

Syllabus for PL SC 403, Section 201 The Legislative Process

Summer II 2013

M-F 9:35am-10:50am, 105 Willard Building

Instructor: Mr. Lee Hannah, Ph.D. Candidate

Office: 314 Pond Lab

Email: lee.hannah@psu.edu

Office Hours: M(11:30-1:30), Th(1:00-3:00) and by appointment (via e-mail)

Course Description: Legislatures are instrumental to the function of representative democracy in the United States. At a very basic level, the size of our population and the resulting transaction costs make direct democracy untenable. Legislative bodies reduce these costs by selecting a few individuals who collectively deliberate and create laws on behalf of society. Today, Congress and legislatures are met with deep skepticism and concern. While many citizens believe their member of Congress does a good job representing their interests, they also believe the institutions themselves are broken, corrupt, inefficient, and perhaps, unnecessary. What causes people to have such disparate views? How do the institutions of Congress actually function and who has influence over legislation?

This course is about legislatures in the United States. We will explore several topics central to legislatures, including how they evolved, the rules that structure their operation, who serves, and what influences legislators' behavior once in office. We will also examine how legislatures interact with other political actors including parties, interest groups, and other branches of government. This course is designed to move beyond social commentary and take a broader look at the institutions of legislatures and the behavior of its members. We will explore not only the basic design and operation of state and national legislatures, but also critically evaluate their value and place in our government.

Prerequisites: PL SC 001 - Introduction to American Government or PL SC 003 - Introduction to Comparative Politics

Learning Goals and Objectives: This is a course about legislatures at the state and national level. After completing this course, it is expected that students demonstrate four general competencies. First, students will understand the trade-offs that are made in representative government and will gain a greater appreciation for the environment in which legislators operate, the influence of outside forces and the realities of inter-branch relations. Second, students will understand competing explanations for policy gridlock and polarization. Third, students will show knowledge of the institutions, rules, and procedures

of the U.S. Congress. Finally, students will grow in their ability to engage in thoughtful and critical commentary in written and spoken form concerning the U.S. Congress.

Methods for Learning and Teaching: This course will contain a mix of lecture, class discussion, and student exercises. It is vital for your own comprehension of the course material that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

Expectations

Attendance: Your attendance in class is always expected. Attending class will allow you to keep up with the rapid pace of a summer session course and will provide for meaningful discussion as a class. I will take attendance as a way to get to know you. Please contact me via e-mail if you are unable to attend class. We follow the University's attendance policy regarding excused absences. See <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/42-00.html#42-27>.

Preparation and Participation: I expect you to read the assigned material before class and be able to discuss what you read in class. Contributing to class discussion will make the course more interesting and will enhance your understanding of the material. Some of the articles I ask you to read are dense and statistically complex. In such cases, I will provide specific directions to help maximize comprehension.

Be Flexible: While the syllabus represents an agreement between us, I reserve the right to revise and modify it throughout the course if it is necessary to achieve our goals. Situations beyond either of our control can also emerge that require changes to the course. I will notify you of any changes made throughout the course.

Cell Phones and Laptops: Please be respectful of your fellow students and me by silencing your cell phone during class and limiting laptop use to only class-related activity.

Current Events: We will spend a few minutes each day discussing current political events both at the national and state levels and applying them to material we are learning in class.

E-mail Policy: I will work to respond to e-mails within 24 hours.

Readings

The following book is required for the course:

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, and Frances E. Lee. 2012. *Congress and Its Members*, 13th ed. Washington DC: Sage CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-60871-642-5.

There are also required readings listed for most class meetings. Readings are drawn from academic journals and news sources. I will post every reading on ANGEL. I will also include links to news articles since many will include links and interactive charts and graphs.

Assignments

I give you a number of assignments in order to allow you multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. I will try to grade and return each assignment within 48 hours.

