

# **POLS 4000 Active Learning: Texas Legislative Advocacy**

## **Sections 182 & D02**

### **Instructor Information**

**Rebecca Larsen**

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10AM-12PM and by appointment

Class Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:10AM – 12:30PM

Classroom: MAC 201 and via Zoom (link on Blackboard homepage and sent via email).

### **Course Description**

This semester the Texas Legislature is in session. Our class will be structured around this legislative process through two active learning projects. One will be a public policy debate that the class will lead by determining the topic, engaging in the debate, and promoting for public participation. The other will be a semester-long policy advocacy project that incorporates our collective learning about the legislative process and rules in Texas, advocacy strategies, and environmental realities. The first half of the course will be more like a traditional course with a focus on the rules and process of the Texas Legislature, theories of the policymaking process, and advocacy elements and approaches. The remainder of the course will incorporate guest speakers and adjust based on the skills you plan to incorporate into your advocacy strategies.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Understand the policy making process in Texas.
2. Understand the structure and rules of the Texas Legislative Branch.
3. Develop a research-backed policy proposal.
4. Design an advocacy strategy that considers audience, messaging, coalition building, and political realities.
5. Produce advocacy materials that reflect a mastery of variety of a policy analysis and advocacy skills.

### **Course Materials**

There is no required textbook for this course. Assigned readings are provided in Blackboard. They include excerpts from textbooks, academic articles, community toolkits, and government reports.

We will rotate updating each other on developments in the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. I recommend signing up for relevant newsletters from the Texas Tribune and regularly visiting their Texas Legislature 2021 stream: <https://www.texastribune.org/series/texas-legislature-2021/>. The Texas Standard is a daily radio segment and podcast that is also objective and informative concerning all things Texas politics.

### **Class Format**

Distance students will join the class from their computers via Zoom. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester if technology limitations will impact your ability to fully participate in

class. Students tend to experience fewer connectivity issues when they are utilizing an Ethernet cable (this cable can be connected straight to your computer from your internet modem). Due to the nature of this course, learning is enhanced when we can see one another's faces during discussions. Feel free to use zoom backgrounds and any other technology to control how much of your private environment we see. If being on video presents an issue, please contact me directly to discuss. Most of us are joining class from personal environments rather than a classroom, so if children, pets, roommates, spouses, etc. appear or interrupt your class period, it is not a problem. Simply be mindful of muting your mic. Waco-based students will begin by joining via Zoom and later in the semester will have the option to join in an in-person classroom.

## Course Assignments

<b>Public Policy Debate</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Advocacy Campaign</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Course Engagement</b>	<b>10%</b>

### Public Policy Debate (30% Total):

As a class we will work with a civic engagement group to develop a community debate on a Texas-relevant policy issue. You will propose potential topics and as a class we will discuss them and vote on one to be the topic of our debate. We will also determine the logistics, the arguments, and who will present during the live community discourse. This is an opportunity to present information in a compelling, research-backed approach, while also engaging in active listening. It is not about one side winning but instead about creating a space to have difficult disagreements and discussions and to work to engage in them in a way that is productive. Our class will also work to promote the debate and invite other students and community members. See the Public Policy Debate Assignment sheet for more details.

### Policy Advocacy Campaign (60% Total):

The main project for this class is an individual policy advocacy campaign on a Texas-relevant policy issue of your choosing. You will connect your learning of policy analysis, research synthesis, advocacy strategies, and practical advocacy tools to develop a research-backed approach to a policy problem and partially implement an advocacy strategy during the 87th Texas Legislative Session. You control what you do and what issue you focus on. There are components due throughout the semester to ensure you are on track, along with regular check-ins to ensure progress and to trouble shoot if the session throws out inevitable surprises that impact your project.

#### Due Dates:

- Policy Issue Proposal: 2/2
- Policy Briefing Presentation: 2/23 & 2/25
- Advocacy Strategy Proposal: 3/20
- Check-ins (As a class and one-on-ones throughout the semester)
- Final Portfolio: 5/4
- Presentation on Final Portfolio: 4/27, 4/29, & 5/4

### Course Engagement (10%):

Course engagement will be measured by class attendance, class discussion participation, briefing the class on updates in the Texas Legislative Session at the beginning of class, and participating in class project check-ins in support of collective learning and problem solving. There will also be two

different weeks where everyone presents their topics – first providing us with a policy briefing and later presenting on their full body of work for the semester. Attending these even on the days you are not presenting is a large portion of this engagement grade.

## Grading Scale

A = 90 – 100

B = 80 – 89

C = 70 – 79

D = 60 – 69

F = 0 – 59

## Course Plan

Any changes to the course plan will be communicated in class and via email. Please note that assignments are due by the class period at 11AM Central Standard Time.

