

**PSCI 3110: The Legislative Process  
Spring 2014  
MWF 1:00–1:50 pm, Business Leadership Building 065**

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Office: Wooten Hall 154  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 9:00–11:00 am

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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 & Email*

My office hours are listed above and I will always be available during those times. Even outside of those hours I am usually in my office between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm; 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 at your UNT email address. If you wish to receive messages at a different address, set up email forwarding. Please check Blackboard and your email regularly so you will receive all course-related information.

*Blackboard*

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

**Keeping Up With the Real Congress**

You should stay up-to-date on current events involving Congress. Some helpful resources are *The*

*Washington Post* (no paywall when accessed from campus), *Politico*, *Roll Call*, *National Journal*, and *The Hill*.

I have created a Facebook group for students enrolled in PSCI 3110. I will post links to news stories related to Congress and reminders related to the course 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/569297673152824/>.

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. (The 13th edition would also be fine.) Hereinafter *Congress and Its Members*.

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: 7892bbe584046ab7cde2f8cb94f893a3

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

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).

United States Constitution, Article I.

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.

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.

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

Randall Strahan. 2007. *Leading Representatives: The Agency of Leaders in the Politics of the U.S. House*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (excerpt)

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	Percent of Course Grade
Midterm Exam	15
Final Exam	15
LegSim Activities and Assignments	60
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

### 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 1:50 pm on Friday, March 7. The final exam is due by 12:30 pm on Friday, May 9.

### 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. All assignments are due at 1:00 pm unless otherwise noted.

Assignment	Due Date	% of Course Grade
LegSim Profile Assignment	Monday, January 27	4%
Legislative Agenda Assignment	Wednesday, February 5	4%
Committee Request Assignment	Monday, February 17	3%
Coalition Building Assignment	Monday, March 3	4%
LegSim Procedures Quiz	Wednesday, March 19	3%
First Bill	Monday, March 24	2%
Major Bill Assignment	Monday, April 7	10%
Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments	Wednesday, May 7 (at 5:00 pm)	20%
LegSim Contributions and Effectiveness		10%

### 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 3 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 3 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 4 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 3 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.

## **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>.

Course Topic	Dates	Readings	Scheduled Activities and Assignments
Course Introduction	Monday 13-Jan	Syllabus	
		Pages 1-11 of LegSim Packet	
Institutional Design and Historical Development	Wednesday 15-Jan	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 2	
	Friday 17-Jan	(1) Federalist 10 (2) Federalist 51 (3) U.S. Constitution, Article I	
No Class Meeting - MLK Day	Monday 20-Jan		
Congress Today	Wednesday 22-Jan	Sinclair, "The New World of U.S. Senators" (Blackboard)	
	Friday 24-Jan	Dodd & Oppenheimer, "The House in a Time of Crisis: Economic Turmoil and Partisan Upheaval" (Blackboard)	
Politics of Representation	Monday 27-Jan		LegSim Profile Assignment Due by 1:00 pm
	Wednesday 29-Jan	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 5	
	Friday 31-Jan	Bessette, <i>The Mild Voice of Reason</i> , Chapters 1-3 (Blackboard)	
Party Organization and Leadership	Monday 3-Feb	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 6	
	Wednesday 5-Feb		Legislative Agenda Assignment Due by 1:00 pm
	Friday 7-Feb	TBA: Excerpt from Strahan (2007)	Leadership Candidate Introductions (in class)
Monday 10-Feb		LegSim Speaker Election	

Course Topic	Dates	Readings	Scheduled Activities and Assignments
Committees	Wednesday 12-Feb	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 7	
	Friday 14-Feb		
	Monday 17-Feb		Committee Request Assignment Due by 1:00 pm
Legislating	Wednesday 19-Feb	(1) <i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 8 (2) <i>Congress and Its Members</i> , pages 293-307 of Chapter 10	
	Friday 21-Feb		
	Monday 24-Feb	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 9	
	Wednesday 26-Feb	Arnold, "Strategies for Coalition Leaders"	Leaders Assign Committees
LegSim Day	Friday 28-Feb		Committees Meet to Discuss Agendas
More Legislating	Monday 3-Mar		Coalition Building Assignment Due by 1:00 pm
	Wednesday 5-Mar	Sinclair, <i>Unorthodox Lawmaking</i> , Chapters 1, 6, and 7 (Blackboard)	
Midterm Exam	Friday 7-Mar		
No Class Meetings - Spring Break	Monday 10-Mar		
	Wednesday 12-Mar		
	Friday 14-Mar		

Course Topic	Dates	Readings	Scheduled Activities and Assignments
<b>LegSim Day</b>	Monday 17-Mar	LegSim Procedures in MC Packet	
<b>The Separation of Powers</b>	Wednesday 19-Mar	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , pages 325-338 of Chapter 11	LegSim Procedures Quiz Due (in Blackboard) by 1:00 pm
<b>The Separation of Powers</b>	Friday 21-Mar		
<b>Domestic and Foreign Policy</b>	Monday 24-Mar	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 14	LegSim First Bill Due
	Wednesday 26-Mar		
	Friday 28-Mar	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 15	
<b>Districting and Elections</b>	Monday 31-Mar	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 3	
	Wednesday 2-Apr	<i>Congress and Its Members</i> , Chapter 4	
<b>No Class Meeting</b>	Friday 4-Apr		Committees Meet in Person or on LegSim
<b>Districting and Elections</b>	Monday 7-Apr		LegSim Major Bill Due
	Wednesday 9-Apr		

Course Topic	Dates	Readings	Scheduled Activities and Assignments
<b>LegSim Days</b>	Friday 11-Apr	<i>We will use these days 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 <u>and</u> on the LegSim website. Participation in online voting/debate is tracked, so be sure to participate there as well as in class!</i>	
	Monday 14-Apr		
	Wednesday 16-Apr		
	Friday 18-Apr		
	Monday 21-Apr		
	Wednesday 23-Apr		
	Friday 25-Apr		
	Monday 28-Apr		
	Wednesday 30-Apr		
<b>Important End of Semester Due Dates</b>	Wednesday 7-May		Final Report on Legislative Accomplishments Due by 5:00 pm
	Friday 9-May		Final exam due by 12:30 pm