

PSCI 3110: The Legislative Process
Spring 2015
TR 8:00–9:20 am, Business Leadership Building 050

Professor Bethany Blackstone
blackstone@unt.edu
Office: Wooten Hall 154
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00 pm–4:00 pm, and by appointment

This course explores the following topics as they relate to the United States Congress: legislative behavior, representation, selection of legislators, organization and procedure, and relationships to other branches of government. Throughout the semester, we will return to the following dilemma: time and again, public opinion data suggest that Congress is the least popular branch of government despite the fact that it was designed to be the most representative of and responsive to the people. It is the singular arena in which factions are brought together to resolve conflicts and to set policy for the nation, yet it is often characterized by partisan gridlock. How, then, does Congress meet its constitutional responsibilities to both govern and represent the people?

Class meetings will blend lecture, discussion, and other activities. For these exercises to prove valuable, you will need to complete the assigned readings on time and to attend class with questions and observations in mind.

Being in Touch

Office Hours & Email

My office hours are listed above and I will always be available during those times. Even outside of those hours I am often in my office and you are welcome to stop in any time my door is open. You can reach me by email at blackstone@unt.edu. If you write me Monday through Friday, I should get back to you within 24 hours. If I don't, please feel free to send me a reminder! If you write over the weekend, you may have to wait until Monday for a reply. A note on etiquette: please sign your emails with your name and include an appropriate salutation. (Hint: you can't go wrong with, "Hi, Dr. Blackstone.")

If I need to contact you, I will send you a message either through my.unt.edu (in which case the message will be delivered to your UNT email address) or through LegSim (an online account you will create for the course). Please check Blackboard, your UNT email, and whatever email you use for LegSim regularly so you will receive all course-related information.

Blackboard

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

Remind

Students that wish to receive course-related reminders via email or text can sign up to receive notifications at this link: <https://www.remind.com/join/legp>.

Keeping Up With the Real Congress

Making an effort to understand the goings-on in the U.S. Congress will deepen your understanding of the course material. Some helpful resources are *The Washington Post* (no paywall when accessed from campus), *Politico*, *Roll Call*, *National Journal*, and *The Hill*.

Facebook

I have created a Facebook group for students enrolled in PSCI 3110. I will post links to news stories related to Congress to the Facebook group. Students are also welcome to post information relevant to class. Joining the group is optional and will not impact your grade. If you wish to join the group, go to

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1585328585019054/>.

Be advised that information you share in the course Facebook page is governed by Facebook's privacy policies. Also, note that I do not guarantee that I will read and respond to every post in the Facebook group; if you have a question that only I can answer, email me or see me in my office.

Course Materials

The following are required:

Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler. 2014. *Congress and Its Members*, 14th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. Hereinafter *Congress and Its Members* or *CAIM*.

Web-based legislative simulation: <http://legsim.org>.

You must register and pay the non-refundable \$16 fee by credit/debit card. The session code you will need to register is: bfe38a83d34e8cf81f558d4e5b54f8b8

Other assigned readings will be posted in Blackboard. (Readings below are ordered by their assignment date.)

United States Constitution, Article I

James Madison. 1787. "Federalist No. 10: The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection." *New York Daily Advertiser*. (November 22).

Alexander Hamilton or James Madison. 1788. "Federalist No. 51: The Structure of Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments." *New York Packet*. (February 8).

Joseph M. Bessette. 1997. *The Mild Voice of Reason: Deliberative Democracy & American National Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1–3.

Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 2011. "The House in a Time of Crisis: Economic Turmoil and Partisan Upheaval" in *Congress Reconsidered*, 9th edition. Larry C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Barbara Sinclair. 2011. "The New World of U.S. Senators" in *Congress Reconsidered*, 9th edition. Larry C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Douglas Arnold. 1992. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 5, "Strategies for Coalition Leaders."

Barbara Sinclair. 2011. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, 4th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. Chapters 1, 6, and 7.

Grading

Your course grade will be based on the following components.

