PSCI 3110, THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS
Department of Political Science, University of North Texas
MWF, 11.00-11.50a, Wooten 215, ecampus.unt.edu
syllabus, fall 2011

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
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Email: via Blackboard
Office Hours: MW 10.00-11.00a; W 1.30-2.30p; by appt
Twitter: @eaoldmixon

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Pursuant to the Undergraduate Catalog, this course explores the following topics: 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, and yet it was designed to be the most representative of and responsive to the people. It is the singular arena where factions are brought together to resolve conflicts and 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?

BEING IN TOUCH
My office hours are listed above, but I am usually around. Feel free to stop by any time, but understand that on occasion I will be unavailable. If you write me M-F, 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 please include an appropriate salutation. (Hint: you can’t go wrong with “Hi, Dr. Oldmixon”.)

PROCEDURE
Class meetings are intended to blend lecture and discussion. If the latter is to prove valuable, you will need to complete the assigned readings on time and to attend class with questions and observations in mind. Students should be aware that lectures are not intended to restate the material that appears in the textbooks, nor will every topic covered in the readings necessarily be discussed in class. Thus, the best way to earn a high grade in this course is to attend class regularly and to complete the assigned readings well before the day of an exam.

REQUIRED READING


• THIS IS AN E-BOOK, available for purchase at the following address: http://store.vitalsource.com/show/978-1-60871-934-1
• Hard copies are also available for purchase.

Additional material is listed with each topic and may be added throughout the semester.

* The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus at her discretion.
### RECOMMENDED READING

### Schedule and Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory remarks</td>
<td>August 26</td>
<td>Davidson ch. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Constitutional System</td>
<td>August 29</td>
<td>Lijphart, selections from <em>Patterns of Democracy</em></td>
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<td>August 31</td>
<td>Federalist 10 and 51</td>
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<td>The U.S. Constitution, Article I</td>
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<td>APSA Conference</td>
<td>September 2</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>September 5</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td>Congress Today</td>
<td>September 7</td>
<td>Davidson pp. 28-41</td>
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<td></td>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>CR ch. 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>District/Party selection worksheet due</strong></td>
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<td>September 12</td>
<td>CR ch. 3</td>
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<td>Running for Office</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Davidson ch. 3</td>
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<td>Elections</td>
<td>September 19</td>
<td>Davidson ch. 4</td>
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<td>September 21</td>
<td>CR ch. 4</td>
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<td><strong>District/Legislator information worksheet due</strong></td>
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<td>Representation</td>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>Davidson ch. 5</td>
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<td>September 26</td>
<td>CR ch. 6</td>
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<td>September 28</td>
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<td>Parties and Leaders</td>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>Davidson ch. 6</td>
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<td>October 3</td>
<td>CR ch. 7</td>
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<td>October 5</td>
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<td>Simulation Day</td>
<td>October 7</td>
<td>Caucus with fellow partisans, choose leaders</td>
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<td>Catch up/Review</td>
<td>October 10</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>October 12</td>
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<td>Committees</td>
<td>October 14</td>
<td>Davidson ch. 7</td>
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<td>October 17</td>
<td>CR ch. 10</td>
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<td>October 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislating</td>
<td>October 21</td>
<td>Davidson ch. 8</td>
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<td>October 24</td>
<td>Davidson pp. 297-305</td>
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Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following schedule: A, 90-100%; B, 80-89%; C, 70-79%; D, 60-69; F, below 60%. Students who participate productively in classroom discussion may earn bonus points at my discretion.

Final grades are based on the following elements:

Examinations (40% of your final grade, 20% for each exam): Exams will be in class closed book in format. They will include a mixture of objective questions, short answers, and essay questions that cover all the assigned reading (whether discussed in class or not) and any other material (videos, Web presentations) covered in class. It is not necessary to bring blue books.

Twitter (16%): The goal of this assignment is to encourage students to connect classroom experiences with the larger political context, using a social networking medium. Each student is required to open a twitter account. During the semester, students must make at least 8 posts to twitter based on their observations about legislative politics. Each tweet must: 1) include the hashtag #PSCI3110; 2) make an observation about politics; 3) relate the observation to course content. The tweet can be an original observation or a forwarded article, as long as it includes all required elements. Each tweet is worth 2 points. Students are under no obligation to follow the instructor or each other. Due dates are posted above. No credit will be given for late tweets.
Legislative Process Simulation (44%): Throughout the semester, we will be engaged in a legislative process simulation. Early in the semester students will select a party caucus and a district to represent. During the simulation, students will act as a Member of Congress representing their district in the context of all activities related to the simulation. This includes written assignments and in-class activities. The goal for each student will be to write a piece of legislation and shepherd it through the legislative process. The simulation may on occasion require students to meet outside of regular class meetings. The simulation accounts for 44% of the final grade. This is broken down into the following components. Due dates are posted on the Schedule.

- **District/Party worksheets (4%)**: This component is broken down into two parts. First, students will have to select a district and party caucus. Dr. Oldmixon will do her best to accommodate student preferences. Second, students are required to complete a worksheet that provides details about themselves and their district.

