

PSCI 3110: The Legislative Process

SECTION 002

MWF 11:00 - 11:50 AM

BLB 065

SECTION 001

MWF 12:00 - 12:50 PM

BLB 075

This course examines the primary responsibilities of the United States Congress--lawmaking and representation--and the relationships among members, party organizations, committees, constituents, and the president. We will discuss the constitutional underpinnings of Congress, the behavior of members of Congress in their districts and in Washington, and the rules and procedures Congress uses to make policy. A large section of the course will focus on participation in a legislative simulation in which you will apply what you learn in class to be an effective legislator.

Instructors

Dr. Bethany Blackstone

Office: Wooten 154

Office Hours:

MWF, 9:30-10:30 am,
BLB Lobby

Dr. Elizabeth Oldmixon

Office: Wooten 156

Office Hours:

MW, 1:00-2:30 pm,
BLB Lobby

GRADING

All assignments and exams in the course will be assessed as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, with the requirements for Satisfactory articulated for each assignment. There is no partial credit--an assignment meets the assignments goals and specifications or it does not. The only letter grade you will receive in the course will be your final letter grade; it will reflect the "bundle" of assignments you have satisfactorily completed in the class.

Built into this system is a good deal of choice as to how much you wish to learn and how hard you want to work to demonstrate and apply that learning. You might choose that passing the course with a C is sufficient for your goals; if you strive to get an A, recognize the work you are taking on and make sure you are in a personal and academic situation to achieve the required level of engagement.

We choose this grading system because it allows us (and you) to easily track student progress, it provides a mechanism for improving unsatisfactory work, and rewards mastery instead of a "hunt for partial credit."

COURSE RESOURCES

Textbook

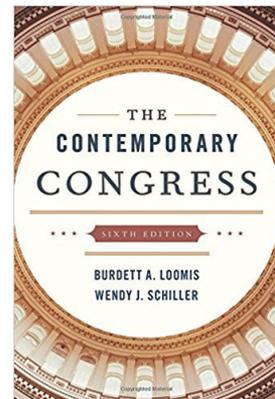
Burdett A. Loomis and
Wendy J. Schiller.

2016. *The Contemporary Congress*, Sixth Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

ISBN:

9781442249684

From \$22.80 at UNT Bookstore.



LegSim

LegSim is a web-based legislative simulation. You will need to register and pay a non-refundable \$16.00 fee by credit/debit card. More information will be distributed in class. Some assignments will be submitted in LegSim.

Blackboard

A Blackboard conference is maintained for this course at <https://learn.unt.edu/>. Some assignments will be submitted in Blackboard and student grades will be posted in Blackboard.

Slack

We'll be using Slack for class-related discussions. Slack can be used for full class, small group and one-on-one conversations. Please use Slack rather than email to communicate with Drs. Blackstone and Oldmixon. There is a link to join the class Slack channel in Blackboard. Join using your UNT email. Your username should take the form yourfirstname.yourlastname.

ASSIGNMENTS

Quizzes

- We will give announced and unannounced quizzes during the semester. You should be prepared for a quiz on any day that you have a reading assignment; these quizzes are closed book but you may use notes you have taken on assigned readings as long as they are printed in hard copy.
- Occasionally, unannounced or announced in-class activities may be administered for quiz credits.
- Missed quizzes and in-class activities cannot be made up.

Exams

- There will be two exams in the course. Each exam will consist of two sections--a Basic Section and an Advanced Section.
- The Basic Section will be administered as a closed-book/note test during a regularly scheduled class meeting. In order to Satisfactorily complete the Basic Section of the Exam, you must earn 70% of available points. The Advanced Section will be a take-home, open-book/note test.

LegSim Assignments

- The majority of assignments in PSCI 3110 are related to our congressional simulation. Detailed instructions about LegSim assignments are posted in Blackboard.

TOKENS

Every student starts the course with 2 virtual tokens that can be exchanged for some leniency or opportunities for revision. You can redeem 1 token for an opportunity to revise and resubmit a LegSim Mini-Project or a bill assignment or to submit an assignment up to 48 hours late. For 2 tokens, you can be awarded Satisfactory credit for a skipped/Unsatisfactory quiz. For 2 tokens, you can re-take the basic section of an exam or the advanced section of the midterm.

