Course Objective:

This course provides an overview of the theoretical and empirical studies of legislative politics. The title of this course (not of my choosing) is somewhat misleading, as the course will place a particular emphasis on rational choice institutional perspectives. Briefly, this paradigm suggests that individual-level strategic calculations are paramount in understanding political phenomena, and institutions both emerge from and serve to constrain these rational, utility maximizing political actors. While the main focus of the course is the U.S. Congress, much of what we cover will have direct relevance to the study of legislatures more generally (both cross-nationally and the American state legislatures). We will discuss congressional elections, the nature of congressional representation, positive theories of congressional organization, political parties, the committee system, institutional change, bicameralism, inter-branch relations, and comparative legislatures. Students taking this course will be exposed to the fundamental tools used to study the U.S. Congress, including basic game theory as well as quantitative and qualitative political methodology, although no prior knowledge in these areas is required.

Class Format and Student Conduct:

This course entails a combination of lecture and class discussion. Lectures are intended to offer a brief overview of the day’s topic, followed by class discussion of the assigned reading materials. Students are expected to be engaged in both lectures and class discussions, and not simply be present. Participation grades will reflect this.

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. I am generally intolerant of disruptive classroom behavior. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of others’
opinions. Students will be held responsible for all material in the texts and lectures, including those classes missed. Moreover, I expect all students to come to class on time and to attend class prepared to participate.

Course Materials:

The following texts are required, and can be found at the Temple University Bookstore and on-line. Any readings not contained in the texts will be posted on Blackboard.


Course Evaluation:

This course is designated as a writing-intensive course. Careful preparation prior to each meeting is extremely important. All readings are to be completed before class meetings, and students are expected to prepare questions and comments for discussion. Course grades will be based on the following assignments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attendance and Class Participation</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>All weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Data Gathering and Analysis</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Sept. 11, Sept. 25, &amp; Oct. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Topic Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Oct. 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Nov. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. First Draft of Research Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Nov. 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Peer Critique of Student Research Papers</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
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**Explanation of Assignments**

1. The *class participation* component of your grade will depend on the quality of your participation in class. A primary responsibility in this course is to complete the readings and to actively participate in seminar discussions each week. Class participation is not simply a matter of how often you speak, but also what, how, and when you contribute. As such, the success of this course relies on the preparedness of its participants. Each week, two individuals will lead discussion. As a discussion leader, you are required to submit a list of questions and/or discussion topics by 5:00 pm on the Wednesday preceding class. These questions/topics should reflect a critical reading of the week’s assigned readings. Second, for sessions in which you are a discussion leader, you will be responsible for presenting a set of articles from the assigned readings (the two discussion leaders may divide the readings as they see fit). These presentations should:

- Describe the main *themes* of the reading.
- Explain what its *contributions* are to our understanding of legislative politics.
- Provide specific *criticisms* of the study (e.g., its theoretical argument, hypotheses, evidence, analysis, etc.).
- Raise *questions* about specific theoretical or empirical issues that you did not understand.

Failure to participate on a regular basis will result in a failing grade in this part of the course. The instructor reserves the right to call on students throughout the semester, and responses to such inquiries will factor into the class participation grade.

For one of the topics on which you are a discussion leader, you will be required to write a short literature critique as part of your participation grade. In writing the literature critique, you will evaluate the theoretical and empirical arguments of one or more of the readings contained in that unit. The critique should be approximately 3-4 pages in length and is due no later than one week following the seminar on that topic.

2. The purpose of the *data gathering and analysis* assignments is to introduce you to the basic concepts of data collection and manipulation (and the difficulties therein). These assignments will also help you to begin thinking seriously about a research topic, and to give you a sense of what data are readily available. You may collaborate on these assignments, but your final product must be individual. The assignments will be posted to Blackboard.

3. The *topic proposal* should include a descriptive title and a one paragraph statement (150-200 words) outlining the central question and your preliminary thesis.
4. The research proposal (2-pages long, plus a brief table of contents) is a critical element of your final assignment. It should identify the key research question for your project, your thesis, alternative explanations, and your proposed empirical approach to evaluating your thesis. It should also display a familiarity with existing work on the topic. The proposal should be followed by an annotated bibliography that briefly summarizes the 10-15 most relevant academic sources you will use. I encourage students to meet with me after submitting this assignment to determine whether any changes need to be made before proceeding to writing the paper.

5. The first draft of the research paper is intended to closely resemble the final product. Specifically, the paper should be properly organized and have a minimum of 3,000 words. In addition, it should include citations and references, and should be thoroughly checked for spelling and grammar. You will be graded on having the required elements of a research paper, although the completed analysis and results need not be included in this version (although obviously preferred).

6. In the final class session of the semester, each student will be expected to give a brief (approximately 10-minute) presentation of his/her project. The structure of these presentations will be discussed in class.

7. Students will also be required to offer a peer critique of the first draft of a classmate’s research paper. My goal is to have you review the work of another student in the class working on a similar topic. Following your partner’s presentation, you will offer in-class comments on his/her project and will submit a written critique responding to a rubric for assessment (available on Blackboard). There are several important goals in this assignment. First, you and your partner may be able to share important resources and ideas about your topic. Second, critiquing another individual’s work can often give you additional insights into effective/ineffective strategies for conveying information. Finally, learning how to critique the work of others is a critical skill for the job market and/or graduate school. It is important to note that a good critique does not simply imply negative feedback. Instead, it should constructively identify any potential problems relating to logical continuity, undefined terms, presentation of ideas, citation of sources, and methodology. Students should take advantage of these critiques by revising their papers accordingly before submitting the final versions.

