The Legislative Process
Political Science 4035
Fall 2015

Dr. Hogan
TTH 1:30-2:50
229 Tureaud Hall

Office Hours: Mon. 9-11 (or by appt.)
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Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of various aspects of the legislative process as practiced in the United States. A variety of topics are examined ranging from institutional development and candidate emergence to representation and the conditions that influence roll-call voting. Our goal is to better understand how the legislative process works and how this process produces public policies. While much of our focus is on the U.S. Congress, significant attention is also given to legislatures in the states where differences in institutional characteristics, electoral incentives, and political conditions provide analytical leverage for addressing important theoretical and practical questions. To the extent that the course has a theme, it is focused on how institutional rules and procedures, contextual features, and election practices shape what legislatures do and the policies they produce.

In addition to our substantive focus on legislatures, we will also give attention to the methods used by scholars in answering empirical questions about these institutions. One of our objectives is to assess the evidence uncovered by scholars. How do these findings comport with common perceptions or media accounts? While this is not a course on political science methodology, issues involving research design and analysis will play prominently in many of our class discussions.

Time Requirements

Please keep in mind the university’s definition of work required for each credit hour: “not less than one hour (50 minutes) of lecture/classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out-of-class student work across 15 weeks for one semester.” Given that this is a 3-hour course, this means that students are expected to devote a total of 9 hours of work each week: 3 hours in the classroom and an additional 6 hours of course related work outside the classroom (for this class it means reading, studying, and working on the course assignments).

Required Reading Materials

There is one textbook available for purchase in the bookstore: Congress and Its Members by Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler (14th edition, Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press). However, the bulk of the readings are individual articles listed on the course schedule below. Each is available for download from the class Moodle site. Note a few of these readings are newspaper articles that will only take a few minutes to read, but most are lengthy pieces from academic journals that will take an hour or more to fully digest. These journal articles will often form the central part of our class discussions so it is imperative that you carefully read and take notes on these pieces. I also strongly recommend printing most of the articles given that I will often make reference to their tables and graphs (NOTE: there are a few exceptions where the reading is quite lengthy and much color ink is required for printing – “Ink Warnings” are indicated). Reading constitutes a substantial portion of the work for this course, so make certain that you plan accordingly for each class. I conduct class in a manner that assumes students have read the course materials assigned for the day, so come prepared.

Course Requirements

The grade for the course is determined by a student’s performance in the following areas:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Letter grades are assigned as follows based on a student’s final numerical average:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96</td>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>≥97</td>
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</tbody>
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Participation and Attendance

Classes are generally conducted using a lecture-discussion format so it is necessary to keep up with the readings and to come prepared for every class. Students are strongly encouraged to take part in class discussions. In order to do so, it is necessary to complete the readings in advance and to spend time thinking about them in a critical manner. Also, please keep up with current political developments since these will often be used as examples in our discussions. Participation comprises a relatively large portion of your grade (15% total) and will be determined by three equally weighted components:

- **Self-Reported Class Participation:** During each class period I will ask questions about the day’s readings and will expect to receive answers. If you have questions about the readings or comments about the substantive topics in the course, please ask them. I will track your participation based upon your self-reported participation. If you have participated in the day’s class either by asking questions, answering questions, or providing comments, please hand in a sheet of paper at the end of class indicating what your contribution was for that day (briefly restating your question, answer, or comment). It is expected that you will participate on 6 different days during the course of the semester. If you provide substantive comments or ask questions (that a reasonable person would say enlightened the discussion) on 6 separate days, you will receive 100% for this portion of your participation grade (if you participate 5 times your score will be 83%, 4 times 67%, and so on).

- **Class Activities:** Several times during the semester I will ask you to provide written comments about a topic, answer a brief question, take a quiz, or take part in a class exercise. Your performance on these activities will be counted as a component of your overall participation grade. There will be many of these opportunities throughout the semester and your grade is determined by your successful completion of each. If you satisfactorily complete all of them, you will receive 100% for this component of your participation, complete 90% and your grade is 90, 80% is a grade of 80, etc.

- **Attendance:** Attending class is important and your presence will be checked regularly with a sign-in sheet or by other mechanisms. Please make certain that you come to class on time so that you will be counted as present for the day. As with the other forms of participation, if you attend 100% of the time when I have checked attendance, your grade is 100, attend 90% of the time and it is 90, etc.

Representation Project

Each student will write a report on an assigned member of Congress, the district represented by the member, and an assessment of his or her recent activities both at home and in Washington. The project counts for 30% of the course grade. Students will make brief presentations to the class in early November and a final report is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 12. Details concerning the project will be provided in an additional handout during the second week of classes.

Exams

There is a midterm and a final exam (dates are listed on the syllabus). These tests will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and/or brief essay questions. Note that makeup exams are all-essay exams and will only be administered when a student can produce a valid written excuse. If you anticipate a problem, please let me know as soon as possible. Also, for anyone who has special needs or who requires accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation in advance of the exams so arrangements can be made.

General Policies

Academic Honesty

Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct (http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs). Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: cheating on exams, plagiarizing, buying or selling assignments, altering grades, intentional deception, and collaborating with others without permission. I reserve the right to investigate when I suspect a violation of any of these policies. All violations of the university’s academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students.