In Class Response Papers (15% of final grade) These are short essays written in class (about 10-15 minutes). They will be based on the readings. I will provide leading questions the night before. The goal of this assignment is to both synthesize and critique the readings while also applying the concepts to current situations or problems. We will have 3 of these over the semester. (No more than a page)

Current Events Essays (20% of final grade) These assignments require you to take any article from a valid news source and comment on it citing the literature and research we have covered in the course. In these assignments you will have an opportunity to apply concepts we are learning in class to the real-life political arena. We will have 2 of these over the semester. (No more than 2 single-spaced pages - Rubric on ANGEL)

Midterm Exam (40% of final grade) The midterm exam material will be drawn from class discussions and the readings. The exam is intended to assess your knowledge of class content and your ability to apply relevant concepts. The exam will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Legislative Portfolio (20% of final grade) Details on this project are included at the end of the syllabus. You can work alone or with a partner. This gives you an opportunity to synthesize a number of concepts by evaluating one state's Congressional delegation. You will get 5% of the points for an in-class presentation, and the remaining 15% for the final project

Attendance (5% of final grade) I will take attendance every day.

Grading

Below I list each assignment, the due date (also marked on course calendar), and the weight it receives in the final calculation of your grade:

Assignment	Due Date	% of Grade
Response Paper 1	July 1	5%
Current Events Essay 1	July 9	10%
Midterm Exam	July 18	40%
Response Paper 2	July 23	5%
Current Events Essay 2	July 29	10%
Response Paper 3	August 1	5%
Legislative Portfolio Presentations	August 5-6	5%
Legislative Portfolio	August 9	15%
Attendance	Daily	5%

We will use the following grade scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	76 to 79
C	70 to 75
D	60 to 69
F	59 and below

Make-Up Grades: You are allowed to make up academic work only in the case of excused absences. These absences may include missing class for a University-sanctioned activity (with proper documentation), illness, religious observance, or family emergency. If you know in advance that you are going to miss class, please contact me before the absence to make arrangements for completing the work. If you are absent for an unexpected reason, please check in with me as soon as possible. You will have one week from the day of your return to class to make up a missed assignment.

Late Work Policy: Assignments turned in late will be penalized 10% per day.

Course Schedule

We will attempt to follow this schedule as closely as possible, but we may take more time on some concepts and less time on others. All changes to the schedule will be announced in class or via e-mail. Required course readings are listed below. Note that all class readings are posted on ANGEL. If you have trouble accessing an article, please do not hesitate to e-mail me. The abbreviation DOL refers to the Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee textbook.

NOTE: Readings are expected to be completed on the date they are posted. On days with multiple readings, readings are listed in the order that we will cover them. I expect you to read all of the textbook pages and newspapers assigned. For the academic articles, I will give specific directions on which sections to focus on.

Week 1

- June 26 (W): Introduction to the class. Discussion on Representation
 - Neuman, Scott. “Why We Love To Hate Congress.” *NPR* December 17, 2010.
- June 27 (Th): The Representative-Constituency Linkage
 - Burke, Edmund. 1774. “Speech to Electors at Bristol.” from *The Founders’ Constitution* at The University of Chicago.
 - DOL, Chapter 1 (pp. 3-13)
 - Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. “Constituency Influence in Congress.” *American Political Science Review* 57(1): 45-56.
- June 28 (F): The Design of Congress
 - Article I of the U.S. Constitution
 - Federalist No. 51
 - DOL Chapter 2 (pp. 15-28)

Week 2

- July 1 (M): The Professionalization of Congress
 - DOL Chapter 2 (pp. 29-41)
 - Polsby, Nelson W. 1968. “The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives.” *American Political Science Review* 62(1): 144-168.

Response Paper #1 (in class)

- July 2 (T): Cracking and Packing: Districting in the House
 - Draper, Robert. “The League of Dangerous Mapmakers.” *The Atlantic* September 19, 2012.
 - DOL Chapter 3 (pp. 43-58)

***Schedule meeting to discuss legislative portfolio assignment.**

- July 3 (W): Districting in the House (Cont’d.)
 - Sides, John. “Gerrymandering is not what’s wrong with American Politics.” *The Washington Post* February 3, 2013.
 - Abramowitz, Alan I., Brad Alexander and Matthew Gunning. 2006. “Incumbency, Redistricting, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections.” *Journal of Politics* 68(1): 75-88.
- July 4 (Th): No Class
- July 5 (F): No Class - Meetings for legislative portfolio assignment

Week 3

- July 8 (M): Legislative Recruitment
 - DOL Chapter 4 (pp. 58-67)
 - Maestas, Cherie D., Sarah Fulton, L. Sandy Maisel, and Walter J. Stone. 2006. “When to Risk It? Institutions, Ambitions, and the Decision to Run for the U.S. House.” *American Political Science Review* 100(2): 195-208.