You can earn 1 additional token for completing SPOT evaluations for Drs. Blackstone and Oldmixon. (You earn 1 token for completing evaluations for BOTH instructors.) You can earn 1 additional token if you miss no more than 1 class day dedicated to simulation activities. Leftover tokens cannot be redeemed for anything at the end of the semester--use them or lose them.

COURSE GRADE BUNDLES

A

To earn an A, satisfactorily complete the assignments listed below:

Basic portions of both exams
Advanced portions of both exams
7 quizzes
7 LegSim Mini-Projects
Minor Bill Assignment
Major Bill Assignment
Re-Election Campaign Assignment
Report on Your Legislative Accomplishments
Evaluation of Another Member's Legislative Accomplishments
Substantial contributions to the LegSim simulation

B

To earn a B, satisfactorily complete the assignments listed below:

Basic portions of both exams
Advanced portions of one exam
5 quizzes
6 LegSim Mini-Projects
Minor Bill Assignment
Major Bill Assignment
Re-Election Campaign Assignment
Report on Your Legislative Accomplishments
Substantial contributions to the LegSim simulation

C

To earn a C, satisfactorily complete the assignments listed below:

Basic portions of both exams
3 quizzes
5 LegSim Mini-Projects
Minor Bill Assignment
Re-Election Campaign Assignment
Basic contributions to the LegSim simulation

D

To earn a D, satisfactorily complete the assignments listed below:

Basic portions of both exams
4 LegSim Mini-Projects
Minor Bill Assignment

Failure you to complete the D bundle will result in a grade of F for the course.

Important Reminder

**To earn a letter grade, you must complete EVERY item in the grade bundle listed above.
Plan accordingly.**

OTHER POLICIES

MAKE-UP POLICIES

Students are expected to complete assignments by the due date and to take examinations at the scheduled times. Make-up opportunities for missed exams or in-class assignments will only be allowed when an absence is due to observance of a religious holiday or participation in a university-sponsored activity. Absence due to participation in UNT activities must be authorized by the student's academic dean in accordance with the UNT Attendance Policy. Whenever possible, arrangements for make-up work should be made prior to a scheduled absence.

HONORS CONTRACTS

If you are a member of the Honors College and would like to complete an Honors Contract for this course, see us as soon as possible to make arrangements. All Honors Contracts for PSCI 3110 will require students to assume leadership positions in the legislative simulation.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of "F" in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at:

<http://faculty.success.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND ASSAULT

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses.

UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

For course drop information, see schedule at: <http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-registration-guide>

Course Schedule

Course Introduction

August 28 (M)	Read Syllabus, join 3110 Slack team
August 30 (W)	No Class Meeting
September 1 (F)	No Class Meeting
September 3, (Sunday)	Mini-Project #1: Ideology Self-Assessment due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm. (You do not need to access LegSim to complete this assignment.)
September 4 (M)	No Class Meeting

Institutional Design and Historical Development

September 6 (W)	Read <i>Federalist 10</i> Read <i>Federalist 51</i> Read Bessette, <i>The Mild Voice of Reason</i> , Chapter 2 Read U.S. Constitution, Article I
September 8 (F)	Read CC Chapter 1, "The Drama of Representation"
September 11 (M)	Read CC Chapter 2, "Congressional Decentralization in Design and Evolution" Students will choose states/districts to represent for the simulation in class. Bring a list of your top choices to class.
September 13 (W)	Read Sinclair, "The New World of U.S. Senators"

The Modern Congress

September 15 (F)	Read CC Chapter 3, "The Changing Environment of Congressional Politics"
September 17 (Sunday)	Mini-Project #2: LegSim Profile due in LegSim by 11:59 pm
September 18 (M)	Read Mann and Ornstein, "Is Congress Still the Broken Branch?"
September 20 (W)	Read CC Chapter 8, "The Individual Enterprise" and "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective"
September 22 (F)	Reading TBA

