

# Legislative Process (POLS 438)

Spring 2009

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Crothers 320

South Dakota State University

Brookings, SD

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

From SDSU ***Undergraduate Bulletin, 2008-2009***: "A study of the development, structure, powers, processes, problems, and personnel of major legislative bodies with emphasis on the U.S. Congress."

Legislatures are the crucial feature of modern representative democracies. With no elements of direct democracy at the national level, citizens rely upon elected officials to represent (re-present?) them. While political executives *govern* the polity, legislatures' major function is to *represent* citizens. Without strong legislatures, modern democracies are likely to be led by elected dictators. This semester, our goal is to understand the scholarly literature on and the practical workings of legislatures. This course is primarily designed to learn about legislative processes as they exist in the U.S. political system. We will attempt to apply academic discovery to real world politics.

Our primary focus will be congressional politics, but we will make broad comparisons to subnational legislatures and—to a lesser extent—parliamentary systems. After establishing a common foundation to understand U.S. politics, we will cover four broad topics: membership selection, intra-institutional organization, inter-institutional relationships, and policymaking. These four basic questions are common to the study of any institution: (1) How are members selected? (2) How does the institution organize its offices? (3) What are the relationships with outside actors? (4) How does the institution make public policy?

Our secondary focus will be to develop students' empirical research skills. Up to this point in your scholarly careers, you have been primarily a consumer of knowledge. Thus, we move you a bit farther down the path to become a producer of knowledge. Of course, these skills and perspectives cannot be fully developed as part of a single undergraduate course, but require substantial graduate coursework. Nonetheless, students will be introduced to the concepts involved in the research process and apply these principles to a researchable question. This question will involve the development of a testable hypothesis and empirical data to evaluate the likelihood of the hypothesis' veracity.

## PREREQUISITES AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS:

At a minimum, students are expected to complete an introductory course in political science (preferably, POLS 100 "American Government"). As an upper-division course for political science majors, this course requires substantial prior in political science, especially U.S. and comparative politics. Moreover, students are expected to be familiar with current events and recent U.S. history. Obviously, students who are attentive to and interested in American politics will have a distinct advantage.

Students are expected to study the course material on a daily basis. Students should devote at least ten hours a week outside of class time to the study of legislative processes. To facilitate learning, students are expected to engage in sets of activities that promote critical thinking and an intelligent exchange of ideas. First, I hope that students will develop an inquisitive, probing mind. Curiosity and a willingness to learn are the highest aspirations and best markers of a learned person.

Second, I encourage students to invest time and effort to become informed about current events. Perhaps the most effective means to accomplish this goal is to read a major daily newspaper (e.g., the *Argus Leader* is widely available in hard copy; *Washington Post* and *New York Times* are available online). News "junkies" may also watch a good weekend half-hour TV news show (e.g., PBS' *Washington Week in Review* on Friday night or one of the Sunday morning shows) or listen to National Public Radio or BBC News whenever possible. I also highly recommend a good newsweekly magazine like *The Economist*.

### General Policies

Students are strongly encouraged to visit with me in my office. Office hours are times I schedule to meet with students. Students do not need an appointment to visit me during these times. However, I strongly encourage you to make an appointment with me ahead of time, so you are assured that no other students are ahead of you in line. Students who cannot make these times are encouraged to make an appointment at another mutually convenient time. Please schedule an appointment by sending me an email message via WebCT. While we may carry on brief conversations immediately prior to and after class, these times are not conducive to meaningful communication. During these class breaks, students and I usually have to hurry off to or from another location on campus. Instead, stop by or call me at the office.

In terms of classroom mechanics, students must read and consult this syllabus throughout the semester. I expect students to attend class and be prepared for class by completing the assigned readings. I encourage students to ask questions before, during, and after class.

It is imperative that students complete and submit assigned work on time. Those who submit work late, lose one whole letter grade for each day it is submitted late. In the real world, deadlines are not extended for casual reasons. Students who believe they have a valid excuse to miss a deadline must consult with the instructor as soon as possible PRIOR to the deadline.

## EXPECTATIONS OF INSTRUCTOR:

Students can expect me to be available to assist students with both the procedural and content (material) during office hours and via e-mail. I ask students to use the Desire2Learn internal email system (more on this below). In general, I attempt to check my d2l email on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So, it might be as long as 72 hours from when you send a message before you hear back from. While email remains the best means of contacting me, students may attempt to reach me by phone. For extended conversations, it is best to schedule an appointment with me via email.

If you have a problem with an exam, please send me an email immediately detailing the problem and attach an MS-Word file that contains your answer. I will do my best to correct or

rectify the situation so that it is fair to all students. On exams and other assignments, I am willing to review your score. However, students who ask me to review a score take a risk that I may revise the score up or down depending on my second analysis.

In general, students can expect that I will return grades on exams and assignments within one week of the due date (not when they are submitted). I reply to each student with an explanation of the grade and then follow up with a general email to all students notifying the class that I have completed the grading of that particular exam or assignment.