- July 9 (T): The Electoral Game
 - DOL Chapter 4 (pp. 68-86)

Current Events Essay #1 due at 5:00 PM.

- July 10 (W): Who Votes?
 - DOL Chapter 4 (pp. 87-100)
 - Bafumi, Joseph, Robert S. Erikson, and Christopher Wlezien. 2010. “Balancing, Generic Polls, and Midterm Congressional Elections.” *Journal of Politics* 72(3): 705-719.
- July 11 (Th): The Legacy of Elections
 - DOL Chapter 4 (pp. 101-106)
 - Sulkin, Tracy. 2005. “A Theory of Issue Uptake.” Chapter 2 in *Issue Politics in Congress*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- July 12 (F): Hill Styles
 - DOL Chapter 5 (pp. 109-127)
 - Volden, Craig and Alan E. Wiseman. 2013. “Legislative Effectiveness and Representation.” in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered, Tenth Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Week 4

- July 15 (M): Home Styles
 - DOL Chapter 5 (pp. 127-137)
 - Fenno, Richard F. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *American Political Science Review* 71(3): 883-917.
- July 16 (T): Leaders and Parties in Congress: The House
 - DOL Chapter 6 (pp. 139-155)
 - Kane, Paul. “House Republicans Broken Into Fighting Factions.” *The Washington Post* June 3, 2013.
- July 17 (W): Leaders and Parties in Congress: The Senate
 - DOL Chapter 6 (pp. 155-167)

- July 18 (Th): **Midterm Exam**
- July 19 (F): No Class

Week 5

- July 22 (M): Dynamics of Party Change in Congress
 - DOL Chapter 6 (pp. 167-173)
- July 23 (T): Dynamics of Party Change in Congress
 - Karol, David. 2009. “Explaining Party Position Change: Theory and Method.” Chapters 1 and 2 in *Party Position Change in American Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Response Paper #2 (in class)

- July 24 (W): The Committee Structure
 - Skim DOL Chapter 7 (pp. 175-213)
 - Drutman, Lee. “Ways and Means, Financial Services, and Energy and Commerce Are Top House Fundraising Committees.” from The Sunlight Foundation Blog.
- July 25 (Th): Rules and Procedures
 - DOL Chapter 8 (pp. 215-238)
 - Binder, Sarah. “Lincoln: Best film ever about... The House of Representatives!” from The Monkey Cage Blog, December 7, 2012.
- July 26 (F): Rules and Procedures
 - DOL Chapter 8 (pp. 238-251)

Week 6

- July 29 (M): Decision Making in Congress
 - DOL Chapter 9 (pp. 253-271)
 - Silver, Nate. “How Liberal Is President Obama.” from *The New York Times* 538 Blog, April 29, 2011.

Current Events Essay #2 due at 5:00 PM.

- July 30 (T): Constituency and Voting
 - DOL Chapter 9 (pp. 271-279)
 - Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan. 2002. “Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members’ Voting.” *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 127-140.

***Late Drop Deadline**

- July 31 (W): Direct Democracy: Citizen Legislators
 - “Special Report: Democracy in California.” *The Economist*, April 20, 2011.
- August 1 (Th): Research on Direct Democracy
 - Lupia, Arthur and John G. Matsusaka. 2004. “Direct Democracy: New Approaches to Old Questions.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7: 463-482.

