

Congress as an Institution

Fall 2019

Tues., 12:30 pm - 3:15 pm

Harkness Hall, rm. 329

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Course Overview

This seminar will provide students with the necessary historical background and methodological tools to conduct original research on the US Congress. The course emphasizes how Congress as an institution provides structure that scholars must embrace – and from which they may often benefit – when applying the more abstract concepts and techniques of political economy.

Responsibilities & Evaluation

Each student will be responsible for robust in-class participation (reflective of thorough preparation) throughout the semester as well as a term paper. We expect all students to come to class having read the week's assignments, ready to engage in thoughtful and critical discussion. In order to facilitate this, we ask students to produce a written treatment (see below for details) each week of one of the assigned readings for that session. The expectations for these write-ups as well as the final paper will depend upon the training of each student. Participation will count for 20% of the course grade and

will be based on the quality, not quantity, of a student's contribution to the discussion. The weekly write-ups (specifically, the best nine of them, i.e., you may miss four weeks) will count for 40% of the grade. The term paper will count for the remaining 40% of the student's grade for the course.

Weekly Write-ups

We ask each student come to class ready to hand in a 2-3 page, double-spaced, response piece to one or more of the assigned readings for that week. This should take the form of (a) a referee report (see attached example) or (b) a short, original, evidence-based investigation/extension related to one of the studies. We encourage students with data/statistics training to download the relevant datasets and perform some analyses of their own. Finding and working with datasets is one of the first steps for those seeking to produce cutting-edge research on the U.S Congress. This second approach, however, may also include locating and engaging with pertinent primary source material. Indeed, novel sources of evidence often distinguish cutting-edge research from derivative research. You must try each approach at least three times, and we encourage you to have some fun with approach (b)!!!

Term Paper

From first-year graduate students, we seek a well-developed research proposal accompanied by some preliminary analyses.

Graduate students in the second year and beyond will be expected to produce something closer to a complete first-draft of an original research paper.

Expectations of undergraduates will vary by student and be decided upon jointly by the student and (at least one of) the professors, but it will likely take the form of an approximately 15-page paper, double-spaced, not including title page or references.

Course Goals

We would like students to take away the concrete knowledge of how parties, committees, leaders, and rules serve as and themselves shape institutions, as well as how the interactions among them have changed historically. Further, students should appreciate the key differences between the House and the Senate. Beyond this, the course is roughly structured around five overarching themes/questions:

1. The Fundamental Question of Deliberative Bodies – How do the rules of the game, i.e., institutions, allow for the existence of equilibria? What are the properties of those equilibria?
2. Endogeneity of Institutions – Under what conditions do the rules of the game change?
3. Collective Action – How do coalitions overcome the challenge of collective action, both in day-to-day legislating and in seeking reform?
4. Studying Legislators – What can/can't we learn from legislators' actions in Congress? Do we have other options?
5. Understanding the Modern Congress in Historical Context – What “Congress” are we in now?

Outline of course and weekly readings

The Textbook Congress and the “New” “Classics”

Sept. 3 – The Institutionalist Approach to Studying Deliberative Bodies

- Fenno, Richard F. 1962. “The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System.” *American Political Science Review*, 56(2): 310–324.
- Polsby, Nelson. 1968. “The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives.” *American Political Science Review*, 62(1): 144–168.
- Weingast, Barry R. and William J. Marshall. 1988. “The Industrial Organization of Congress; or, Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets.” *Journal of Political Economy*, 96(1): 132–163.

Sept. 10 – Committees? Parties? None of the Above?

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. “The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power.” *American Political Science Review*, 81(1): 85–104.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1991. “On the Decline of Party Voting in Congress.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 16(4): 547–570.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1994. “Bonding, Structure, and the Stability of Political Parties: Party Government in the House.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 19(2): 215.

- Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. “Where’s the Party?” *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(2): 235–266.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A., 1989. “The Changing Textbook Congress.” In *Can the Government Govern?*, Washington, DC: Brookings, pp. 238–266.

Congressional Reform

Sept. 17 – Leaving the “Textbook Congress”

- Cooper, Joseph and David W. Brady. 1981. “Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn.” *The American Political Science Review*, 75(2): 411–425.
- Rohde, David W. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Zelizer, Julian E. 2000. “Bridging State and Society: The Origins of 1970s Congressional Reform.” *Social Science History*, 24(2): 379–393.

Sept. 24 – Race and Congress

- Bateman, David A., Ira Katznelson, and John S. Lapinski. 2018. *Southern Nation: Congress and White Supremacy after Reconstruction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Oct. 1 No Class – Rosh Hashanah

Set up a meeting for later in this week with one of the professors to discuss idea for term paper.

Sizing Up the Senate

Oct. 8 – Filibusters and more!

- Binder, Sarah A. 1997. *Minority Rights, Majority Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wawro, Gregory J. and Eric Schickler. 2018. “Reid’s Rules: Filibusters, the Nuclear Option, and Path Dependence in the US Senate.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 43(4): 619–647.
- Gamm, Gerald and Steven S. Smith. “Arthur Pue Gorman and the Origins of Senate Floor Leadership, 1890-1913.” In *Emergence of Senate Party Leadership*, chapter 5.

Oct. 15 No Class - Fall Break

Set up a meeting for later in this week with one of the professors to review a couple-page outline/plan/sketch of the project.

Oct. 22 – Johnson and the Senate

- Zelizer, Julian E. 2015. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society*. New York: Penguin Books.

Oct. 29 – Beyond the Filibuster (and an example of applying Pivotal Politics)

- Gehlbach, Scott, 2013. “Veto Players.” In *Formal Models of Domestic Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter 4, pp. 74–97.
- Reynolds, Molly E. 2017. *Exceptions to the Rule: The Politics of Filibuster Limitations in the U.S. Senate*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Theories of Lawmaking

Nov. 5 – Pivotal Politics and Responsible/Conditional Party Government Get Sent to Reconciliation

- Cox, Gary W. and Matthew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenkins, Jeffery A. and Nathan W. Monroe. 2012. “Buying Negative Agenda Control in the U.S. House.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(4): 897–912.

Nov. 12 – Distributive Politics and Vote Buying

- Snyder, Jr., James M. 1991. “On Buying Legislatures.” *Economics and Politics*, 3(2): 93–109.
- Banks, Jeffrey S. 2000. “Buying supermajorities in finite legislatures.” *American Political Science Review*, 94(3): 677–681.
- Dekel, Eddie, Matthew O. Jackson, and Asher Wolinsky. 2009. “Vote Buying: Legislatures and Lobbying.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 4(2): 103–128.

- Alexander, Dan, Christopher R. Berry, and William G. Howell. 2016. “Distributive Politics and Legislator Ideology.” *The Journal of Politics*, 78(1): 214–231.
- Berry, Christopher R. and Anthony Fowler. 2016. “Cardinals or Clerics? Congressional Committees and the Distribution of Pork.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3): 692–708.
- Gordon, Sanford C. and Hannah K. Simpson. 2018. “The Birth of Pork: Local Appropriations in America’s First Century.” *American Political Science Review*, 112(3): 564–579.

Nov. 19 – Empirical Validation for Theories of Lawmaking

- Bianco, William T. and Itai Sened. 2005. “Uncovering Evidence of Conditional Party Government: Reassessing Majority Party Influence in Congress and State Legislatures.” *The American Political Science Review*, 99(3): 361–371.
- Jeong, Gyung Ho, Gary J. Miller, and Itai Sened. 2009. “Closing the deal: Negotiating civil rights legislation.” *American Political Science Review*, 103(4): 588–606.
- Sinclair, Barbara, 2017. “Making Nonincremental Policy Change through Hyperunorthodox Procedures: Health Care Reform in 2009-2010.” In *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, Washington, DC: CQ Press, pp. 170–218. 5th edition.
- Wiseman, Alan E. 2004. “Tests of Vote-Buyer Theories of Coalition Formation in Legislatures.” *Political Research Quarterly*, 57(3): 441–450.

Partisan Era

Nov. 26 – How do we know we’re polarized, or What can(’t) we learn from legislators’ actions?

- Clinton, Joshua, Simon Jackman, and Douglas Rivers. 2004. “The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data.” *American Political Science Review*, 98(2): 355–370.
- Fowler, Anthony and Andrew B. Hall. 2012. “Conservative Vote Probabilities: An Easier Method for the Analysis of Roll Call Data.” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, pp. 1–29.
- Caughey, Devin and Eric Schickler. 2016. “Substance and change in congressional ideology: NOMINATE and its alternatives.” *Studies in American Political Development*, 30(2): 128–146.

- McCarty, Nolan. 2016. “In Defense of DW-NOMINATE.” *Studies in American Political Development*, 30(2): 172–184.
- Volden, Craig, Alan E. Wiseman, and Dana E. Wittmer. 2013. “When Are Women More Effective Lawmakers Than Men?” *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(2): 326–341.

Dec. 3 – Partisanship and Polarization

- Aldrich, John H. and David W. Rohde. 2000. “The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee.” *Journal of Politics*, 62(1): 1–33.
- Aldrich, John H., Brittany N. Perry, and David W. Rohde, 2013. “Richard Fenno’s Theory of Congressional Committees and the Partisan Polarization of the House.” In Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered*, Washington, DC: CQ Press. 10th edition.
- Bonica, Adam. 2014. “The Punctuated Origins of Senate Polarization.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 39(1): 5–26.
- Lax, Jeffrey R., Justin H. Phillips, and Adam Zelizer. 2019. “The Party or the Purse: Unequal Representation in the US Senate.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Alexander, Dan & Asya Magazinnik. 2019. “The Problem of Aggregational Inference,” working paper.

Dec. 10 – Partisanship w/o Polarization?

- Lee, Frances E. 2016. *Insecure Majorities*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Be prepared to provide an informal discussion of your term paper during this session, as well.