Classroom Rules

Please be respectful to those around you who are trying to listen, take notes, and participate in the class. Please make every effort to be on time to class. Be seated and ready to begin at 1:30 and leave early only for emergencies. Turn cell phones and pagers to silent. Most importantly, do not talk during class. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.

Absolutely no audio or video recording devices are allowed to be used unless special permission is granted. Please do not take photographs of the overheads. Photography or videography of any kind is forbidden. This rule is strictly enforced during exams and during review of exam materials. All violators of this policy will be asked to leave the classroom immediately and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students. These restrictions are in place to ensure the integrity of testing materials and to protect student privacy.

You are free to use laptop computers and other electronic devices for class purposes (e.g., taking notes, looking up relevant information, etc.). But please do not simply play on the internet, check e-mail, or use social networking sites.
Late Assignments and Missed Work

In an effort to provide a level playing field, I take deadlines very seriously and hold everyone to an identical standard. Make every effort to take scheduled exams and hand in work on time. However, I recognize there are legitimate reasons for missing a deadline or an exam. The following reasons are some, but probably not all, of the excuses that are considered acceptable: a documented illness, a family emergency, some severe mechanical failure (related to transportation, computing, etc.), or a scientifically documented anomaly in the space-time continuum. Please note that most job-related issues are not considered acceptable excuses (although see university regulations concerning military duties, official university-sponsored events, etc.). A penalty for handing in the paper late is assessed based upon the circumstances, but will generally involve a substantial loss of points (5 points for missing the deadline, and 5 points for each 24-hour period thereafter). Recognize that for reasons of fairness to other students in the class, credit cannot be given at the end of the semester for missed exams or papers not handed in. In other words, when you experience a significant problem that prevents you from meeting a deadline or taking a test, it is your responsibility to let me know about it in a timely manner and to make arrangements to make up the missed work. Excuses must be provided within one week of your return, NOT at the end of the semester. Excuse forms are available on this course’s Moodle site where they must be submitted along with any other accompanying documentation (a doctor’s note, etc.).

Graded Work

I do not make grades available on Moodle and I will not e-mail grades. I will return the representation project and your midterm exam to you in class. During office hours I am happy to review grades with you and talk with you about ways to improve your performance. Please note, however, I will not estimate your current grade for you (the percentage that each grade counts toward your final average is provided above).

Graduate Credit or Honors Credit

For students taking this course for graduate credit or for those who wish to receive special Honors credit, it is the student’s responsibility to contact me at the beginning of the semester to make appropriate arrangements.

Special Needs

For students who have special needs or require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation so arrangements can be made.
Course Schedule

August 25  
**Introduction to the Course**

- No reading assignment.

August 27  
**Studying the Legislative Process in the United States**


September 1  
**How to Study Legislatures**

- Reading #7: “Political Science Research Fundamentals: Some Important Concepts and Definitions.”

September 3  
**Legislative Institutions: National Level**

- Reading #9: U.S. Constitution and Amendments.
- Reading #10: Federalist Papers #10 and #51.

September 8  
**Legislative Institutions: State Level**


September 10  
**Who Runs for Congress and Why**


September 15  
**Legislative Districts and Redistricting**

- Text: Davidson, et al. Re-read pages 45-56 in text on “Districting in the House”.

September 17  
**Nominations and General Elections**

September 22  \textit{Financing Congressional Campaigns}

- \textbf{Reading #17: Chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-70):} Tokaji, Daniel P., and Renata E. B. Strause. 2014. “The New Soft Money: Outside Spending in Congressional Elections,” A Project of Election Law @ Moritz, Ohio State University College of Law [INK WARNING – This is a very large file with many colored pages].

September 24  \textit{Election Outcomes}

- \textbf{Text:} Davidson, et al. Re-read pages 77-100.

September 29  \textit{Forms of Representation}


October 1  \textit{Connections with Constituents}


October 6  \textit{Leaders and Parties in the Legislature}


October 8  \textit{Polarized Political Parties}


October 13  Midterm Exam

October 15  \textit{Congress in Moving Pictures}

- No reading assignment.

October 20  \textit{Legislative Committees}

October 22  Legislative Rules and Procedures


October 27  Roll Call Voting and Its Consequences


October 29  Fall Break

November 3  Interest Groups: Lobbyists

*** Presentations: Set #1 ***


November 5  Interest Group Money

*** Presentations: Set #2 ***


November 10  Gauging Interest Group Influence

- Reading #39: Chapters 5-6 (pp. 71-104): Tokaji, Daniel P., and Renata E. B. Strause. 2014. “The New Soft Money: Outside Spending in Congressional Elections,” A Project of Election Law @ Moritz, Ohio State University College of Law [INK WARNING – This is a very large file with many colored pages].

November 12  Assessing Interest Group Influence

***** Printed copy of Representation Project due at the beginning of class ****

- No Reading Assignment.

November 17  Legislatures and Executives

November 19  Legislative Connections with the Bureaucracy and the Courts

- **Text**: Davidson, et al. Chapters 11 and 12.

November 24  Institutional Changes: Term Limits


November 26  Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1  Budgets and Pork Barrel Politics


December 3  Conclusions and Reflections

- **Text**: Davidson, et al. Chapter 16.

December 8  Final Exam in this classroom on Tuesday, December 8 from 3:00-5:00 p.m.