

**Political Science 307**  
**The Texas Legislature**

Professor Harvey Tucker  
Bush Academic 2084  
Office Hours TR 1:30-2:30 and by appointment  
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Spring 2008  
Texas A&M University  
845-8589

**Purpose of the Course**

Students in this course will study the Texas Legislature through a variety of means, including readings, discussions, interaction with guest speakers, exercises, and a research paper. Assigned readings include studies comparing all state legislatures, studies comparing the Texas legislature and selected other state legislatures, and studies focusing only on the Texas Legislature. The readings are varied: some from academic journals, some from popular sources. Students will be encouraged to read and think about this work critically--some are not examples of excellent scholarship. The key questions will be (1) Are the conclusions of the studies justified by the research reported? (2) To what extent are the results reported in the past likely to be valid today? Guest speakers will be legislators, former legislators, and people who interact professionally with legislators. Their knowledge is based primarily on personal experience. Students will be encouraged to evaluate this information critically. The key question is: How can the views of guest speakers be tested with comprehensive empirical data?

**Course Requirements**

Students are expected to attend class and to have completed reading assignments prior to class.

Course grades will be based on a number of elements. Each element comprises a specified proportion of the final grade. A research paper prospectus (10%) and a research paper executing the prospectus (40%) are required. Students who do not complete a prospectus and research paper as required will receive course grades of F. Other graded assignments are optional. Students who complete required and optional assignments whose final grade proportions sum to less than 100% will receive grades of zero for the missing percent. Students who complete assignments whose weights sum to more than 100% will have their lowest course grades in excess of 100% deleted—excluding grades for the research paper prospectus and research paper.

The first optional assignment is a major exam consisting of two essay questions (15% each). It will be held during class time on the date listed below. Students must write their essays in examination blue books in blue or black ink. The second optional assignment is a portfolio of one page papers. Each one page paper is 10% of the course grade. Students may choose which and how many papers to write. Up to five one page papers may be applied to the course grade. Students who write more than five one page papers will have the highest paper grades applied to the course grade. The entire portfolio of all graded one page papers must be submitted with each new paper. Students may not propose studying the same or similar hypotheses more than once in one page papers. Students who repeat writing errors identified in earlier one page papers will receive lower grades on those assignments.

Requests to reread an assignment and reconsider the grade must be made before the end of the second class meeting after the assignment is returned in class. Revised grades may be higher or lower than the original.

Each assignment will be graded on a 4.0 scale. As described below, students may receive grade bonuses for seeking and using or for providing peer review of draft assignments. At the end of the semester, weighted scores will be assigned grades as follows: 3.40 and higher, A; 2.60-3.39, B; 1.70-2.59, C; 0.8-1.69 D; 0-.79 F. A student grade calculating spreadsheet will be provided to help students know how they can meet their course grade goals.

Student peer review—reading each others' one page and research papers and giving suggestions for revision—is encouraged. Students who seek and receive peer reviews are eligible for a grade bonus of up to .2 for each assignment. In order to qualify, review seekers must submit the reviewed draft with peer comments on it and final draft. Students who provide peer reviews are eligible for a grade bonus of up to .2 for each assignment. In order to qualify, review providers must submit the reviewed draft with their comments on it. Writers may seek multiple reviews and students may provide multiple peer reviews for each assignment. Peer review seekers and providers may submit one set of documents per assignment for grade bonuses; the maximum peer review bonus a student may receive on any paper assignment is .2.

### **Email**

Email messages must include Pols 307 and your last name in the message subject line and be sent from a TAMU email address (preferably NEO) or else they will be treated as spam and deleted unread. Email communications must meet the same standards as the written assignments in this course. Those that do not may be returned for rewriting and/or forwarded to your academic dean and your former high school.

### **Readings**

Course readings are available in Evans Library Electronic Reserves (ELER), on JSTOR, and on the internet.