I will listen to all legitimate excuses for work not submitted on time. Students must contact me as soon as they know about a problem. Except in cases of dire medical emergencies, students should email me prior to the due date.

## **PLEASE SEE THESE ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS ON DESIRE 2 LEARN**

- **ACADEMIC POLICIES**
- **GRADING PROCEDURES**
- **EXAM INSTRUCTIONS**
- **PAPER GUIDELINES**

### TEXTS:

The following textbooks have been ordered and should be available in sufficient quantity at the SDSU bookstore or <<http://www.sdstatebookstore.com>>. If the bookstore runs out of books, notify them and me immediately, so that we can order more copies. The first and last items should be available in used copies.

Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek, and Frances E. Lee. 2007. Congress and Its Members. 11th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Levine, Bertram J. 2008. The Art of Lobbying: Building Trust and Selling Policy. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Mann, Thomas E. and Norman J. Ornstein. 2007. The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

### Additional Required Readings:

As discussed in the Papers items in the Grading Procedures, I have provided links to several scholarly articles required for the paper. Also, I have provided links to news articles that analyze contemporary legislative politics that I recommend.

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

| Dates                        | Topic(s)  | Reading Assignments  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Jan. 15 (Th)                 | First Day of Class                                  | Syllabus   |
| Jan. 20 (Tu)<br>Jan. 22 (Th) | Introduction to Legislatures                        | "A Civics Primer;" and Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee Chapters 1 – 2 |
| Jan. 27 (Tu)                 | Congressional Recruitment                           | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 3                            |
| Jan. 29 (Th)                 | Congressional Elections                             | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 4                            |
| Feb. 3 (Tu)                  | Working in An Atomistic Congress                    | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 5                            |
| Feb. 5 (Th)                  | EXAM ONE  | (Chapters 1 – 5)   |
| Feb. 10 (Tu)                 | Verbal Presentations One – Theory                   |  |
| Feb. 12 (Th)                 | Verbal Presentations One – Theory                   |  |
| Feb. 17 (Tu)<br>Feb. 19 (Th) | A Potential Centralizing Force: Parties and Leaders | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 6                            |
| Feb. 24 (Tu)                 | Decentralized Bodies: Committees                    | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 7                            |
| Feb. 26 (Th)                 | Further Decentralization: Rules and Procedures      | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 8                            |
| Mar. 3 (Tu)                  | Decision Making in An Atomistic Congress            | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 9                            |
| Mar. 5 (Th)                  | EXAM TWO  | (Chapters 6 – 9)   |
| Mar. 17 (Tu)<br>Mar. 19 (Th) | Congress and the Presidency                         | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 10                           |
| Mar. 24 (Tu)                 | Congress and the Bureaucracy                        | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 11                           |
| Mar. 26 (Th)                 | Congress and the Courts                             | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 12                           |
| Mar. 31 (Tu)                 | Congress and Organized Interests                    | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 13                           |
| Apr. 2 (Th)                  | EXAM THREE  | (Chapters 10 – 13)   |
| Apr. 7 (Tu)                  | Individual Consultations                            |  |
| Apr. 9 (Th)                  | Individual Consultations                            |  |
| Apr. 14 (Tu)                 | The Budget and Domestic Policymaking                | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 14                           |
| Apr. 16 (Th)                 | National Security Policies                          | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 15                           |
| Apr. 21 (Tu)                 | Is Congress Broken?                                 | Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee, Chapter 16                           |
| Apr. 23 (Th)                 | Review  |  |
| Apr. 28 (Tu)                 | Verbal Presentations Two – Data                     |  |
| Apr. 30 (Th)                 | Verbal Presentations Two – Data                     |  |
| May 7 (Th)<br>6:00 p.m.      | EXAM FOUR   | (Chapters 14 – 16)   |

## NOTICES

*Advising is a very important resource designed to help students complete the requirements of the University and their individual majors. Students should consult with their advisor at least once per semester to decide on courses, check progress towards graduation, and discuss career options and other educational opportunities provided by SDSU. Advising is a shared responsibility, but students have final responsibility for meeting degree requirements.*

*Students should check their grades online at <https://wa-sdsu.prod.sdbor.edu/WebAdvisor/webadvisor>. Moreover, SDSU uses your student "jacks" email address as the primary means of communicating with students regarding official matters (including advising, billing, and notification of course deficiencies). Students should regularly check this email account for pertinent information.*

*South Dakota State University is committed to providing equal access to University programs and services for all students. Under University policy and federal and state laws, students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations to ensure the student has an equal opportunity to perform in class. If any member of the class has such a disability and needs special academic accommodations, please notify me and make the appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disabilities Services. The ODS is located in SWSC 125. To schedule an appointment, call (605) 688-4504 and request to speak with Nancy Hartenhoff-Crooks, the Coordinator of Disability Services. Reasonable accommodations may be arranged after the Office of Disabilities Services has verified your situation. Do not hesitate to contact me if any assistance is needed in this process.*

*DISCLAIMER: This syllabus is subject to change. Verbal announcements during class or email messages via the D2L system are sufficient notification of such alterations.*