COURSE OBJECTIVES/DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to study, in depth, the workings of legislatures in the United States and their members. We will focus on understanding why and how legislatures function as representative bodies and how the institutional characteristics of legislatures facilitate or hinder that process. At the end of this course, you should be able to trace legislation through the policy process, understand the key influences that shape policy outcomes, and understand the decision pressures faced by elected officials.

More importantly, this class will give you the foundations to critically assess the quality of representation of various interests in U.S. legislatures. What are the different ways in which legislators serve the needs of constituents? How do the rules and processes influence policy outcomes? Which interests areas are typically represented by legislators in each party, and why? How responsive are legislatures to the views of citizens and interest groups? How do parties and interest groups seek to influence the legislative process? To answer these questions we will examine political science theories of legislatures and consider whether the evidence is supportive of those theories.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOS)

At the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Develop a more sophisticated understanding of the unique roles of the House and Senate in the contemporary American political system.
- Critically evaluate the three theories of power in Congress.
- Compare and contrast a legislator’s “home style” and his or her “hill style.”
- Assess the influence of parties and committees on Congressional effectiveness.
- Discuss Congressional interactions with the public, organized interests, and other branches of government.
**Required Texts** (available at the campus bookstore):


Other assigned readings, noted on the syllabus and designed to complement the books, will be posted to the course’s Blackboard site.

Finally, while this is not a current events class, it is important to stay informed about what is going on in Congress. Especially given that this class is taking place during an election year, it is important to “consume” political media regularly. Reading a major national newspaper is perhaps the best way to stay informed about politics, and you should all do so. But also, get acquainted with a variety of political media sources and be as broad as possible. Step outside of your comfort zone. If you typically read the Wall Street Journal, pick up the New York Times (and vice-versa). If you’ve never listened to political talk radio, give it a try. Watch the Daily Show. Visit political websites you don’t usually go to. It can be fascinating (and informative) to hear different media outlets discuss the same topic in dramatically different ways.

**General Course Policies and Exam Policies:** You are responsible for all assignments and information assigned or presented in class. Assignments are due when collected in class or at other specified deadlines whether a student is present for class or not (emailed assignments will not be accepted unless I have granted you prior approval in writing). You may make up exams only if I grant prior approval. Prior approval will always be given in writing. If you do not have it in writing, you do not have prior approval. Make up exams may be different from those given in class. **Make-up exams will only be allowed in the case of the death of an immediate family member or your own hospitalization. Athletes on University teams will also be excused if you are traveling for a game or out of town. All of these scenarios must have the appropriate documentation, and sports events MUST have my prior, written approval.** You will have a maximum of two weeks from the date of the original event to complete the make-up, or if there are less than two weeks left in the semester, until the last day of the semester at a time designated by me. You are responsible for contacting me in sufficient time and making yourself available so that the make-up is completed within the allowed time. Unexcused missed assignments or failure to complete a make-up exam in the appropriate time will result in a grade of zero for that assignment. There is no extra credit.

If you feel you are having trouble with any aspect of the course, please contact me as early as possible **either in person or by email**. I try to answer all emails within 24 hours (weekends and holidays may take a bit longer). Help yourself by developing good study habits and asking questions in class. If you repeatedly skip class and/or wait until late in the term to get serious about the course, there will be little that I can do to help you. On the other hand, I am happy and willing to assist those who are trying to help themselves.
GRADING/EVALUATION:

Your grade will consist of two exams (50%), two written assignments (35%), and reading response journal/in-class activities (15%). The exams will not be cumulative.

Exam 1 25%
Exam 2 25%
Writing Prompt 1 17.5%
Writing Prompt 2 17.5%
Writing Prompt 3 15%

Grading Scale: A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 59 and below.

Calculating your Final Grade
In summary, your overall grade consists of five main components (see above). Let’s say for example, your Exam scores are 70 and 86; Paper scores are 80 and 75; and your average score on the reading quizzes is 70. Your final grade would be:

(1) [70 x .25] + [86 x .25] = 39 (exams)
(2) [80 x .175] + [75 x .175] = 27.125 (written assignments)
(3) 70 x .15 = 10.5 (Final Written Assignment)
Final grade is 39 + 27.125 + 10.5 = 76.6
Your overall grade for the course would be a C.

Assignments: You are to read and be prepared to discuss assignments as listed in the “class schedule” section of the syllabus. Exams will cover assigned readings and classroom discussion/lectures. You should check the Blackboard website at least weekly for notices and other helpful information.

Readings and Papers
Students are expected to have the readings listed for each class completed prior to class. It is important to keep up with the reading so that you will be well prepared for class discussions, activities, and exams. You will be responsible for all readings as indicated in the syllabus, as well as material covered in lectures. All papers should be typed, stapled, doubled spaced, regular margins, and Times New Roman 12 point font.