## Reading Assignments and Dates

<b>Jan 17—Feb. 5</b>	<b>Overview and Review of Student Research Papers</b>
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Geeslin, Jessica Michelle. 1997. Bill Consideration in the 73<sup>rd</sup>, 74<sup>th</sup>, & 75<sup>th</sup> Legislative Sessions of Texas. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Green, Amanda. 1997. Factors Influencing Bill Assignment to the Texas Senate Local and Uncontested Calendar for the 75<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Walker, Sedrick. 2004. The Influence of Political Party Control on Bill Passage and Bill Assignment to the Local and Consent Calendar in the Texas House of Representatives. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Green, Erin. 2004. Companion Bills and Author Similarity in the 76<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Mayfield, Matt. 1997. Professional Expertise in the 75<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Werlinger, Danny. 2004. The Role of Speaker Party in Determining the Outcome of a Point of Order. 2004. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

<b>Feb 7-19</b>	<b>How the Legislature Operates and Date Sources to Study It</b>
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House Research Organization (2007). **How a Bill Becomes Law: 80th Legislature.**

<http://www.hro.house.state.tx.us/focus/hwbill80.pdf>

House Research Organization (2007). **House Committee Procedures. 80th Legislature.**

<http://www.hro.house.state.tx.us/focus/compro80.pdf>

Senate Research Center (2007). **Budget 101: A Guide to the Budget Process in Texas.**

[http://www.senate.state.tx.us/SRC/pdf/Budget101\\_2007-web.pdf](http://www.senate.state.tx.us/SRC/pdf/Budget101_2007-web.pdf)

Information posted on the course web site as Texas Legislature on the Internet.

Yang, Zheng Y. 1999. Texas Legislative Information Sources. Unpublished paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

<b>Feb. 21-28</b>	<b>Legislative Procedure</b>
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Tucker, Harvey J. 1985. Legislative Logjams: A Comparative State Analysis. **Western Political Quarterly** 38: 432-446.

Tucker, Harvey J. 1987. Legislative Workload Congestion in Texas. **Journal of Politics** 49: 565-578.

Tucker, Harvey J. 1987. Legislative Calendars and Workload Management in Texas. **Journal of Politics** 51: 631-645.

Green, Amanda. 1997. Factors Influencing Bill Assignment to the Texas Senate Local and Uncontested Calendar for the 75<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Tucker, Harvey J. 2002. Major and Minor Calendars in the Texas House and Senate. Unpublished paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Geeslin, Jessica Michelle. 1997. Bill Consideration in the 73<sup>rd</sup>, 74<sup>th</sup>, & 75<sup>th</sup> Legislative Sessions of Texas. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Walker, Sedrick. 2004. The Influence of Political Party Control on Bill Passage and Bill Assignment to the Local and Consent Calendar in the Texas House of Representatives. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

**Mar. 4 1:30 PM Paper prospectus due**

**Mar 4-18 Evaluating Legislators**

Luttbeg, Norman R. (1992). The Validity and Electoral Impact of Media Estimations of "Best or "Worst" State Legislators. **Legislative Studies Quarterly** 17: 395-408.

Tucker, Harvey J. Bill Authors and Bill Sponsors in the 74th Texas Legislature. Paper prepared for delivery at the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, San Francisco, California, March 14-16, 1996. (ELER)

Tucker, Harvey J. Winning by Losing: DOA Bills and Legislative Strategy. Unpublished Paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Green, Erin. 2004. Companion Bills and Author Similarity in the 76<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Popham, Cole. 2004. Bill Complexity and Author Characteristics in the 1999 Texas House of Representatives. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Jones, Bryan D. (1973). Competition, Role Orientations, and Legislative Responsiveness. **Journal of Politics** 35: 924-947.

Adams, William C. and Paul H. Ferber. (1980). Measuring Legislator-Constituency Congruence: Liquor, Legislators and Linkage. **Journal of Politics** 42: 202-208.

