

PSCI 3110: The Legislative Process
Fall 2016
TR 2:00–3:20 pm, Sage 356

Professor Bethany Blackstone
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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?

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 in Sage Hall

I will hold office hours in the study area on the 1st floor of Sage Hall on Tuesdays from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm and on Thursdays from 12:15 pm to 1:45 pm. If these times are not convenient for you, please send me a message in Piazza (more information below) to schedule a meeting.

Class Discussion and Questions

We will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates and from me. Rather than emailing questions that might be of relevance to the entire class, you should post your questions on Piazza. If you have a question that is private in nature, you should send a private message in Piazza, rather than email. Create an account using the link in Blackboard.

If I need to contact you, I will send you a message through Piazza or LegSim (the simulation site we will use for the course). Check Piazza and LegSim regularly to ensure you receive all course-related information.

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.

Remind

Students that wish to receive course-related reminders via email or text can sign up to receive notifications at this link: <https://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*, *The Hill*, and *National Journal*.

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: 6553b8fca55663b2f8adda6d6e78f8fe

REEF Polling Account (*free for all UNT students*)

We will use REEF polling (a student response system) in class this term. Students should create (or log-in to an existing) REEF account in Blackboard and then use REEF polling to respond to questions in class using a personal electronic device. If you do not have a personal electronic device that you can use in class (smartphone, tablet, or computer), please see me right away.

Assigned readings from sources other than the textbook 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).

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 Scot Schraufnagel. 2013. "Party Polarization and Policy Productivity in Congress: From Harding to Obama," in *Congress Reconsidered*, 10th edition. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Barbara Sinclair. 2013. "The New World of U.S. Senators" in *Congress Reconsidered*, 10th edition. Lawrence 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.

Assignments and Grading

All assignments and exams in the course will be assessed as Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory, with the specifications required for Satisfactory articulated on each assignment. In general, Satisfactory should not be

viewed as “minimally competent,” but rather as a mark of having achieved the assignment’s learning goals and specifications. An assignment meets the goals, or it does not—there is no gradation of assessment. The only letter grade that will be given in the course will be your final grade, and it will reflect the “bundles” of assignments and requirements you have satisfactorily accomplished in the class. That final letter grade is not an assessment of your intelligence, your abilities, or your value as a person. Rather, the grade reflects what you demonstrated that you learned in the course: no more, no less.

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—it is perfectly appropriate and worthy of respect for you to make that choice, especially if it allows you to proactively allocate your time to other endeavors. If you strive to get an A in the course and maximize your learning, you should know that you are taking on that work and challenge yourself, and should make sure you are in a personal and academic situation to achieve that level of engagement.

Grading Bundle Information

- ***A Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of A. The work required to complete this bundle provides strong mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete advanced portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete at least 7 quizzes.
- Satisfactorily complete 7 LegSim Mini-Projects.
- Satisfactorily complete Minor Bill Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Major Bill Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Re-Election Campaign Strategy Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Report on Your Legislative Accomplishments.
- Satisfactorily complete Evaluation of Another Senator’s Legislative Accomplishments.
- Make substantial contributions to the LegSim simulation.

- ***B Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of B. The work required to complete this bundle provides good mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete advanced portion of one exam.
- Satisfactorily complete at least 5 quizzes.
- Satisfactorily complete 6 LegSim Mini-Projects.
- Satisfactorily complete Minor Bill Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Major Bill Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Re-Election Campaign Strategy Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Report on Your Legislative Accomplishments.
- Make substantial contributions to the LegSim simulation.

- ***C Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of C. The work required to complete this bundle provides fair mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete at least 3 quizzes.
- Satisfactorily complete 5 LegSim Mini-Projects.
- Satisfactorily complete Minor Bill Assignment.
- Satisfactorily complete Re-Election Campaign Strategy Assignment.
- Makes basic contributions to the LegSim simulation.

- ***D Bundle***

Students who complete this bundle will receive a final course grade of D. The work required to complete this bundle provides minimal mastery of course material.

