Public Policy & Administration 260
Working With Legislatures

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Tuesday 6-8:50 p.m.
Mendocino 1032

Overview

The purpose of PPA 260 is to enhance your effectiveness working with state and local legislative bodies by increasing your knowledge and understanding of legislatures. The seminar will examine the basic structure, functions and constitutional context of a legislature and the characteristics of members, whether state legislators, county supervisors or city council members. From these basics, we will proceed to the formal and informal rules, structures, processes and procedures that comprise the internal environment of a legislature. The external environment comes next with a focus on elections, interest groups, constituents, governors and other forces impacting legislatures. Finally, we will examine current trends that threaten to fundamentally change the role of legislatures in a representative democracy. As the purpose is enhancing your ability to work effectively with legislative bodies, a major continuing focus will be on legislative decision-making.

The class will be conducted as a seminar, with some lectures. I expect all students to come to class having read all assigned readings and thus fully prepared to engage in informed discussions about the day’s topic. Consistent lack of participation or regularly substituting unsupported personal opinions for comments and opinions informed by the readings will result in a reduced course grade. Informed discussions are inherently respectful discussions. Disagreements are inevitable and welcomed but ad hominem attacks, rudeness or ill-temper will not be tolerated. An essential component of an effective legislative body is comity and we will practice it in PPA 260.

Finally, I also expect regular attendance; anyone missing four or more seminars will not receive a passing grade.
Assignments & Grades

The seminar will include writing assignments and a final take-home exam. **Note:** All papers and written reports are to be double spaced, 12 point type, with standard margins and format pursuant to the APA style manual (see Diane Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 4th ed. 2007).

Bill Tracking Exercise

Each student will be assigned a bill currently pending in the state Legislature. Every week, students will be required to hand-in a 3x5 index card indicating any and all actions taken in the previous week affecting the bill (e.g., bill referrals, committee hearings, etc.). Students are expected to make use of the various legislative publications (*Daily File*, *Daily Histories*, etc.) to complete this exercise.

Bill Analysis Exercise

Critical skills in working with legislative bodies includes the ability to write concise but accurate analyses of proposed legislation, ordinances, etc., and to use that analysis to verbally brief legislators, council members, supervisors, etc.

Each student will write an analysis of an assigned a bill or proposed local ordinance. The analysis should be a maximum of three pages and clearly and concisely state:

- Bill number, author, co-authors
- Subject
- Existing law
- Proposed changes in the law
- Critical issues
- Arguments for and against

The bill analysis will be due on February 21. Each student will be given exactly five minutes to present their analysis. Grade will be based both on the written analysis and the oral presentation. Please bring to class sufficient copies to distribute to all class members.

Book Reports

Each student will be assigned a book to read and report on to the class. Book reports are to be five to seven pages. Students will bring to the class sufficient copies of their book report to distribute to all class members. Students will give oral presentations on their book report. The oral presentation is an opportunity to practice giving relevant and important information in a concise format to an audience whose attention will be mixed -- much like presenting a bill to a legislative committee or city council. Oral presentations will be limited to exactly five minutes. At the end of the presentation, the class will have
an opportunity to ask questions. Grade will be based both on the written report and the oral presentation.

**Group Project**

The seminar will be divided into two sets of two groups each. Each set of two groups will be assigned a proposal, based on an actual legislative bill or proposed city or county measure. One group will advocate for the proposal while the second will oppose it. On May 13 the seminar will act as a legislative body while the first set and then the second set presents arguments for or against the proposal. The design, structure, format of the presentation is entirely up to each group but groups will have exactly 15 minutes for the presentation with up to 15 additional minutes for questions, if the seminar has any. Each group will also have to submit a written five to seven page version of their presentation.

**Final Exam**

The final exam will be take-home. The exam will be distributed at the end of the May 9 seminar and due to me no later than 6:30 p.m. on **May 16, 2002**.

**Grades**

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Bill analysis 20%
- Book report 20%
- Group presentation 20%
- Final 20%
- Seminar participation 20%

**Required Readings**


Class Reader (to be distributed during the class).
Class Schedule:

January 29  Introduction: Legislatures in the American Political System

*What role do legislatures have in the American political system? What are legislatures necessary in a republic or a democracy? How should legislatures be judged?*

February 5  What Makes a Legislature a Legislature?