*See Readings folder in Blackboard for each week's readings. They are listed by the topic name for that class period.*

Week	Date	Topic	Due
Week 1	1/21	Course Introduction	
Week 2	1/26	Texas Legislature I	Submit ideas for public debate topic
	1/28	Texas Legislature II	
Week 3	2/2	Texas Legislature III	<b>DUE: Policy Issue Proposal</b>
	2/4	Texas Legislature IV	
Week 4	2/9	Guest Speaker – Justin Perez, Chief of Staff for Texas House of Representatives	
	2/11	Guest Speaker – Jade Doss, Constituent Services Representative for U.S. House of Representative and former Texas House of Representatives	
Week 5	2/16	Policy Typologies and Policymaking Process	
	2/18	Identifying Problems and Policy Solutions	
Week 6	2/23	Policy Briefing Presentations	<b>Policy Briefing Presentations</b>
	2/25	Policy Briefing Presentations	<b>Policy Briefing Presentations Cont.</b>
Week 7	3/2	Guest Speaker – Jessica Attas, Vice President of Public Policy for the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce	
	3/4	Guest Speaker -- Joshua Sanders, Lobbyist	
Week 9	3/9	Advocacy Introduction: From Lobbying to Grassroots Organizing	
	3/11	Elements of Advocacy Campaigns I	

Week 10	3/16	Elements of Advocacy Campaigns II (& beginning of individual check ins)	
	3/18	Individual checks ins on your advocacy strategy proposal	<b>Draft of your advocacy strategy proposal to discuss at check-in</b>
Week 11 to Week 14	3/20 – 4/20	Beginning with Week 11, our class will become more flexible. We will host guest speakers that are relevant to your topics, I will provide resources for mastering the types of advocacy skills you are engaging in, and I will give you time on your own to work on implementing the elements of your advocacy proposal. Keep updated on Blackboard for readings and resources.	<b>DUE on 3/20: Advocacy Strategy Proposal</b>
Week 15	4/27	Portfolio presentations	<b>Presentations on Final Portfolio</b>
	4/29	Portfolio presentations	<b>Presentations on Final Portfolio</b>
Week 16	5/4	Final class activities and remaining portfolio presentations	<b>Presentations on Final Portfolio</b>  <b>DUE Final Portfolio Due</b>

## TTU Policies

### Religious Holy Days

Texas House Bill 256 requires Institutions of higher education to excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day. The student shall also be excused for time necessary to travel. An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and allows for the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused. No prior notification of the instructor is required.

### Disabilities

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note: instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, you may contact the Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or 806-742-2405.

### Academic Integrity

Cheating, plagiarism, or any other act of academic dishonesty will result in a 0.0 for the course. For more information on TTU's Academic Integrity Policy, see: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/handbook/>.

For the purposes of this course, cheating is defined as, but not limited to:

- Working with another student on an exam
- Sharing exam questions or answers with another student
- Using exam questions or answers provided by another student

For the purposes of this course, plagiarism is defined as, but not limited to:

- Quoting from any source without properly citing
- Paraphrasing from any source without properly citing
- Presenting the work of another person as your own

## Title IX

Texas Tech University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other [Title IX violations](#) are not tolerated by the University. Report any incidents to the Office for Student Rights & Resolution, (806)-742-SAFE (7233) or file a report online at [titleix.ttu.edu/students](http://titleix.ttu.edu/students). Faculty and staff members at TTU are committed to connecting you to resources on campus. Some of these available resources are: TTU Student Counseling Center, 806-742-3674, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/> (Provides confidential support on campus.) TTU 24-hour Crisis Helpline, 806-742-5555, (Assists students who are experiencing a mental health or interpersonal violence crisis. If you call the helpline, you will speak with a mental health counselor.) Voice of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center, 806-763-7273, [voiceofhopelubbock.org](http://voiceofhopelubbock.org) (24-hour hotline that provides support for survivors of sexual violence.) The Risk, Intervention, Safety and Education (RISE) Office, 806-742-2110, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/rise/> (Provides a range of resources and support options focused on prevention education and student wellness.) Texas Tech Police Department, 806-742-3931, <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/ttpd/> (To report criminal activity that occurs on or near Texas Tech campus.)

## TTU LGBTQIA Support

I identify as an ally to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) community, and I am available to listen and support you in an affirming manner. I can assist in connecting you with resources on campus to address problems you may face pertaining to sexual orientation and/or gender identity that could interfere with your success at Texas Tech. Please note that additional resources are available through the Office of LGBTQIA within the Center for Campus Life, Student Union Building Room 201, [www.lgbtqia.ttu.edu](http://www.lgbtqia.ttu.edu), 806.742.5433

## COVID-19 Policies and Considerations

If at any time during the semester you feel ill, you are asked to attend class through the synchronous Zoom option. If you contract Covid-19 during the semester, contact the Dean of Students (DOS) through this portal: <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/COVID-19Absence.php>. By reporting to the DOS, they will take on the burden of reaching out to your professors and asking them to work with you while you are ill.

When this course transitions to an in-person option, Waco-based students must follow the local institution's requirements to attend class in person. This includes wearing a mask during class and socially distancing in the classroom.

## Basic Needs

If at any time during the semester, you face challenges accessing regular food and housing and believe this may affect your performance in the course, you are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support, <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos>. If you are located at the Waco campus you also have access to MCC's food pantry, <http://www.mclennan.edu/completion-center/food-pantry>. In addition, if you feel comfortable, please feel open to notifying me so that I can assist in connecting you with university and community resources.