

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

The past three decades have brought remarkable change to state legislatures. Until the mid-1970s, most state legislatures had little independent power in shaping the course of public policy and were usually dominated by governors and powerful interest groups. A demand for reform began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, ushering in an era of reform as one state after another moved to improve the capacity and independence of these assemblies. The changes that have occurred have not been applauded by all, however, and today state legislatures find themselves again facing frequently criticism.

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an understanding of state legislative politics and to give them better insight into the changes that have shaped these bodies over the past three decades. The course examines such topics as representation, campaign politics, reform, and political power. It also provides an overview of the roles played by a variety of actors in legislative politics, including political parties, interest groups, committee chairs, legislative leaders, and governors.

The course provides a good foundation for students interested in enrolling in the "Engaging Democracy" capstone, which will be offered in the winter and spring quarters. The students in the capstone will be working as interns in Oregon House or Senate. It will be a great experience and a lot of fun. If you are interested, please talk with me at some point during the quarter.

Required Texts

Three books are required, which are available at the PSU bookstore. The books are:

Malcolm Jewell & Sarah Morehouse, *Political Parties and Elections in American States*, 4th edition (limited copies at bookstore; order online; 1 copy in reserve room)
Alan Rosenthal, *Heavy Lifting: The Job of the American Legislature*
Richard Clucas, Brent Steel, and Mark Henkels, *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives versus Conservative Populists*

Field Trip to Salem

The course will include a field trip to Salem. Once I confirm a specific date, we will adjust the syllabus accordingly. The field trip should be a lot of fun, but it will also take up several hours. It is possible that we may end up going on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, rather than one of the regular class days, depending on events in Salem. The political science division will provide transportation. However, I will be asking you to contribute money so we can have lunches provided (I think last time it was around \$5 per person). Of course, you can bring a sack lunch if you do not want to pay.

Grading

Grades will be based on a mid-term, a final, and a paper. The exams are a combination of essay and short answer. The paper is explained on the back page of the syllabus. If you cannot attend the field trip, you will be required to write a second paper.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, the students in this class will become familiar with:

- the structure, procedures, and functions of state legislatures, especially the Oregon Legislative Assembly
- the importance of particular actors in the legislative process, including individual citizens, legislative leaders, governors, political parties, and interest groups
- the demands and pressures put on elected officials
- the nature of representative government
- the character of state legislative campaigns and elections

Course Outline

I. INTRODUCTION (Sept. 30-Oct. 9)

Structure. Function. Process. Composition. Representation.

Read: Rosenthal, chapters 1-4
Clucas et al., chapter 8

II. LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS (Oct. 14-16)

State Election Laws. Redistricting. Voting Rights. Term Limits. Top-two Primary. Non-partisan Legislatures.

Read: Jewell and Morehouse, chapter 1
Clucas et al., chapter 4
Clucas, "The Oregon Constitution and the Quest for Party Reform" (I will make available)

III. POLITICAL PARTIES AND CAMPAIGNS (Oct. 21-28)

The Decline of Parties. Candidate-centered Campaigns. Gubernatorial Versus Legislative Elections. The New Party Organizations. Legislative Caucus Committees. Willie Brown. Oregon Projects. Campaign Finance. Election Outcomes.

Read: Jewell and Morehouse, chapters 2-7, 10

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(bring a bluebook or two!!)

IV. THE MODERN LEGISLATURE (Nov. 4-6)

Legislative Reform Movement. The New Amateur Politics. Continued Disillusionment.

Read: "State Legislatures: The Concept of Professionalism," in *Readings and Cases in State and Local Politics*, edited by Richard Clucas, pages 182-204 (on reserve)

V. THE PLAYERS AND THE POLITICS (Nov. 13-12)

Lawmaking. Governors as Chief Legislator. Partisan Politics. Legislative Leaders. Committees. Chairs. Interest Groups. Lobbying.