- **Legislation and Memo (20%)**: Students are required to write a piece of legislation. The length of the legislation will vary, but should be about 1800 words long, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and using 11 or 12-point font. Bills must be accompanied by a 1000 word memo that explains 1) the merits of the bill, 2) how bill benefits the district, and 3) who is likely to support the bill. Students are required to submit a hard copy and an electronic copy. Bills will be uploaded to Blackboard.

- **The Simulation (20%)**: Having written legislation and (hopefully) built supportive coalitions, in the final component of the assignment bills will be taken through the legislative process. This includes committee consideration, floor debate, consideration of amendments, and voting. Students must be active participants in this process and will be graded based on their attempts to gain support for their bill, participation in committee work, and participation in floor activity.

Extra Credit: Students should not expect or ask for extra credit. If extra credit is offered, it is only when it can be made available to everyone in the class. Note the grading criteria, and plan accordingly for your success.

Class Policies and Conduct Expectations

Record Keeping: Check that your grades are recorded properly on Blackboard. Keep all copies of your returned exams and assignments, in order that discrepancies can be demonstrated and corrected. Also, photocopy assignments before you turn them in.

Attendance and Excused Absences: Excused absences are absences that result from a verifiable, documented emergency or unavoidable legal or University obligation. Attendance is not factored directly into final grades. However, students who miss class are solely responsible for getting the notes, for all in-class announcements, and for any other consequences of non-attendance.

Make-Up Examinations: Failure to take an exam on time on the scheduled date will normally result in a zero. Make-up examinations are given at the discretion for the instructor, and only for excused absences. Students needing to miss an exam for any reason must meet with the instructor in person outside of class to request a make-up. They must provide documentation at least one week prior to the scheduled exam. If that is not possible, students much produce documentation demonstrating the emergent nature of their absence, such as a police report or physician’s letter (not a receipt).

Late Assignments: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date, unless otherwise noted. If class has started, the assignment will be considered late. Assignments will be penalized a ½ of a letter grade if tuned in late but on the due date and a full letter grade for each day thereafter. Please note that
assignments may be turned in early. Students fearing that they might be late may email them to the instructor as PDF documents or fax them to the instructor at 940.565.4818. Students should not interrupt class to turn in a late assignment.

Classroom Conduct: Creating a productive and engaging learning environment is based in part on mutual respect and courtesy. All students must treat the instructor, the other students, and the classroom setting with respect. The same is true for the instructor. Therefore:

• Cell phones, pagers, or all other potentially disruptive electronic devices must be silenced. Use of laptops in class is a privilege that I extend for note taking or for in class exercises as directed.
• Students should not send text messages, have side conversations, fall asleep, or read irrelevant materials during class. It’s rude and distracting.
• Please note the start and end times for this class. Students should plan to be on time and stay for the entire period. We’re all busy, so let’s respect each other’s time.
• Please show respect for alternative opinions and points of view, listen when either the instructor or a fellow student is speaking to the class, and refrain from insulting language and gestures.
• Please note that expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.
• Students who violate the standards of behavior in the UNT Student Handbook or are otherwise disruptive are subject to an array of sanctions, such as dismissal from class, grade reduction, and referral to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Exam Conduct: During exams, please observe/note the following rules: (1) no caps with brims, earphones/headphones, or sunglasses; (2) you may not answer your phone or even take it out to silence it during the exam (you cannot touch your phone, period); (3) once a completed exam has been turned in, I will not give out any new blank exams; all notes must be hidden from view (if I see notes that are visible to you or another student, I will assume you are cheating).

Religious Holidays
In accordance with UNT Policy 15.2.5, students will be excused from class or other activities for the observance of religious holidays, for religions whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20 of the Tax Code. The student is encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible regarding the absence.

Statement of ADA Compliance
In accordance with UNT Policy 18.1.14, the Political Science Department cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request on or before the sixth class day (beginning of the second week of classes).

Academic Integrity
See UNT Policy 18.1.16

I. Categories of Academic Dishonesty
A. Cheating. The use of unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise, including but not limited to:
  1. use of any unauthorized assistance to take exams, tests, quizzes or other assessments;
  2. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems or carrying out other assignments;
  3. acquisition, without permission, of tests, notes or other academic materials belonging to a faculty or staff member of the University;
4. dual submission of a paper or project, or re-submission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor;
5. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage on an academic assignment.

B. Plagiarism. Use of another’s thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student’s intent, including but not limited to:
   1. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation.
   2. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials.

C. Forgery. Altering a score, grade or official academic university record or forging the signature of an instructor or other student.

D. Fabrication. Falsifying or inventing any information, data or research as part of an academic exercise.

E. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty. Helping or assisting another in the commission of academic dishonesty.

F. Sabotage. Acting to prevent others from completing their work or willfully disrupting the academic work of others.

II. Available Academic Penalties
The following academic penalties may be assessed at the instructor’s discretion upon determination that academic dishonesty has occurred. Admonitions and educational assignments are not appealable.

A. Admonition. The student may be issued a verbal or written warning.

B. Assignment of Educational Coursework. The student may be required to perform additional coursework not required of other students in the specific course.

C. Partial or no credit for an assignment or assessment. The instructor may award partial or no credit for the assignment or assessment on which the student engaged in academic dishonesty, to be calculated into the final course grade.

D. Course Failure. The instructor may assign a failing grade for the course.