

Legislative Process (POLS 438) Aguiar, Spring 2009

GRADING PROCEDURES

Final grades will be based on the following components:

Item	Percent
Parts of Paper (3 @ 10 each)	30
Final Paper	30
Exams (4 @ 10 each)	40
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS	100

Letter Grades are assigned on the following scale:

Points Earned	Quality of Work	Letter Grade Earned
91.0 or higher	“Exceptional”	A
81.0 - 90.9	“Superior”	B
71.0 - 80.9	“Average”	C
61.0 - 70.9	“Passing”	D
60.9 or less	“Failure”	F

Papers:

Students will have the opportunity to prepare three parts of their final paper before submission of the final product. Each part will constitute a specific assignment, which can then be incorporated into the final paper. The Final Paper will include these parts (substantially re-written and re-worked) into a coherent whole. The goal of this paper will be to test whether Congress has changed in a specific aspects as described by a legislative theory. The Parts are described below:

PART ONE:

This part of the paper will summarize and prepare to test a theory of legislative politics. In particular, students will select one of the seven articles I have linked in d2I (See Links, “Theory” Articles for Paper). This paper should be roughly two to three pages in length and accomplish two tasks: (1) summarize and explain the theory and (2) develop or report two hypotheses that you can test using case studies as data.

PARTS TWO AND THREE:

This second and third parts of the paper will begin to develop evidence, data, and information to test one or both of your hypotheses. Part Two will use the Mann and Ornstein text. Part Three will use the Levine text. Each paper should be three to five pages in length and accomplish these two tasks: (1) summarize the general argument of the text and (2) identify and develop evidence from the text your hypotheses.

FINAL PAPER:

The Final Paper is a complete integration of the previous parts into a seamless whole. This paper should have a unified introduction and conclusion. It may “lift” some parts from earlier papers, but these earlier parts are likely to be substantially revised. The Final Paper should present a unified, coherent, holistic argument that evaluates the hypotheses in terms of evidence from both all three books we have read this semester. The focus should uncover/discover whether Congress has changed on the particular aspect under study.

These papers will be submitted as MS Word compatible documents in the Dropbox via D2L. In the text box associated with the Dropbox, please avoid entering any comments (or a copy of the text). I do not read this material and it only serves to take up unnecessary space when I grade these papers. The papers are due on the following Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m.

PART	DATE
Part One	Feb. 3
Part Two	Mar. 3
Part Three	Mar. 31
Final Paper	Apr. 28

Verbal Presentations:

Each student will be required to present portions of their research to the class on two occasions. The order of student presentation will be selected randomly on the day of each set of presentations. Hence, all students must be prepared to present on the first day of each set of presentations. In Presentation One – Theory, students will present the First Part of their Paper, which will be submitted shortly beforehand. In particular, this discussion should focus on the hypotheses they hope to test and the kind of evidence they will be looking for. In Presentation Two – Data, evaluate the evidence from all three texts to arrive at a conclusion, however tentative, has the Congress changed since the publication of the original article on the subject under study.

Exams:

Students will also complete four open-book exams via D2L. These exams feature open-ended essay questions that test students’ understanding of the material and their ability to organize a diverse range of information. These questions are aimed at developing students’ capacity to analyze politics and assemble logical arguments with supporting evidence. Each exam has a database of a few questions; the software will randomly select ONE (1) question from that pool for each student to answer. The exam questions build on the Davidson and Oleszek text and the in-class discussions. Students who miss class on a regular basis will be at a severe disadvantage in approaching these exams. The exams are graded on completeness, accuracy, content, organization, and clarity. All Exams will be 75 minutes in length.

Exam Instructions

The Exams are available in the “Quizzes” link in d2l. The questions for each exam are randomly selected from a database of questions. Write an organized, coherent essay using sentences and paragraphs. You must answer the question in your own words. You may not directly quote the text or other reading material in any way. Paraphrase these ideas using sentences you constructed yourself for this exam. Do not use lists or bulleted points. Construct sentences in paragraphs to explain your ideas. Each exam consists of one (1) essay question randomly selected from a question database that covers the units listed in the Schedule of Topics. Students are required to type and save their answers locally (on your own PC or flash drive) in their word processor of choice (e.g., MS Word) and print them on paper.

While some students may think that online exams are just another anxiety-producing event, many advantages result from this test method for students. First, by necessity, the exams becomes open-book. Students are allowed to use any material they wish during the exam. Second, students can take the exam at their convenience. On-demand exams allow students to take the quizzes as their schedules permit. Finally, professional certification exams are increasingly being conducted in this manner. Nursing, teaching, and many graduate school entrance exams use the one-question-at-a-time, no-return format for online tests.

If your Internet Service Provider has a history of unstable connections, I suggest you find a more secure connection. I highly recommend that students use a high-speed (or broadband) Internet connection. Also, it is preferable if students take the exams during normal business hours when on-campus assistance is available. In case of problems, contact the Computer Support Desk at SDSU. Please do not contact me, because I cannot resolve technical problems. Call SDSU's Support Desk at 605-688-6776 (Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or via e-mail: SDSU.SupportDesk@sdsu.edu. If you have any indication that the process did not proceed properly and that your response was not submitted, immediately send me a d2i email with your exam response attached as a Word document. This provides a back-up system with a time-stamp to ensure that your answer is delivered on time. In case something goes awry, it is essential that you save your answer in some place other than d2i! Best wishes and if you have any trouble, call the Support Desk.

Extra Credit Opportunities:

Often during the semester, various components of the University host various events, activities, and films which are appropriate for students of politics. When these opportunities arise, I attempt to offer students choices for extra credit. To earn this credit for these experiences, students must attend the event I have announced and on a single sheet of paper, write two paragraphs. In the first paragraph, summarize the event. In the second paragraph, relate the event to our study of legislative process. Submit these papers to me personally at the end of the event. Typically, I offer one to four of these extra credit opportunities in a semester; each is worth one point or 1% of the total possible points. No other extra credit possibilities exist.