**Mar. 18 1:30 PM Last opportunity to turn in revised paper prospectus if first submission was not approved**

**Mar. 20-25 Legislative Apportionment and Districting and Legislative Elections**

Toobin, Jeffrey. (2003). The Great Election Grab. **The New Yorker**, December 8, 2003, 63-80. (ELER)

Gaddie, Ronald Keith. 2004. The Texas Redistricting, Measure for Measure. **Extensions**, Fall 2004, 19-24. (ELER)

Weber, Ronald E., Harvey J. Tucker, and Paul Brace (1991). Vanishing Marginals in State Legislative Elections. **Legislative Studies Quarterly** 16: 29-47.

Olson, Edward C (1983). Campaign Spending in Texas Legislative Elections. **Texas Journal of Political Studies** 7: 40-53.

Thielemann, Gregory S. and Donald R. Dixon (1994). Explaining Contributions: Rational Contributors and the Elections for the 71st Texas House. **Legislative Studies Quarterly** 19: 495-506.

**Mar. 27-Apr. 3      Legislative Parties and Coalitions**

Harmel, Robert and Keith E. Hamm (1986). Development of a Party Role in a No-Party Legislature. **Western Political Quarterly** 39: 79-92.

Hamm, Keith E. and Robert Harmel (1993). Legislative Party Development and the Speaker System: The Case of the Texas House. **Journal of Politics** 55: 1140-1151.

Werlinger, Danny. 2004. The Role of Speaker Party in Determining the Outcome of a Point of Order. 2004. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Harmel, Robert, Keith Hamm and Robert Thompson (1983). Black Voting Cohesion and distinctiveness in Three Southern Legislatures. **Social Science Quarterly** 64: 183-92.

Wiggins, Charles W., Keith E. Hamm and Charles G. Bell (1992). Interest-Group and Party Influence Agents in the Legislative Process: A Comparative State Analysis. **Journal of Politics** 54: 82-100.

Thieleman, Gregory S. (1992). Minority Legislators and Institutional Influence. **Social Science Journal** 29: 411-21.

Lutz, Donald S. and Richard W. Murray. Coalition Formation in the Texas Legislature: Issues, Payoffs, and Winning Coalition Size. **Western Political Quarterly** 296-315.

Hamm, Keith E., Robert Harmel and Robert Thompson (1983). Ethnic and Partisan Minorities in Two Southern State Legislatures. **Legislative Studies Quarterly** 8: 177-189.

Bearden, Christi. 2002. The Impact of Caucuses and Coalitions: A Study of Voting Cohesion in the Texas House of Representatives. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Vaughn, La Shawn. 2004. A Comparison of Voting Polarization in the Texas House Between the 77<sup>th</sup> and 78<sup>th</sup> Sessions. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

**Apr. 3 3:05 PM      Last opportunity to turn in paper draft for feedback**

**Apr. 10 3:05 PM      Research papers due**

**Apr. 10-15      Legislative Committees**

Hamm, K. E. and Gary Moncrief. (1982). Effects of Structural Change in Legislative Committee Systems on Their Performance in U.S. States. **Legislative Studies Quarterly** 7: 383-399.

Thielemann, Gregory S. 1997. Committee Leadership and Power in the Texas Legislature. In Anthony Champagne and Edward J. Harpham, eds., **Texas Politics: A Reader**. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. (ELER)

Snyder, Kristin. 1999. Committee Chair Experience in the Texas House and Senate. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

Mayfield, Matt. 1997. Professional Expertise in the 75<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature. Student paper, Texas A&M University. (ELER)

**Apr. 17-24**

**Presentation of papers**

**May 7 1:00 PM**

**Major Exam**

### **Additional Information**

The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, tests, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets and instruction sheets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to reproduce the handouts unless I expressly grant permission.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination 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 accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room B116 of Cain Hall, or call 845-1637.

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the Aggie Honor System Office website (<http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>) or the latest version of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

Students should be aware that academic dishonesty involves acts other than plagiarism. It is the mission of the Aggie Honor System Office to serve as a centralized system established to respond fairly to academic violations of the honor code at Texas A&M University. Prohibited academic misconduct is defined and discussed on their web site: <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/definitions.php>.