Syllabus
American Government Simulation (Simgov) – PLSC 2410
Tue/Thu 12:00-1:50PM, 380 Sturm Hall
Winter 2012
Professor Seth Masket

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 10AM-12PM, Thursdays 2-4PM, 466 Sturm Hall

Introduction: This course explores American politics by simulating the legislative process of the U.S. Congress. Each student will portray a current member of the House of Representatives. The simulation requires that students seek the goals related to their member, including writing bills, participating in committee and floor sessions, and attempting to secure reelection. By putting theory into practice, students will gain a better understanding of Washington politics.

Required Texts:

- Simgov Manual (available on Blackboard).
- Other readings available on Blackboard.
- Clickers (to be purchased at the Bookstore)

Requirements: Grades will be based on the following:

1. Exam. All students will take a multiple-choice exam during the fourth week of class. The exam will cover material from lecture and the manual (anything is fair game). Students are expected to know the real-life procedures of the federal government, the behaviors of politicians, and SIMGOV procedure.

2. Wiki Page. Students will write a biography of the real-life politician they are playing. This paper will then be posted to the course Wiki-page on Blackboard. The purpose of the assignment is to help you become more familiar with the politician you are playing and to help others in the course know whom they are playing with or against. Details on the page design and appropriate information will be handed out in class.

3. Committee Quiz. I will observe and grade one of your committee sessions. There are two parts to this grade. First, the committee as a whole will be graded on their knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Second, you will receive an individual grade based on your participation and knowledge of parliamentary
procedure. You must be present to receive a grade for the committee quiz. *An excused absence requires written documentation.*

4. **Participation.** This class depends on student participation. You are expected to show up for all sessions on time. Students with more than two unexcused absences will loose participation points. *An excused absence requires written documentation.*

   a. **The Civility Rule.** The Civility Rule requires students to treat all other students in SIMGOV with courtesy and good manners at all times. Because SIMGOV requires students to work on class business outside of regular class hours, the Civility Rule applies 24 hours a day, seven days a week until the end of the quarter. If your character has a reputation for being rude or abrasive, you are specifically required NOT to reflect those character traits in your portrayal. Students who break the civility rule will receive one warning. After that, each instance of incivility will result in a two-point deduction from the total grade.

5. **Role Requirements.** As a Member of Congress, you are required to:
   1. Write six bills.
      a. You will be graded on the content of the bill as well as the clarity of the writing.
   2. Participate in all committee, floor, and caucus meetings.
      a. You will be graded on your level of participation as well as the clarity of your arguments.
   3. Speak on bills.
   4. Sign-up to be a floor manager at least once.
   5. Stay in character.

6. **Portfolio and Reflection Paper.** At the end of the quarter, you will turn in a portfolio of all your work during the quarter. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: bills, testimony you have given, and bills that you have been a floor manager on. In addition, you are required to write a two-page reflection paper on the simulation.

**Course Grades:**

- Exam 20%
- Wiki Page 10%
- Committee Quiz 10%
- Participation/Roll Requirements 50%
- Portfolio 10%

**Blackboard:** The simulation will utilize the course Blackboard page. If you are having difficulty accessing Blackboard, let me know immediately.
**Contacting Me**

I frequently check e-mail ([smasket@du.edu](mailto:smasket@du.edu)), so that is usually the best way to get in touch with me. I can also be reached on my office phone (x12718). My regular office hours are Wednesdays from 10AM to 12PM and Thursdays from 2PM to 4PM. If you need me to get back to you within the same day, definitely contact me before 9PM. I can’t promise I’ll look at e-mail after that.

I would also encourage you to check your e-mail at least once a day. I will occasionally send out information relevant to class.

**Students with Special Needs**

Please contact me as soon as possible if you have a documented learning disability or other condition that requires accommodations, such as a separate testing room or extra time on exams.
SIMGOV Schedule

This schedule is subject to change with prior notification. All readings can be found on Blackboard.

Jan. 3rd - Introductions
- Role Requests: Party, leadership positions

Jan. 5th - Legislative Procedure I
- Initial Party Preference Sheet Due
- Readings

Jan. 10th - Legislative Procedure II
- Finalized Party Memberships Handed Out
- SIMGOV Social
- Readings
  - Dwyre and Farrar-Myers, Legislative Labyrinth, chaps. 1-3.
  - Zeleny, Jeff, "In Health Vote, Democrats Weigh Success vs. Survival"

Jan. 12th - Presentation from Career Center

Jan. 17th - Legislative Procedure III
- Member request due.
- Select House leadership positions
- Select committee assignments
- Select committee chair and ranking minority member
- Readings
  - Sinclair, Unorthodox Lawmaking, chaps. 1-2.

Jan. 19th - Legislative Procedure IV / Mock Committee Meetings
- Mock Committee Meetings
- Readings
  - Aldrich and Rohde, “Congressional Committees in a Partisan Era.”
- Wiki Profile Due!

Jan. 24th - Exam and Party Caucus
- You will need the clicker for the exam.
- Election of Committee Chairs
- Establish Seniority
- Set Quorum
- Begin hearings and mark-up

Jan. 25th - Bills Due (Wednesday).
- Rules Committee post rules and bills to appropriate calendar by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker posts agenda by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
All members read agenda and print out bills on the agenda before floor session.

Jan. 26th - Caucus/Committees

Jan. 30th - Bills Due (Monday).
- Rules Committee post rules and bills to appropriate calendar by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker posts agenda by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
- All members read agenda and print out bills on the agenda before floor session.

Jan. 31st - Caucus/Committees

Feb. 1st - Prep for the First Floor Session
- Rules Committee post rules and bills to appropriate calendar by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker posts agenda by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
- All members read agenda and print out bills on the agenda before floor session.

Feb. 2nd - First Floor Session
- Begin to consider bills on the floor.

Feb. 6th - Bills due (Monday)
- Members submit bills by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker refers bills to committee by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
- Committee members review and print out bills on the agenda before session.

Feb. 7th - Caucus/Committees

Feb. 8th (Wednesday) - Prep for Floor Session.
- Rules Committee post rules and bills to appropriate calendar by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker posts agenda by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
- All members read agenda and print out bills on the agenda before floor session.

Feb. 9th - Floor Session

Feb. 13th (Monday) - Bills Due
- Members submit bills by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker refers bills to committee by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
Committee members review and print out bills on the agenda before session.

Feb. 14th - Caucus/Committees

Feb. 15th (Wednesday) - Prep for Floor Session.
- Rules Committee post rules and bills to appropriate calendar by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker posts agenda by 7:00 pm.
- All members read agenda and print out bills on the agenda before floor session.

Feb. 16th - Floor Session

Feb. 20th - (Monday) - Bills Due
- Members submit bills by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker refers bills to committee by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
- Committee members review and print out bills on the agenda before session.

Feb. 21st - Caucus/Committees

Feb. 22nd (Wednesday) - Prep for Floor Session and Money Committee’s Draft of Congressional Budget Resolution Due!!!
- Rules Committee post rules and bills to appropriate calendar by 6:00 pm.
- Speaker posts agenda by 7:00 pm.
- Chair sets agenda by 8:00 pm.
- All members read agenda and print out bills on the agenda before floor session.

Feb. 23rd - Floor Session
- Floor consideration of the Budget

Feb. 28th - Floor Session

Mar. 1st - Floor Session

Mar. 6th - Floor Session
- Omnibus Appropriations Bill Due

Mar. 8th – Floor Session (if needed)
- Portfolio Due