8. The final research paper should be an original piece of research and be of direct relevance to the topics discussed in this course. The main text of the final papers should be a minimum of 5,000 words. More information on the final paper will be made available in a handout. I will accept the final research paper anytime between your class presentation and December 12, 2014 at 5 pm. All papers must be turned in through Blackboard.

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92.5% ≤ A</td>
<td>80.0% - 82.49% = B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.0% - 92.49%</td>
<td>77.5% - 79.99% = C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.5% - 89.99%</td>
<td>72.5% - 77.49% = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82.5% - 87.49%</td>
<td>70.0% - 72.49% = C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.5% - 69.99%</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>62.5% - 67.49%</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>60.0% - 62.49%</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>59.99% ≤ F</td>
<td>F</td>
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Course Policies:
Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class. If you are unable to attend class, you remain responsible for handing in assignments before the time that class begins. Only under extraordinary circumstances, in which students have made previous arrangements with me, will I accept late work. If previous arrangements are not made, late submissions will be penalized by a full letter grade for every 24 hours. Due dates are marked on the syllabus. Similarly, students will not be granted additional time to prepare for exams, except where there is compelling reason for doing so. A request for an extension must be arranged in advance, and must be accompanied by a recommendation from a recognized authority (e.g., physician or an academic dean). Grades of incompletes will only be granted for the most severe circumstances that prevent students from completing the course as scheduled. A request for a grade of incomplete must be supported with a recommendation from a recognized authority, as in the case of a request for an extension. In addition, it will not be possible for students to submit extra assignments intended to offset missing work or work on which students performed poorly (including exams).

Contacting the Instructor:
Students are encouraged to use office hours. If students are unable to attend office hours, but would like to meet with me, please contact me via email to arrange an appointment. I am typically quick to respond to such emails. Unfortunately, I cannot guarantee that I will be able to meet with students that come to my office without first scheduling a time to see me.

Academic Integrity:
No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated in this course. Discussion of course material with fellow students is a valuable learning technique and is strongly encouraged. However, copying or plagiarizing another person’s work or cheating on an assignment or an examination is unacceptable. Anyone found guilty of cheating, plagiarism, or of any other violation of academic integrity will automatically receive a grade of 0.0 for the assignment or exam. Depending on the circumstances, a course grade of 0.0 may be given with the matter referred to the University Dean for further action.
Schedule of Topics and Readings:

The schedule of topics and readings is listed below. Readings are expected to be completed by the day they are listed. I reserve the right to alter the readings in a timely fashion according to the progress of the class.

Week 1. Introduction (8/28)

Week 2. Representation (9/4)

* Lecture Topic: Members, Goals, Resources, and Strategies


Recommended Readings:


Week 3. Candidates in Congressional Elections (9/11)

* DUE: Data Assignment #1

* Lecture Topic: Regulating Elections


Recommended Reading:


**Week 4. Districting and the Incumbency Advantage (9/18)**

* Lecture Topic: Principles of Districting


Recommended Reading:

• Lee, Frances. 2000. “Senate Representation and Coalition Building in Distributive Politics.”

**Week 5. Race, Gender, and Representation (9/25)**

* DUE: Data Assignment #2


**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 6. Positive Theories of Legislative Organization: Distributive and Informational Approaches (10/2)**

* Lecture Topic: Formalizing Arguments

**Rational Choice Approaches: Background**


**Distributive and Informational Approaches**

• Shepsle, Kenneth. 1979. “Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models.” *American Journal of Political Science* 23: 27-59. **Note:** This paper is mathematically dense, but the general argument is straightforward. It is recommended that you master the material in the background readings on “structure-induced equilibrium,” and then peruse this article.


Recommended Reading:


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**Week 7. Positive Theories of Legislative Organization: Partisan Perspectives (10/9)**

* DUE: Data Assignment #3

* Lecture Topic: Party Organization


• Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 3)


Recommended Reading:


**Week 8. Search for Party Effects (10/16)**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 9. Committees (10/23)**

* DUE: Topic Proposal

* Lecture Topic: *The Congressional Committee System*


Recommended Readings:


Week 10. Institutional Change (10/30)

* DUE: A meeting must be arranged with me during this week (October 27-31)

* Lecture Topic: Formatting the Research Paper and Writing a Literature Review


Recommended Readings:


Week 11. Bicameralism (11/6)

* DUE: Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

* Lecture Topic: Constructing Hypotheses


Recommended Readings:

Week 12. Congress and the Executive (11/13)

* Lecture Topic: Testing Hypotheses – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches


Recommended Readings:

Week 13. Comparative Perspectives and Data Collection Workshop (11/20)
* DUE: First Draft of Research Paper

* Class discussion followed by open data collection workshop


Recommended Readings:


Week 15. Presentation of Final Projects (12/4)

* DUE: Peer Critique of Papers

Friday, December 12, 2014

* DUE: Final Research Paper (5 pm)