*What are the essential structure and functions of legislatures?*

Readings:  Class Reader: Section 1  
Rosenthal: Chapters 1, 11  
Squire: Chapter 2

February 12  Representation

*An essential characteristic and function of legislative bodies is to represent the people. But are all people represented? What is effective representation? What does representation really mean?*

Readings:  Class Reader: Section 2  
Rosenthal: Chapters 2-3

February 19  People: Characteristics & Motives of Legislators

*A legislative body is more than an institution or a set of functions; it is a highly personalized organization profoundly affected by its members, staff and others. It is critical, therefore, to understand this human dimension. Who are legislators? Why do they seek office? What are the collective characteristics of legislators and why? What are the differences and similarities?*

Readings:  Black: Chapters 1-2  
Class Reader: Section 3  
Squire: Chapters 3-5

February 26  How: Processes, Procedures, & Committees

*What are legislative processes and procedures? What are the formal rules and the informal norms? What are their importance? Why do outsiders perceive legislatures as chaotic and incomprehensible? Why do insiders prefer to appear chaotic and incomprehensible?*
March 4  Bill Analysis Exercise

March 11  Internal: Parties, Politics & Phat Cats

*What are the roles and powers of legislative leaders? Of party caucuses? Who are the inside phat cats and why? Has partisanship and/or ideological factors increased and, if so, why and what are the consequences for legislative bodies? What are the roles and influences of non-party factions, blocs and caucuses? How non-partisan are non-partisan local legislatures?*

Readings: Black: Chapter 6
Class Reader: Section 5
Rosenthal: Chapters 5, 7 & 10

March 18  External: Parties, Politics & Phat Cats

*How and in what ways are legislators affected by elections? What are the purposes and functions of electoral campaigns? What are the rules of partisanship in the electorate? In primary versus general elections? How does money influence elections?*

Readings: Class Reader: Section 6

March 25  Pressure Groups and Public Opinion

*What are interest groups and why are some special? Does public opinion matter? Constituent opinion? What is representation? How do lobbyists work? What is the influence of the news media?*

Readings: Black: Chapters 3-4-7
Class Reader: Section 7
Rosenthal: Chapter 6

April 1  Spring Break

April 8  Governors & Mayors

*What is the theory and the reality of relations between the legislative and executive branches? What about counties and*
school districts without separate executives? What do checks and balances mean two centuries after Madison?

Readings: Class Reader: Section 8
Rosenthal: Chapters 8 & 9

April 15  Judges & Initiatives

A significant portion of the state budget is controlled by court orders and initiatives. How are legislatures impacted by external factors of court decisions and initiatives?

April 22  Budgets

How do legislatures act as policy & budget making bodies? How well do legislatures make policy & budget decisions? What is right and what is wrong with legislative policy & budget making?

Readings: Class Reader: Section 9
Class Reader: An Inventory of Local Tax Powers. December 2007, Senate Local Government Committee

April 29  Local Legislatures

Local legislatures and legislators have figured throughout previous seminars. This seminar will focus on the unique aspects of local governments in California.

Readings: Class Reader: Section 10

May 6  Synthesis: Legislative Decision Making

Given the discussions of the previous weeks, how do legislatures and legislators make decisions?

Readings: Black: Chapters 5 & 9
Class Reader: Section 11
Rosenthal: Chapters 8 & 9
Squire: Chapter 6

May 13  Class presentations

May 20  TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE by 6:30 p.m.
BOO K LIST & REPORT DATES
PPA 260, Spring 2006


March 11 Richardson, James. Willie Brown: A Biography. UC Press, 1996 (the entire book is worth reading, but the book report should be limited to Part III & IV)


April 8  Cannon, Lou. Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power. Public Affairs Books, 2003 (the entire book is worth reading, but the book report should be limited to Part II)


April 22


April 29

Drier, Peter, et. al. (2004). Place Matters: Metropolitics for the 21st Century


May 6

Loftus, Tom. The Art of Legislative Politics. Congressional Quarterly Press, 1994