

Political Science 325: Congress & the Legislative Process

Teaching Assistant: Brian Harrison

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Office Location/Hours: Scott Hall 220; Thursdays, 10am-12pm

Students are expected to adhere to codes of academic and classroom decorum and to behave in a respectful manner appropriate for a community of scholars. The course material may generate heated discussion and all students must be respectful with their comments. Students should not engage in distracting, unprofessional and/or rude behavior - including eating or excessive talking - during class time. Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off at the door. Please refrain from texting, emailing, or chatting on Gmail during section or I may institute a no laptop policy for section.

Section Objectives:

- (1) To clarify and to deepen understanding of terms, definitions, theories, models, and issues that arise in course readings and during course lectures by Dr. Harbridge
- (2) To critique and to analyze existing research on Congressional action, elections and political parties; to explore the methodologies and assumptions used in the existing literature; and to propose new and creative ways to evaluate the topics
- (3) To apply the course concepts and theories to contemporary political actors and events

Attendance and Participation: You are expected to read all assignments, to come to section ready to discuss course readings, and to be a contributing member of the section. Please arrive on time; arriving late is disruptive and demonstrates disrespect for fellow students and the teaching assistant. If you leave class early, are chronically tardy or disrupt the class in any way, your participation grade will be adjusted to your detriment. Students are allowed one unexcused absence from section; additional unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your section grade. Excused absences must be documented *before* the section has started; e-mails sent the same day of section are not acceptable excused absences. Students will not be able to make up any in-class assignments to receive a grade for a missed section meeting except in extraordinary circumstances (as defined by the professor and/or teaching assistant) and in cases of documented medical/emergency situations. Students must get the explicit permission of the teaching assistant to attend a section in which they are not enrolled; if a student needs to attend a different section, they must officially re-enroll in the new section with the University Registrar. Students are expected to be active participants in discussion; please let me know if there are impediments to complete involvement in class.

Section grading & requirements: Your physical attendance will not guarantee a good section grade. I will assign your section grades (10% of your overall course grade) on the basis of your critical evaluation of material, the quality of required discussion questions, and engagement with section discussion, materials, and any in-class group work. If I feel students are not completing the course reading, I reserve the right to give quizzes or additional reading and assignments that will factor into the overall section grade. I will keep track of the frequency and quality of your class contributions and attentiveness to discussions and to

fellow classmates' comments. Grades will not be discussed over e-mail or via telephone; please attend my office hours to address questions about course or section grading.

Each week, students should select a news article from a reputable source regarding current American political or Congressional issues. The article should be printed out and turned in along with two discussion questions that **explicitly** involve that week's readings. Questions will be used to facilitate discussion and should therefore focus on those parts of the readings that students found intriguing, problematic, difficult, persuasive, etc. These questions should explicitly address toward the issues in the assigned readings; however, if questions arise from lecture material, discussion questions should be as specific as possible. I may randomly select discussion questions that will serve as the basis of our section discussions. The students whose questions are selected are expected to lead/stimulate discussion on the topic/question.

Note: Questions will be collected at the *beginning* of each class for attendance purposes and no late assignments will be accepted. It is the student's responsibility to turn in discussion questions on time; late assignments will not be accepted and no credit will be given for students not in attendance of that day's section meeting regardless of whether questions are turned in.

Students with Disabilities: Students requiring classroom accommodation for disabilities must provide written documentation from the appropriate university official regarding the specific disability during the first week of class. Any student with a disability requiring special accommodation should contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (847.467.5530; www.northwestern.edu/disability) as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the student to make the teaching assistant aware of any disabilities immediately so all possible accommodations can be made.

Copyrighted Class Materials: All course materials used in section including but not limited to class notes, lectures, handouts, and presentations are the copyrighted materials of the teaching assistant. The copying and sale of any such materials will subject the involved parties to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act. The teaching assistant also reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, grading standards, or section policies; this syllabus does not constitute a binding contract.