

# POLS 4340: Congress & Legislation

FALL 2021

Mark Owens

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*Course Time:* 1:25 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.  
Monday - Wednesday - Friday  
Classroom: RBS 2024

*Office Hours:* 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Mondays  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Thursdays  
Office: CAS 123

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## Key Reminders: Above the Fold

SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted in local areas (6 feet from the source) when water droplets enter an individual's mouth, eyes, or nose. It is also possible for some virus particles to stay on plastic or metal surfaces for 3 days. Here's what you can do as we meet in person:

- 1) When you are healthy, study together with a small group of students you see often.
- 2) If you are ill, hunker down where you can. Send Dr. Owens a note to set a plan.
- 3) Dust off your work space, because the public has used that desk today.
- 4) Round-up a face covering.
- 5) If you work with a lot of people indoors or travel on public transportation, get tested 3-5 days after you think you were exposed.

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## Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with a survey of the legislative branch of the American government. Through your participation in this course we will discuss the development of the legislative process as a function of changes within both chambers of the U.S. Congress and the role of the Presidency. We will also discuss the role of elections, committees, inter-branch interactions, as well as the influence of party effects and budgetary politics.

## Learning Objectives

The course is designed with the objective that by the end the semester each student will have a comprehensive knowledge of the workings of Congress, understand the complexities of how legislation is enacted, and comprehend what trade-offs are necessary in the legislative process. Students who will do the best the course will have an understanding of how changes in the political context or institution will effect those *complexities* and *trade-offs*. Also you should find yourself thinking carefully about the politics behind passing legislation and the difficulties that stand in the way of enacting legislation.

## Required Readings

All articles can be found on the course page.

## Student Evaluation *Expectations for all work*

All work must be original - including only direct quotes without any analysis will result in a 0. Work that largely summarizes or only paraphrases work from other sources will not receive more than a B-. A papers must synthesize arguments and facts to build justifications for the author's main point (or argument).

All missed in-class activities will be counted as a zero, *if not excused beforehand*.

Should it be necessary for a student to make up either of the first two exams, that will be done toward the end of the term.

All out of class assignments are due at the beginning of the class. Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in a penalty of one letter grade per day. Assignments not received within two days of the deadline will no longer be accepted.

All readings are expected to be completed before class. Although not all readings will be discussed in class, this does not negate your responsibility to know the assigned material.

### *Participation in Class Discussions*

I believe active participation in discussion is an important part of a class, which is why participation will make up 50 points of your final grade. The participation grade is a proportion of the high quality contributions to class discussion throughout the class meetings, or engaging beyond the minimum activities on the discussion board (i.e. posts, responses, and replying to a response). Note: *Incorrect answers during class discussion will not count against you, but you should not expect points in those cases*. Students attentively taking notes each day, but not engaging in discussions or helping their peers should expect to receive 30 of the 50 points. Texting, email, and “researching trends in public opinion” via social networks detracts from your participation in class and this score.

### *Congressional Staff Simulation*

Experiencing the complexities of decision making in a legislative setting is one way to study the legislative process. Throughout the class, meetings will be dedicated to participatory activities that apply what we learn in practice. Pay attention to the instructions and due dates that are provided online, because it is imperative that we stay on schedule.

Member Office Requests Due	Sept 8	5 points
Member Bio & District Summary	Sept 22	25 points
Choose a Historical Bill to Revise/Reintroduce	Oct 1	15 points
Bill Details, Summary, & Co-Sponsor Request	Oct 20	50 points
Request Procedures to use in Simulation	Nov 3	10 points
Decision Memo	Nov 8	50 points
Submit an Amendment	Nov 12	25 points
Constituent Letter	Nov 19	50 points
Voting Day 1	Nov 29	10 points
Voting Day 2	Dec 1	10 points
TOTAL		250 points

*Weekly Congressional Observation* Once you have been assigned a member of Congress for the simulation, you will receive weekly prompts to study the legislative activity of the member (relative to their colleagues).

### **Service Learning & Assignment**

- 1) Interview State Residents  
Assign: IRB Certification (25 points)  
Assign: Write a short journal (25 points): why did people you interviewed have those opinions?  
Assign: Essay: Evaluate the Public’s Understanding of Redistricting and Representation in Congress (50 points).

## Exams

The two exams during the term will each be worth 100 points. The final *will be* cumulative in that it will ask you to draw connections across topics covered throughout the class. Each exam will offer different types of short-answer, matching, and multiple choice questions. Each question will hold different point values. *Missing an exam without the confirmation of an alternative test date will result in a zero.*

## Grading<sup>1</sup>

Participation	50 points
Study of Member Activities	50 points
Staffer Assignments (10 total)	250 points
Service Learning	100 points
Exam I (Oct 6)	100 points
Legislative History Presentations	50 points
Final Exam (Dec TBD)	100 points
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 600 points

## Student Conduct

I have high expectations for each student in this class, which are based on your academic performance to get to this point and my belief that you will treat each of your fellow classmates with respect. My goal is to facilitate a supportive and engaging classroom for everyone and one part of that is eliminating disruptive behavior. I will allow computers in-class for note taking. However, it is unacceptable to use your cell phone or computer during class to chat, surf the web, talk, or text. Using technology in this way during class is distracting to others and demonstrates a lack of respect for the instructor.

### Student Standards of Academic Conduct:

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

i. “Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student’s test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;

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<sup>1</sup>Should the class schedule need to be amended, I will advise the class in advance by email and via the course page

- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
  - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
  - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
  - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
  - misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.
- ii. “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.
- iii. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.
- iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

## Class Schedule

**Aug 23-27** Bicameralism, Legislative Power & Process

Read: Lee & Oppenheimer (1997) on apportionment  
 Canes-Wrone et al. (2002), on accountability  
 Grofman et al. (2012), on the calculus of consent

**Aug 30-9/3** Who is in Congress?

Read: Swers (2001), on the impact of women  
 CRS Report on the Members of the 117th Congress

**Sep 8-10** Interview Training / Field Experience in CAS 151

*Due Sept 8: Member Selection*

**Sep 13-17** Public Perceptions of Redistricting

Read: Bartels (1991)

**Sep 20-24** Laws that Shape Representation

Read: Gould (2021) on the Constitution and what interests have added to Congress.  
 Gaynor & Gimpel (2021) on reapportionment and political influence  
 Edwards et al (2017) on independent redistricting commissions  
 Ting et al (2018) on primary elections

*Due Sept. 22: Member Bio*

- Sep 27-10/1** Who uses legislative power?  
 Read: Moe & Teel (1970) on Congress's role relative to the president.  
 Rohde (2013) on theories of congressional power  
 Curry & Lee (2019) on priorities of the party's agenda.  
 Workshop Sep 29:  
 Drafting Legislation – Prep for Oct 20 submission  
*Due Oct 1:* Bill Selection
- Oct 4-8** Review & Exam  
*Exam on Oct. 6*
- Oct 11-15** Venues to be an Effective Legislator  
 Read: McCubbins & Schwartz (1984) about choices to conduct oversight  
 Maltzman (1998) on how committees support legislators  
 Atkinson & DeWitt (2017) on public attention to committee hearings  
 Howard & Owens (2020) on bypassing the committee process
- Oct 18-22** Lobbying & Issue Accountability  
 Read: Hall & Wayman (1990) on the trade-offs of lobbying  
 Beckmann (2008) on ways the White House lobbies Congress  
 Makse (2017) on the skills legislators use when they become lobbyists  
*Due Oct 20:* Bill Details
- Oct 25-29** Constitutional Responsibilities of Congress  
 Read: Binder et al. (2007) on the nuclear option  
 Ostrander (2016) on the importance of time in a negotiation  
 Owens (2018) on changes in behavior when the Senate uses a new approach  
 to consider a nominee
- Nov 1-5** Group Presentations of Legislative History (Regular vs. Irregular Order).  
*Due Nov. 3:* Procedure Request
- Nov 8-12** Field Experience in CAS 151  
*Due Nov. 8:* Decision Memo  
*Due Nov. 12:* Amendment
- Nov 15-19** Revisiting Topics in Redistricting  
*Due Nov. 19:* Constituent Letter
- Nov 29-12/3** Identify the Problem: Polarization, Gridlock, and Complex Legislation
- Dec 6-10** Final Exam TBD

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT MUST APPEAR IN EACH COURSE SYLLABUS

### UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

### Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

### Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

### UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors.

Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.

There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit [www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free](http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free).

### Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

### State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

### Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

### Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

### Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

### **Social Security and FERPA Statement**

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

### **Emergency Exits and Evacuation**

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

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  - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
  - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
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### **UT Tyler Resources for Students**

- [UT Tyler Writing Center](mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu) (903.565.5995), [writingcenter@uttyler.edu](mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu)
- [UT Tyler Tutoring Center](mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu) (903.565.5964), [tutoring@uttyler.edu](mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu)
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- [UT Tyler Counseling Center](tel:903.566.7254) (903.566.7254)