To help you prepare, you should write brief summaries of each assigned reading. Summaries for the book chapters and journal articles might include the following:
- Major research question
- Key concepts
- Theory – what theory does the author propose will answer the research question?
- Test – how does the author test these implications?
- Conclusion(s)

You should also take notes about things you do not understand and/or challenges to the author’s work. Some readings will include advanced statistical analysis. Do not let this scare you! Statistics is not required for this course. We will discuss how to carefully read these articles and draw out the key point without a strong grasp of statistics. Also, don’t be shy about asking questions in class about the readings. It is likely that someone else has the same question!
Reading Response Journal/In-Class Activities:

Reading Response Journal: Each week you have a number of assigned readings from the textbook and online readings. The purpose of the reading journal is to briefly summarize the reading and then describe in greater detail your response to the reading. Each journal entry should highlight what you learned from the reading and your reactions to the reading. You may find that you are shocked or surprised by the information. Discuss what shocked you. You may find that you have additional questions after completing the reading. List those questions. The journal is a forum for you to describe in your own words what the readings mean to you. Organization counts! You should be prepared each class period to turn in your reading journal. Journal entries should be typed and stapled together. Please feel free to write whatever comes to mind and to “speak” freely. As long as your journal entries relate to the readings and clearly show that you have done the readings, I encourage you to speak your mind! However, do not write anything you would be uncomfortable reading in class. Each class period, I will randomly call on 2 or 3 students to read their response papers aloud and then turn them in to me for grading. If you are unprepared, you will receive a zero. These writings cannot be made up for any reason, so if you are not in class and you are chosen to read, you will be given a zero.

In-Class Activities: As part of the course this semester, we will be conducting a “mock Congress.” During these activities, each of you will be assigned a role (e.g., Speaker of the House, Majority Whip, Minority Leader, committee member, etc.). We will discuss this project well in advance, but your intelligent participation on the days in which we conduct the mock Congress is crucial. There may also be brief, graded writing assignments as part of this activity.

Written Assignments:

Over the course of this semester, each student is required to write a 5-6 page essay response (typed, Calibri 11 or Times New Roman 12-pt. font and double-spaced) to writing prompts on an assignment handout sheet that will be distributed in class. You must also turn in a complete bibliography of any resources consulted. All writing prompts are due on the designated dates in the course calendar. Respond to the questions in a clear, organized, thoughtful, analytical, and polished short essay.

Examinations:

The exams will consist of short answer identifications and essay questions. Examinations will occur at the beginning of the class session for which they are scheduled and you will have the entire class period to complete all exams. The midterm will feature the material covered from the first day of class to the middle of the term. The final will cover the material covered after the midterm exam.
**Exam Make-ups and Due Date Policies**

Make-up exams will only be given to students who miss class for excused absences. I must approve absences in writing prior to the exam time. Excused absences include: 
- Religious holidays, as specified in the University's policy;
- absences due to representing TAMUCC at official functions, including intercollegiate debating or varsity sports events;
- verified emergencies and/or medical illness. If you have a chronic illness that could affect your attendance, it is imperative that you alert me to this at the beginning of class. Also note that documentation is required for an absence to be excused. Please provide me a copy of the documentation at least one week prior to your absence and keep a copy for your own records.

Please know that your makeup exam may not be the same as that taken by other students in the class during the scheduled exam period.

*If you miss an exam and your absence is NOT excused, you will receive a zero (0) for the exam*

Class participation activities cannot be made up, except in the case of officially excused absences. Late papers will not be accepted. Papers turned in after the start of class on the due date will lose the equivalent of one-half letter grade. Papers will not be accepted over email unless you have received special permission in advance of the deadline from me to do so.

If you feel you are having trouble with any aspect of the course, please contact me as early as possible *either in person or by email*. I try to answer all emails within 24 hours (weekends and holidays may take a bit longer). Help yourself by developing good study habits and asking questions in class. If you repeatedly skip class and/or wait until late in the term to get serious about the course, there will be little that I can do to help you. On the other hand, I am happy and willing to assist those who are trying to help themselves.

**Other Policies**

**Academic Honor Code:** Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the TAMUCC Student Handbook. The Academic Honor Code is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student’s own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community. Violations of the Academic Honor Code will not be tolerated.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

**Veterans:** If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816. Veterans can find more information online at [http://vets.tamucc.edu/](http://vets.tamucc.edu/).
**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call (361) 825-3466.

**Grade Appeal Process:** As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *Student Grade Appeals*, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *Student Grade Appeals*. These documents are accessible online at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html).

**Things I must say:**

**Courtesy in the Course:** Attention to classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. Please no cell phones, talking during lectures, reading newspapers, or listening to music with headphones, etc. during class. If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about children or other family members, keep it on “vibrate.” Students who are distracting to others or to me will be required to leave the classroom. *Please be on time for class and stay until the end.* Entering and leaving is distracting to me and to other students and is prohibited. If you must enter late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Two or more disruptions of class that require me to address you directly in any form will lead to penalties that will reduce your final grade by up to five points per infraction.

As the course progresses, we will most likely discuss current political issues. These discussions can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. I ask all of you to respect the opinions of your fellow students, even if you do not agree with them. In simple terms, that means not interrupting other students while they are speaking and not verbally attacking them for their beliefs. While I believe that it is essential to connect theory to current events, I will cut short debates of current events that do not enhance the understanding of course concepts.