Read: Rosenthal, 5-10
Jewell and Morehouse, chapter 8
Clucas et al., chapters 6, 9, 16

VI. BUDGETING (Nov. 25-Dec. 2)

Increased Capacity. Shared Responsibilities. The Budget Process. Balanced Budgets?

Read: Clucas et al., chapter 13
"State Finances: The Concept of Budgeting," in *Readings and Cases in State and Local Politics*, edited by Richard Clucas, pages 325-347 (on reserve)

VII. STATE LEGISLATURES IN PERSPECTIVE (Dec 4)

The Nature of Power. What is a "Good" Legislature?

Read: Rosenthal, ch. 11

* * * * * FINAL EXAM – TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 10:15 A.M. * * * * *
(bring a bluebook or more!!)

ENGAGING DEMOCRACY CAPSTONE: *If you are interested in an internship in the Oregon legislature during the winter and spring quarters, please consider signing up for the Engaging Democracy capstone. The legislature meets for a few months every other year, so this is the best time to intern in the legislature. Plus the Political Science Division rarely offers capstones!*

Contact info:

My phone number: (503) 725-3258

My e-mail: hprc@pdx.edu

My office: URBN 650F

RESEARCH PAPER

Everyone in the class is expected to write a research paper focusing on legislative politics. I have included a list of suggested topics below. If you decide to go with any of these, you would be wise to narrow your focus. If you feel strongly about an alternative topic, talk to me. I am willing to consider other topics as well, as long as they are relevant to the course.

HOW TO GET A GOOD GRADE: (1) When you write your paper, I don't just want a listing of facts or a compilation of anecdotes. You need to write an essay. Have a thesis or a theme. Tell me what this thesis is in the first few paragraphs, and then use the body of your text to argue your point. Finish with a conclusion. (2) I do not require a set number of references, but I do expect you to rely on scholarly work and do a reasonable amount of research beyond the course readings. By scholarly work, I mean academic books and journal articles written by scholars. If you can bring in some original research (such as campaign finance data or legislative turnover), it would particularly please your professor. Absolutely do not use Wikipedia or any other non-academic on-line resource!

PAPER SPECIFICATIONS: The paper should be 8 to 10 pages long (excluding footnotes/endnotes) with reasonable margins and point size. In writing the paper, you should try to follow elementary rules of style (for help see Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* or similar works). At minimum, this means that the paper must be double-spaced and it must include proper references. I will lower your grade if you do not include proper references. While students are free to work together in sharing ideas and developing their presentations, I expect that each student will turn in an original paper. If you borrow words, ideas, or arguments from others, you must cite your sources.

DUE DATE: Tuesday, Dec. 2, during class. I do not accept electronic copies.

APPROPRIATE PAPER TOPICS:

I am flexible on possible research topics, as long as the paper revolves around something that is related to state legislative politics. If you have some ideas that you would like to pursue, feel free to talk with me about them. Of course, it is always wise to talk with your instructors about possible paper topics. If you don't have any ideas, here are some potential topics:

1. Focus on a movement. Write a paper on the history of some past reform *movement*, be it the Legislative Reform Movement of the 1970s, the Progressive Movement of the early 1900s, the Jacksonian Movement of the early 1800s, or some other concerted effort to reform state legislatures.
2. Write a paper on some past or current reform proposal, such as campaign finance restrictions, the top two system, non-partisan elections, proportional representation, or unicameralism. One word of caution: I have read so many papers on term limits over the past few years, and so many that have been done poorly, that you might be wise to find a more creative topic.
3. Take an Oregon slant. Write about some reform movement, some particular reform proposal, or some problems in legislative politics that are found in Oregon politics.
4. Write a paper on the role and influence of women, minorities, big business, the governor, or another interest in legislative politics.
5. Write a paper on the some aspect of legislative campaigns and elections (such as the importance of incumbency, the role of the media, growing costs, or the battle surrounding minority representation).
6. Write a paper on the forces that shape legislators' voting behavior (possibly choose a recent bill considered in the Oregon legislature and analyze the influences on legislators).