- Satisfactorily complete basic portions of both exams.
- Satisfactorily complete 4 LegSim Mini-Projects.
- Satisfactorily complete Minor Bill Assignment.

- ***F Bundle***

Students failing to meet the requirements for the D bundle will receive a grade of F for the course.

Tokens & Flexibility

Every student starts the course with 3 virtual tokens that can be “exchanged” for some leniency or opportunities for revision.

- For 1 token: Revise and resubmit an Unsatisfactory LegSim Mini-Project.
- For 1 token: Submit a LegSim Mini-Project up to 48 hours late.
- For 2 tokens: Be awarded “Satisfactory” credit for a skipped or “Unsatisfactory” quiz.
- For 2 tokens: Re-take the basic section of the midterm exam.
- For 2 tokens: Re-take the advanced section of the midterm exam.

You can earn additional tokens by attending political/campus events and writing reflections about your experiences. Events must be approved in advance by Dr. Blackstone.

Exams

There will be two exams in the course. Each exam will consist of two sections—a Basic Section and an Advanced Section.

- Basic Section
 - Will include questions that require students to remember, understand, and apply course material.
 - Question types will include a combination of multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false, matching, and ordering questions.

- The Basic Section of each exam will be administered as a closed-book/note test during a regularly scheduled class meeting.
- In order to Satisfactorily complete the Basic Section of an exam, you must earn 70% of the available points.
- **Advanced Section**
 - Will include questions that require students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information using course material.
 - Question types will include a combination of multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false, matching, ordering, and short essay questions.
 - The Advanced Section of each exam will be administered as a take-home, open-book/note test.
 - In order to Satisfactorily complete the Advanced Section of an exam, you must submit the exam on time and earn 80% of the available points.

Quizzes

I will give announced and unannounced quizzes during the semester. Unannounced, in-class quizzes on assigned readings may be given any time you have a reading assignment. These quizzes 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.) Some quizzes will be announced ahead of time and may be completed outside of class time. Occasionally, unannounced or announced in-class activities may be administered for quiz points. Missed quizzes and in-class activities cannot be made up.

LegSim Assignments

LegSim is an interactive web-based legislative simulation where students apply what they learn in class in an interactive setting. The majority of course requirements are related to LegSim activities. Detailed instructions about LegSim and LegSim assignments are posted in Blackboard. A list of written assignments and due dates is below.

Assignment	Due
Mini-Project #1: Ideology Self-Assessment	Sunday, September 11 at 11:59 pm
Mini-Project #2: LegSim Profile	Sunday, September 18 at 11:59 pm
Mini-Project #3: Legislative Agenda	Tuesday, September 27 at 2:00 pm
Mini-Project #4: Committee Request	Sunday, October 9 at 11:59 pm
Mini-Project #5: LegSim Procedures Assessment	Tuesday, November 1 at 2:00 pm
Mini-Project #6: Coalition-Building Assignment	Sunday, November 20 at 11:59 pm
Mini-Project #7: Debate Preparation Assignment	Open due date, but must be submitted prior to the in-class debate on the selected bill
Mini-Project #8: Committee Report	Open due date, but must be submitted when the committee votes to report the selected bill
Minor Bill Assignment	Sunday, November 6 at 11:59 pm
Major Bill Assignment	Sunday, November 13 at 11:59 pm
Re-Election Campaign Strategy Assignment	Thursday, December 8 at 2:00 pm
Report on Your Legislative Accomplishments	Sunday, December 11 at 11:59 pm
Report on Another Senator's Legislative Accomplishments	Sunday, December 11 at 11:59 pm

Other Class 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 <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.

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://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

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>.

Reading, Assignment, and Exam Due Dates

indicates a reading assignment; \triangleright indicates an assignment is due; \odot denotes scheduled in-class activities.