Response Paper #3 (in class)

- August 2 (F): Evaluating Political Polarization
 - Hetherington, Marc J. “Review Article: Putting Polarization in Perspective.” *British Journal of Political Science* 29: 413-448

Week 7

- August 5 (M): **Legislative Portfolio Presentations**
- August 6 (T): **Legislative Portfolio Presentations**
- August 7 (W): Course Wrap-Up
 - DOL Chapter 16 (pp. 473-495)
 - Hamilton, Lee H. “Ten Things I Wish Political Scientists Would Teach About Congress.” Pi Sigma Alpha Lecture, American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, August 31, 2000.
- August 8 (Th): No Class
- August 9 (F): **Legislative Portfolio due at class time (9:35 AM).**

Legislative Portfolio

Instructions

Over the course of the semester you will gain a better understanding of the legislative process by examining the Congressional delegation of one specific state. You may complete this assignment alone or may choose to work with one other member of the class. If you decide to work in a group, both of you will receive the same grade on the assignment regardless of other considerations. All assignments will be due by 9:35 AM on the date indicated in the course schedule. Make sure to use appropriate citations in completing your work. I expect you to integrate readings from the semester into your citations. I will post a number of useful links on ANGEL to help you get started. We will also have meetings and checkpoints along the way to make sure you are meeting expectations.

*You can select any state that has *at least* 3 congressional districts. Each pair or individual will study a different state, so I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the first week of classes for you to rank order your preferences.

In this assignment, you will examine the Congressional delegation from the state you selected (MCs and Senators). In this paper, I would like you to address:

***For the first part, answer broadly about the state's Congressional history.**

- The History of the Congressional Delegation
 - When did the state first send representatives to Congress?
 - Have MCs or Senators held major positions in the chamber?
 - Has the state shifted in party allegiance over time at the national- or state-level?
- Apportionment and Districting
 - Has the state gained or lost seats over the last 50 years?
 - Have any Congressional districts been gerrymandered or malapportioned in the last 50 years?
 - How many citizens does each Senator represent?
 - What percentage of House districts are: swing districts? lean towards one party? safe for one party?

For the next sections, you need investigate *at least 3 House districts more closely and the 2 Senate elections in your state. (i.e. If you selected California as your state, you do not need to focus on all 53 House districts, just select at least 3 districts that are interesting to you, and answer the questions below *along* with answering questions about the 2 seats in the Senate.)

- Incumbents and Challengers

- Do incumbents hold office for long periods of time or are there regular shake-ups?
- Do challengers appear to be quality candidates or outsiders?
- Do incumbents face challenges in the primary?
- Have any third parties been influential in the elections?

- Electoral Contestation and Competition

- Looking at the past two election cycles, have both parties contested all of the elections? If not, what percentage (in general terms) are run uncontested?
- Are the races (both Senate and House) competitive? Or is one party dominating?
- What was the House and Senate vote share in elections since 2006? Are there any interesting patterns?
- What was the Obama vote share (by district) in the 2008 and 2012 election?
- Do candidates benefit from the coattails of the president or do you see a lot of ticket-splitting in House and Senate races?

***Finally, you need to assess how well each MC (the three you selected) and Senator represents their constituency. This can be accomplished by looking at how they are rated by certain groups and what legislation they produce.**

- Representation

- How are your Congressional members rated by the ADA, NOMINATE, etc.?
- What committees/leadership positions do your MCs and Senator's hold?
- Have your MCs and Senator's sponsored any noteworthy legislation?
- Can you find any evidence of them representing constituent over party interests or vice versa?

You have a lot of freedom in how you present this information. **Superb essays will go beyond constructing a simple report or “fact book” and make judgments and evaluations for each section.** For example, you may find that the districts you examine rarely have competitive elections - this should lead to integrating some of the literature on competitive versus non-competitive elections to discuss how this may affect the average constituent. I will grade your assignment based on the following:

Grading Rubric	
History of the Congressional Delegation	15%
Apportionment and Redistricting	10%
Describe Contestation/Competition	15%
Electoral Contestation and Competition	20%
Representation	15%
Synthesis Integration of Course Concepts	15%
Grammar and Read-Ability	10%

Academic Dishonesty

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in class or take home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Academic_Integrity/integrity.shtml.

Disabilities

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services. For further information regarding policies, rights and responsibilities please visit the Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web site at: www.equity.psu.edu/ods/. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.