Component	% of Course Grade
LegSim Activities and Assignments	60
Midterm Exam	15
Final Exam	15
Quizzes	10
Total	100

Course grades will be rounded to the nearest percent and assigned according to the scale below:

90%–100%	A
80%–89%	B
70%–79%	C
60%–69%	D
<60%	F

LegSim Activities and Assignments (60%)

LegSim is an interactive web-based legislative simulation where students apply what they learn in class in an interactive setting. The majority of your course grade will be based on your participation in LegSim activities. Detailed instructions about LegSim and LegSim assignments are posted in Blackboard. A list of assignments and due dates is below.

Assignment	Due	% of Course Grade
LegSim Profile Assignment	Sunday, February 1 by 11:59 pm	4
Legislative Agenda Assignment	Thursday, February 12 by 8:00 am	4
Committee Request Assignment	Sunday, February 22 by 11:59 pm	3
LegSim Procedures Quiz	Friday, March 27 by 11:59 pm	3
First Bill	Sunday, March 29 by 11:59 pm	2
Major Bill Assignment	Sunday, April 5 by 11:59 pm	10
Coalition Building Assignment	Thursday, April 9 by 8:00 am	4
Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments	Tuesday, May 12 by 5:00 pm	20
LegSim Contributions and Effectiveness		10

Exams (30%)

There will be two exams in the course; each will be worth 15% of your course grade. Exams will include a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Both exams will be take-home, open-book/note tests that will be administered through Blackboard. The midterm exam is due by 5:00 pm on Friday, March 13. The final exam is due by 5:00 pm on Thursday, May 14.

Quizzes (10%)

You will earn points for quizzes on the assigned readings, for unannounced in-class activities, and for supplementary assignments that are required during the semester. Quizzes on assigned readings are closed book, but you may use notes that you have taken on the assigned readings as long as they are printed in hard copy. (You cannot use a laptop, tablet device, or phone during quizzes.) Missed quizzes and in-class activities cannot be made up. If you have a university-excused absence, you will not be penalized for missing points offered in class if you provide appropriate documentation to verify your absence.

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

<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-2-5>. Whenever possible, arrangements for make-up work should be made prior to a scheduled absence.

Attendance Bonus

Because I will cover material in class that is not discussed in the readings, I strongly encourage you to attend each class session. If you are absent from a class session, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from a classmate. You will be considered absent if you are not present when attendance is taken; this means you may be recorded as being absent if you arrive late or leave early. Students that miss 2 or fewer class during the semester will have two percentage points added to their course grade. For example, If your course grade after the final exam is an 89.0 and you have missed only 2 classes, you will earn the attendance bonus, raising your course grade to 91.0 (an A) for the class; if your final course grade is an 89 and you have missed 3 or more classes, you will not earn the attendance bonus and your final grade will be a B.)

You should "save" sufficient absences to deal with unexpected problems that arise during the semester. You will not be granted extra absences because of unexpected personal problems that require you to miss class. Don't waste your absences just because you don't feel like coming to class. Save them in case you need them. If you miss class for a university-excused absence, your absence will count towards your total absences; you are not permitted "extra" penalty-free absences. If your participation in a university-excused activity will require you to miss more than 2 classes, see me to discuss accommodations.

Grade Disputes

A significant amount of time is invested in grading student assignments. If you wish to dispute a grade, you must do so in writing within one week of the date that grades are made available to the class. When requesting reconsideration of a grade, you should provide a clear explanation as to why a different grade is in order. You should also indicate what grade you believe is appropriate for your work. Please be advised that I will not change a grade simply because someone "wants" or "needs" a higher grade. Also, when work is reviewed for a grade dispute, the grade may be left unchanged, raised, or lowered. All grade disputes are due in hard copy within one week of the date that grades are returned in class. Grade disputes will not be considered if submitted past the one-week statute of limitations.

Honors Contracts

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

Other Class Policies

For course drop information: see schedule at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>.

Policies on academic dishonesty are available at <http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>.

Department of Political Science Statement of ADA Compliance

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking 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 an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. 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.

Department of Political Science Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism

The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying others' tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one's own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty.

Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of "F" in the course. In the case of graduate departmental exams, the minimum penalty shall be failure of all fields of the exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the field faculty in the case of departmental exams. Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Graduate Studies Committee.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary coursework may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Undergraduate Studies Committee in the case of undergraduate students, or the Graduate Studies Committee in the case of graduate students. These committees, acting as agents of the department Chair, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if they determine that the case warrants it.

In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case. Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

Department of Political Science Policy on Academic Integrity

The Political Science Department adheres to and enforces UNT's policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and sabotage). Students in this class should review the policy (UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16), which may be located at

http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf. Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the penalties and procedures laid out in this policy. Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Policy Manual Section 18.1.16 "Student Standards of Academic Integrity."

Department of Political Science Statement on Acceptable Student Behavior

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 classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

Reading, Assignment, and Exam Due Dates
Semester start thru Midterm

Topic: Course Introduction

- January 20 (T) Read syllabus
 Read LegSim Packet
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Topic: Institutional Design & Historical Development

- January 22 (R) Read U.S. Constitution, Article I
 Read Federalist 10
 Read Federalist 51
January 27 (T) Read Bessette, *The Mild Voice of Reason*, Chapters 1-3
January 29 (R) Complete 1040 Review quiz (in Blackboard) by 8:00 am
 Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 1
 Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 5
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Topic: The Modern Congress

- February 1 (SUNDAY) Complete LegSim Profile by 11:59 pm
February 3 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 2
February 5 (R) Read Dodd & Oppenheimer, "The House in a Time of Crisis: Economic Turmoil and Partisan Upheaval"
 Read Sinclair, "The New World of U.S. Senators"
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Topic: Parties & Committees

- February 10 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 6
February 12 (R) Legislative Agenda assignment due by 8:00 am
 Parties caucus in class
February 17 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 7
February 19 (R) Parties elect leaders in class
February 22 (SUNDAY) Committee Request assignment due by 11:59 pm
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Topic: Legislating

- February 24 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 8
 Read *Congress and Its Members*, pages 293-307 of Chapter 10
February 26 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 9
March 3 (T)
March 5 (R) Read Arnold, "Strategies for Coalition Leaders"
March 10 (T) Read Sinclair, *Unorthodox Lawmaking*, Chapters 1, 6, and 7
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Midterm

- March 12 (R) No Class Meeting – Midterm Exam Posted in Blackboard
March 13 (FRIDAY) **Submit midterm exam by 5:00 pm**
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Reading, Assignment, and Exam Due Dates
Spring Break thru Final Exam

Spring Break

March 17 (T) No Class Meeting
March 19 (R) No Class Meeting

Topic: LegSim Day

March 24 (T) Read LegSim Procedures in MC Packet
 Committees meet in class to discuss agendas

Topic: Domestic & Foreign Policy

March 26 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, select portions of Chapters 14 and 15 (TBA)
March 27 (FRIDAY) Complete LegSim Procedures Quiz by 11:59 pm

Topic: The Separation of Powers

March 29 (SUNDAY) Introduce a bill in LegSim by 11:59 pm
March 31 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, select portions of Chapters 10, 11, and 12 (TBA)

Topic: Districting and Elections

April 2 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 3
April 5 (SUNDAY) Complete major bill assignment by 11:59 pm
April 7 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 4

LegSim Days. April 9–May 7

April 9 (R) Coalition Building Assignment Due by 8:00 am
May 7 (R) Legislature adjourns, *sine die*

Beginning on April 9, 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, as well as online through the LegSim website. Legislation will be debated and voted on in class and on the LegSim website. Participation in online voting/debate is tracked, so be sure to participate there as well as in class!

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

End of Semester Due Dates

May 12 (T) Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments Due by 5:00 pm in Blackboard
May 14 (R) **Submit final exam by 5:00 pm**