Topic: Course Introduction

- August 30 (T) Read syllabus
 Read LegSim Packet
September 1 (R) *No Class Meeting*

Topic: Institutional Design & Historical Development

- September 6 (T) Read U.S. Constitution, Article I
 Read Federalist 10
 Read Federalist 51
 Read Bessette, *The Mild Voice of Reason*, Chapter 2
September 8 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 1
September 11 (Sunday) \triangleright Mini-Project #1: Ideology Self-Assessment due by 11:59 pm
September 13 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 5

Topic: The Modern Congress

- September 15 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 2
September 18 (Sunday) \triangleright Mini-Project #2: LegSim Profile due by 11:59 pm
September 20 (T) Read Dodd and Schraufnagel, "Party Polarization and Policy Productivity in Congress: From Harding to Obama"
 Read Sinclair, "The New World of U.S. Senators"

Topic: Parties & Committees

- September 22 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 6
September 27 (T) \triangleright Mini-Project #3: Legislative Agenda due by 2:00 pm
 \odot Parties caucus in class
September 29 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 7
October 4 (T) \odot Parties elect leaders in class

Topic: Legislating

- October 6 (R) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 8
 Read *Congress and Its Members*, pages 293-307 of Chapter 10
October 9 (Sunday) \triangleright Mini-Project #4: Committee Requests due by 11:59 pm
October 11 (T) Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 9

Midterm

- October 13 (R) Basic Section of Midterm Exam Administered in class
October 16 (Sunday) \triangleright Advanced Section of Midterm Exam Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm.
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Reading, Assignment, and Exam Due Dates

☐ indicates a reading assignment; ▷ indicates an assignment is due; ⊙ denotes scheduled in-class activities.

Topic: More Legislating

- October 18 (T) ☐ Read Arnold, “Strategies for Coalition Leaders”
October 20 (R) ☐ Read Sinclair, *Unorthodox Lawmaking*, Chapters 1, 6, and 7

Topic: LegSim Preparation—Procedures and Bill-Writing

- October 25 (T) ☐ Read LegSim Procedures in MC Packet
⊙ Bill-Writing Workshop
October 27 (R) ⊙ Bill-Writing Workshop
November 1 (T) ▷ Mini-Project #5: LegSim Procedures Assessment due by 2:00 pm
⊙ Procedures Practice
November 3 (R) ⊙ Parties and committees meet in class to discuss agendas
November 6 (Sunday) ▷ Minor bill assignment due by 11:59 pm

Topic: Districting and Elections

- November 8 (T) ☐ Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 3
November 10 (R) ☐ Read *Congress and Its Members*, Chapter 4
November 13 (Sunday) ▷ Major bill assignment due by 11:59 pm

LegSim Days. November 15–December 6

Beginning on November 15, 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.

- November 20 (Sunday) ▷ Mini-Project #6: Coalition Building Assignment due by 11:59 pm
December 6 (T) ⊙ Legislature adjourns, *sine die*

End of Semester Due Dates

- December 8 (R) ▷ Re-Election Campaign Strategy Assignments Due by 2:00 pm
⊙ LegSim Debriefing & Re-Election Campaign Strategy Presentations
December 11 (Sunday) ▷ Report on Legislative Accomplishments Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm
▷ Report on Another Senator’s Legislative Accomplishments Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm
December 15 (R) Basic Section of Final Exam Administered during scheduled final exam period (1:30 pm)
December 16 (F) ▷ Advanced Section of Final Exam Due in Blackboard by 11:59 pm.
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Track Your PSCI 3110 Progress

Use this checklist to track your progress in PSCI 3110. To earn a grade, you must satisfactorily complete all items in that grade's column and all columns to the left.

- To earn a C, you must complete all items in the C and D columns.
- To earn a B, you must complete all items in the B, C, and D columns.
- To earn an A, you must complete all items in the A, B, C, and D columns.

	D	C	B	A
Exams: Basic Section	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Exams: Advanced Section			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quizzes		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
LegSim Mini Projects	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minor Bill Assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Major Bill Assignment			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Re-Election Campaign Strategy Assignment		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Report on Your Legislative Accomplishments			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Report on Another Senator's Accomplishments				<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic Contributions to the Simulation		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Substantial Contributions to the Simulation			<input type="checkbox"/>	

Tokens Available: