PSC 319/519 - American Legislative Institutions

Instructors:  Michael Peress (mperess@mail.rochester.edu, OH: T 2-4)  
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Time:  Monday, 3:25-6:05  

Course Description:  

The United States Congress has always dominated the modern study of legislatures. In recent years, however, legislative scholars have paid increasing attention to the value of comparative studies. American state legislatures, in particular, offer a rich field for examining the impact (and origins) of institutional differences. In this course, we will look side-by-side at the U.S. House, the U.S. Senate, and the 99 state legislative chambers. We will consider the major institutions within a legislative chamber, including the role of committees, leaders, parties, and rules in legislative organization. But, taking advantage of this comparative approach, we will also gain insight into the effects of term limits, bicameralism, party competition, seniority systems, professionalization, careerism, ideological heterogeneity, money in politics, and links between campaigns and governance.
**Course Requirements:**

There will be three major requirements for this course. First, attendance and class participation are mandatory. Anything more than two absences needs to be excused. Each week, some students will be designated as discussion leaders for certain articles. Participation counts for 40% of your final grade.

Two short papers (2-3 pages in length), related to the course readings, will be assigned throughout the class. They will be due in class, on dates indicated in the syllabus. Combined, these short papers will count for 20% of your final grade.

Your will be required to write one research paper (10-15 pages in length). We are quite open to a number of different approaches you could take here, but you must gain permission from Professors Peress and Powell for your topic before you begin. The main requirement is that you go beyond the class readings and perform some amount of original research. We will provide a number of ideas as the course proceeds. The research paper will count for 40% of your final grade.

Please note that you must complete all of these requirements in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

**Readings:**

The following lists the readings we will be covering in class. Most articles are available through JSTOR, and the remaining articles will be e-mailed to you.
Week 1: Overview (January 29)


Week 2: Incumbency and Redistricting (February 5)


Week 3: Ideal Point Estimation (February 12)


Week 4: Representation I (February 19)


Week 5: Representation II (February 26)


Weeks 6 through 13: To Be Announced