I expect you to offer substantive comments and questions when appropriate in class. I also expect you not to dominate a discussion, but to allow free discussion and exchange of ideas. Just think of all the brainpower assembled in this room!!

**Computer Usage and Cell Phones in the Classroom:** Understandably, many students now use laptops to take notes in class. Please know that laptop usage is a privilege,
not a right, and I will ban all computers in class if they become a distraction to others. If you must use a computer in class, please sit in the back 2 rows or the first row of the class. Do not use your computer for anything other than note taking. Use of computers to play games, Skype your friends, update your Facebook status, or for any other reason than note taking is strictly prohibited. If you are found doing these things, at the very least your computer will be closed and you will not be able to use it for the remainder of the class period. You may also be asked to leave the class. Additionally, cell phone use is prohibited. In fact, you should not have your cell phones out or visible during class. If you are waiting for an emergency phone call, please notify me before class. Otherwise, if you use your cell phone for any reason during class, you will be asked to leave and will be given a zero for any in-class assignments due that day.

**Cheating:** Don’t do it. The penalties for cheating in my class are severe and simply not worth the risk. Academic dishonesty on even the smallest quiz or assignment will result in you failing this course and facing University disciplinary action. In such cases, I will push for the strongest possible penalty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. The term **plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling or distribution of term papers or other academic materials. If you have questions about University policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Student Code of Conduct at [http://www.tamucc.edu/~students/08-09StudentHandbook.pdf](http://www.tamucc.edu/~students/08-09StudentHandbook.pdf).

Dropping a Class – I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. **Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.** Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 9th is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.
GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE
The readings listed below are to be done before you come to class on the day listed. For example, when you come to class on Thursday, August 30th you should have read *War Stories from Capitol Hill*, Introduction.

We will attempt to stick as closely to this schedule as possible; however, this serves as a guideline and may be updated as the semester progresses. Updates will be posted on WebCT.

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Introduction of Syllabus, Overview of Course</td>
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| #2   | **Introduction to Congress**  
Required Reading:  
• *War Stories from Capitol Hill*, Introduction (online) |   |
| #2   | **The Two Congresses**  
Required Reading:  
• *The American Congress*, Ch. 1 |   |
|      | **Labor Day Holiday**  
No Class |   |
| #3   | **Evolution of the Modern Congress**  
Required Reading:  
• *The American Congress*, Ch. 2 |   |
| #3   | Required Reading:  
• *The American Congress*, Ch. 3 |   |
|      | **Congressional Elections** |   |
| #4   | **Going for It: Recruitment & Candidacy**  
Required Reading:  
• *The American Congress*, Ch. 3  
| #4   | **Making It: The Electoral Game**  
Required Reading:  
• *The American Congress*, Ch. 4 |   |
| #5   | Required Reading:  
• *The American Congress*, Chs. 5 & 6  
| #5   | **Being There: Hill Styles & Home Styles**  
Required Reading:  
• *The American Congress*, Ch. 5  
• Fenno. 1977. US House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration. (online) |   |
| #6   | Required Reading:  
• Rothenberg & Sanders. 2000. Severing the Electoral Connection: Shirking in the Contemporary Congress. (online) |   |
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<th>#</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Required Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td><strong>Leaders in Congress</strong></td>
<td>Required Reading:</td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, pgs. 157-185</td>
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<td>#7</td>
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<td>Required Reading:</td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em> Ch. 9</td>
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<td>#7</td>
<td><strong>Exam 1</strong></td>
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<td>#8</td>
<td><strong>Parties in Congress</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em> pgs. 185-197</td>
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<td>- <em>Congress Reconsidered</em> Ch. 7</td>
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<td>#8</td>
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<td>Required Reading:</td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 8</td>
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<td>#9</td>
<td><strong>Committees: Workshops of Congress</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 7</td>
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<td>#9</td>
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<td>Required Reading:</td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 10</td>
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<td>#10</td>
<td><strong>Congressional Rules &amp; Procedures</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 8</td>
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<td>#10</td>
<td><strong>Deliberation in Congress</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 9</td>
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<td>#11</td>
<td><strong>Mock Congress Day</strong></td>
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<td>#12</td>
<td><strong>Policymaking in the Two Congresses</strong></td>
<td>Required Reading:</td>
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<td>- Pre-Election discussion.</td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Chs. 15 &amp; 17</td>
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<td>#12</td>
<td><strong>Congress and the President</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 10</td>
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<td>#13</td>
<td><strong>Congress and the Bureaucracy</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 11</td>
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<td>#13</td>
<td><strong>Congress and the Courts</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 12</td>
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<td>#14</td>
<td><strong>Congress and Organized Interests</strong></td>
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<td>- <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch. 13</td>
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<td>#15</td>
<td><strong>Congress, Budgets, &amp; Domestic Policymaking</strong></td>
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<td>• <em>The American Congress</em>, Ch.14</td>
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**Happy Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving Break**

**What have we learned?**
- Overview of the semester and review for final exam.
- **Final Exam**