl.edu

352-392-8565

disability.ufl.edu

Other Helpful Links

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

UF Writing Center: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect the parameters of evaluation, including grading and the scheduling of the final exam, this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. I will provide you with advance notice in class and via your university registered email contact.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading(s)
Part I	Basics of the Florida Legislature	Structure, Function, and History
Topic	Readings	Assignments
Historical Context & Basic Structure	Online Sunshine Jewett 2008	Lecture and Reading Quiz Due (1/26/24)
Part II	Institutions of the Florida Legislature	How do institutions impact outcomes?
Topic	Readings	Assignments
Professionalism in State Legislatures	Jansa et al (2019) Squire Index (2017)	Step 1 of Legislative Tracking Report due Jan. 30.
Finances and Background of Legislators	Fahey (2018)	Current Event Benchmark 1- Feb. 1
Term Limits	Fourinaies & Hall (2022) Holman & Mahoney (2023) Schraufnagel & Halperin (2006)	Step 2 of Legislative Tracking Report due Feb. 13 Lecture and Reading Quiz Due (2/16/24)
Part III	Party Politics & Polarization	How does partisanship affect the function of the legislature?
Topic	Readings	Assignments
Mass Opinion in Florida	USF 2023 Public Opinion Survey	
Partisanship	Shor & McCarty (2011)	Step 3 Legislative Tracking Report Due March 1
Polarization	Hinchcliffe & Lee (2016)	Lecture and Reading Quiz Due (3/08/24)
Part IV	Representation	How do different representatives represent differently? How do institutions impact quality of representation?
Topic	Readings	Assignments
Gerrymandering and Redistricting	Warsaw et al (2022) Florida Redistricting.gov	Step 4 Legislative Tracking Report Due March 20
Legislative Style & Effectiveness	Bucchianeri et al (2020)	Current Event Benchmark 2 - March 21

Part V	Current Issues in Florida	What current issues are or could be part of the Florida Legislative Agenda?
Topic	Readings	Assignments
Voting and Elections	Merivaki (2019) Cottrell et al (2020)	Current Event Benchmark 3 - April 15
LGBTQ Issues	Lax & Phillips (2009) Kraschel et al (2022)	Step 5-Legislative Tracking Report due 4/17
Human Trafficking and Crime	OPPAGA Report 2023 Farrell (2019)	Lecture and Reading Quiz Due (4/19/24)

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