Parties & Committees

September 25 (M)	Read CC Chapter 4, "Parties, Leaders, and Ideology in Congress"
September 27 (W)	Read Smith and Gamm, "The Dynamics of Party Government in Congress"
September 29 (F)	Read CC Chapter 7, "Policymaking in Committee and on the Floor," pages 155-170
October 1 (Sunday)	Mini-Project #3: Legislative Agenda due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm
October 2 (M)	<i>LegSim Day - Parties Caucus in Class</i>
October 4 (W)	Basic Section of Midterm Exam Administered in Sage Hall Testing Center (during regular class time)

Presidential-Congressional Relations

October 6 (F)	Read CC Chapter 5, "Presidential and Congressional Relations: Boundaries of Power"
October 8 (Sunday)	Advanced Section of Midterm Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm
October 9 (M)	Reading TBA <i>LegSim Day - Parties Elect Leaders in Class</i>

Legislating

October 11 (W)	Read CC Chapter 7, "Policymaking in Committee and on the Floor," pages 171-185 and CC Chapter 9, "The Competitive Congress: Centrifugal Forces in a Partisan Era"
October 13 (F)	Read Kingdon, "Models of Legislative Voting," and Davidson et al, Chapter 9, "Decision-Making in Congress"
October 15 (Sunday)	Mini-Project #4: Committee Request Assignment due in Blackboard <u>and</u> sent to your party leader by 11:59 pm.
October 16 (M)	Reading TBA
October 18 (W)	Reading TBA
October 20 (F)	Reading TBA

LegSim Procedures & Bill Writing

October 23 (M)	Read LegSim Tutorials <i>LegSim Day: Introduction to Bill Writing</i>
October 25 (W)	<i>LegSim Day: Bill Writing Workshop</i>
October 27 (F)	<i>LegSim Day: Bill Writing Workshop</i>
October 29 (Sunday)	Mini-Project #5: Procedures Assessment due by 11:59 pm in Blackboard
October 30 (M)	<i>LegSim Day: Bill Writing Workshop</i>
November 1 (W)	<i>LegSim Day: Procedures Practice</i>
November 3 (F)	<i>LegSim Day: Parties and Committees Meet in Class</i>

Elections

November 6 (M)	CC Chapter 6, "Congressional Elections: All for One and One for All?"
November 8 (W)	Reading TBA
November 10 (F)	Reading TBA



LegSim Days

Beginning on November 13, class days will be used primarily for in-class committee meetings, debates on legislation, floor voting, etc. Committees may need to meet outside of class time and/or online through the LegSim site. Legislation will be debated and voted on in class and on the LegSim site. Participation in online voting/debate is tracked—be sure to participate there as well as in class.

Reminder: The final Mini-Projects (#6 and #7) are Debate Preparation assignments. These assignments are completed in Blackboard. In order to earn credit for a Debate Prep Mini-Project, you must complete it prior to the class period in which debate on the bill is scheduled to occur.

If the legislature does not have business to consider, we will cover new material.

November 13 (M)	LegSim Day
November 15 (W)	LegSim Day
November 17 (F)	LegSim Day
November 20 (M)	LegSim Day
November 22 (W)	No Class Meetings - Have a great Thanksgiving!
November 24 (F)	
November 27 (M)	LegSim Day
November 29 (W)	LegSim Day
December 1 (F)	LegSim Day
December 4 (M)	LegSim Day: Legislature adjourns, sine die

Important End-of-Semester Dates

December 6 (W)	Last Class Day Re-Election Campaign Strategy Assignment due by the start of class
December 10 (Sunday)	Report on Your Legislative Accomplishments Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm. Report on Another Legislator's Accomplishments Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm
Final Exam	Basic Section Administered during assigned final exam period. Location TBA. Section 002 (11:00 am): Monday, December 11, 10:30 am-12:30 pm Section 001 (12:00 pm): Wednesday, December 13, 10:30 am-12:30 pm
December 14 (Thursday)	Advanced Section of Final Exam due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm.