

**PSCI 3110: The Legislative Process**  
**Summer 2015 (5W2)**  
**MTWR 10:00–11:50 am, Business Leadership Building 040**

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Office: Wooten Hall 154  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30–9:30 am, and by appointment

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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?

In this class, you will learn about Congress by studying and practicing its politics. Roughly half of class time is devoted to a student-run simulation called LegSim. The majority of graded assignments are simulation-related. Please do not take this class if you aren't interested in and willing to participate actively in the simulation. There are lots of excellent lecture-based courses out there to choose from, but this isn't one of them!

Each member of PSCI 3110 will act as member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Based on your own interests and political ideology, you will choose a district to represent. Your goal for the course is to build a record to demonstrate that you have been an effective legislator. Your final assignment for the course will ask you to reflect on your legislative accomplishments and shortcomings and your electoral strengths and vulnerabilities to build a reelection strategy based on your activities in LegSim.

Students in the course differ a good deal in their backgrounds, but most of what you need to know will be new to nearly everyone. Importantly, the course is designed to provide you with all the information and skills you need to succeed, even if you start out knowing little about the subject. Don't panic!

**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*

If you wish to receive course-related reminders via email or text, you may sign up to receive notifications at this link: <http://remind.com/join/legprocess>.

### **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. You 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/unt3110/>.

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:

1. 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*.
2. Web-based legislative simulation: <http://legsim.org>.  
*You must register and pay the non-refundable \$16 fee by credit/debit card.*
  - (a) To create your account, go to [www.legsim.org](http://www.legsim.org), select our session (UNT: UNT 5W2 Summer 2015) from the dropdown box, click "create new account."  
Complete the form using this authorization code: 32d3aa82fd5a6f23dc235ffc3876663c
  - (b) Write down your user name and password—you will need them later!
  - (c) After you complete and submit the form, you will be redirected to a secure on-line payment processing system. If you are asked to provide an email address, please use the same one.

- (d) After you have completed the payment process, LegSim will send a confirmation email that includes an activation link. **You must click on the link in the email to login for the first time.**
  - (e) If you don't receive this email after a few minutes, check your email trash/junk folder. Still have a problem? Contact [support@legsim.org](mailto:support@legsim.org)
3. Other assigned readings will be posted in Blackboard.

### **Grading**

This class includes a lot of assignments that range in value from 1% to 10% of your course grade and two exams that are each worth 15% of your course grade. It is important that you meet the assigned deadlines. Quizzes and tests will not be accepted late. Other late assignments will be penalized 10% of their starting value if they are submitted on the due date but after the assigned time. Assignments will be penalized an additional 10% for each day that they are late.

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

Your course grade will be based on the following components.

#### Activities, Assignments, & Quizzes (65%)

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
Political Typology quiz	Tuesday, July 14	1
Week 1 Reading Quiz	Friday, July 17	2
LegSim Profile Assignment	Monday, July 20	4
LegSim Group Procedure Quiz	Thursday, July 23	1
Legislative Agenda Assignment	Thursday, July 23	4
Committee Request Assignment	Thursday, July 23	4
Week 2 Reading Quiz	Friday, July 24	2
Committee Jurisdiction Research Assignment	Tuesday, July 28	4
Individual Procedures Quiz	Friday, July 31	2
Using Congress.gov Quiz	Friday, July 31	1
First Bill	Monday, August 3	2
Major Bill Assignment	Wednesday, August 5	10
Committee Report	Tuesday, August 11	4
Debate Preparation	Tuesday, August 11	4
Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments	Thursday, August 13	10
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 4:00 pm on Wednesday, July 29. The final exam is due by 4:00 pm on Friday, August 14.

#### Attendance (5%)

I will cover material in class that is not discussed in the readings and your attendance is necessary for the success of the simulation. Accordingly, I encourage and expect you to attend all class sessions. Attendance accounts directly for 5% of your course grade. Attendance will also affect my evaluation of your contributions to the simulation and your effectiveness as a legislator. If you are absent from a class session, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from a classmate.

If you miss 2 or fewer class meetings during the summer session, you will earn all of the 5% of the course grade based on attendance. Students that miss 3 or more classes will earn a 0 for the attendance portion of their grade. This means that if you miss 3 or more classes, the highest grade

you can earn in the class is a 95%. 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.

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.

### **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.

### **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](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 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

Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due at the start of class (10:00 am).

Readings should be completed prior to the class meeting for which they are listed.

\* indicates there is no class meeting on this day but an assignment is due.

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#### Week 1

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- July 13 (M)  Read U.S. Constitution, Article I  
 Read Federalist 10  
 Read Federalist 51
- July 14 (T)  Read Bessette, *The Mild Voice of Reason*, Chapter 2  
 Complete Political Typology Quiz by 10:00 am
- July 15 (W)  Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 1  
 Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 2
- July 16 (R)  Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 5  
 Read *Life in Congress: The Member Perspective*
- July 17 (F)\*  Complete Week 1 Reading Quiz by 11:59 pm

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#### Week 2

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- July 20 (M)  Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 3  
 Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 4  
 Complete LegSim Profile by 10:00 am
- July 21 (T)  Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 6  
 Parties caucus in class.
- July 22 (W)  Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 7  
 Parties elect leaders in class.
- July 23 (R)  Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 8  
 Submit Legislative Agenda Assignment in Blackboard by 10:00 am  
 Submit Committee Request Assignment to party leaders via LegSim by 10:00 am  
 Complete Group Procedures Quiz (in class)
- July 24 (F)\*  Complete Week 2 Reading Quiz by 11:59 pm

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*Week 3*

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- July 27 (M)     Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 9  
                   Committee assignments announced.  
                   Committees meet in class to work on Committee Jurisdiction Research Assignment.
- July 28 (T)     Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 14  
                   Committees meet in class to work on Committee Jurisdiction Research Assignment.  
                   Submit Committee Jurisdiction Research Assignment by 4:00 pm
- July 29 (W)\*    *No Class Meeting*  
                   Submit Midterm Exam by 4:00 pm
- July 30 (R)     Read LegSim Procedures
- July 31 (F)\*     Complete Individual Procedures Quiz in Blackboard by 11:59 pm  
                   Complete Using Congress.Gov Quiz in Blackboard by 11:59 pm

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*Week 4: LegSim Days*

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- August 3 (M)     Introduce First Bill in LegSim by 10:00 am
- August 4 (T)     *Additional readings may be announced.*
- August 5 (W)     Introduce Major Bill in LegSim & send Dear Colleague letter by 10:00 am
- August 6 (R)     *Additional readings may be announced.*

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*Week 5: LegSim Days*

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- August 10 (M)     *Additional readings may be announced.*
- August 11 (T)     Submit Committee Report Assignment by 10:00 am  
                   Submit Debate Preparation Assignment by 10:00 am
- August 12 (W)    Legislature adjourns *sine die*.
- August 13 (R)     Submit Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments by 10:00 am.  
                   Bring printed campaign posters to class; videos or radio ads should be emailed to blackstone@unt.edu by Wednesday night.
- August 14 (F)\*     Submit final exam by 4:00 pm.