

PSC 218: Legislative Politics
Professor Sarah Binder
Spring 2006

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Class meets: M 3:30-5:20, 415 OM
Office hours: Wednesdays 2-4pm
or by appointment

Seminar Description:

This seminar is designed as a theoretical and empirical examination of legislative politics in the U.S. Congress, targeted for graduate students seeking to complete the department's comprehensive PhD exam in American politics. Thus, our goals for the semester are both to develop a strong substantive understanding of congressional theory, behavior, institutions, and politics and to develop students' abilities to explicate, synthesize, and criticize the vast array of scholarship on Congress and the methods/approaches used therein. By the end of the course, you should have a basic understanding of important classic works on Congress, as well as a strong grasp of theoretical and methodological debates in the study of Congress.

We will start with an introduction to the major theoretical approaches that have been used to study Congress. Then we turn to examining Congress on several levels: individual (with an examination of research on representation, candidates, and elections), institutional (with a look at committees, parties, leaders, and rules, and historical change), and inter-branch (with a look at Congress and the executive).

Requirements:

There are a number of requirements for this seminar. All must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course. Your final grade will be determined as follows: seminar participation (25%), a literature critique (25%) and a take-home (closed book) final exam (50%). If anyone wishes to write a longer piece of original research (in lieu of the literature critique and final exam), please come speak with me early in the semester. This would be an article-length piece (roughly 15-20 pages) suitable for presentation at a professional conference (i.e. it would include a theoretical framework, appropriate methodological design, and empirical analysis/tests). I would be happy to work with any of you on such a project, so long as we agree on a workable project early in the semester.

Seminar participation. Your primary assignment is to complete the readings and to participate effectively in seminar discussions each week. To bolster the quality of our weekly discussion, you are asked to undertake two tasks. First, for two of the seminar meetings, you are required to submit a list of questions and/or discussion topics by 2:30 pm on Monday. These questions/topics should reflect a critical reading of the week's assigned readings. Second, you will each present an article or set of articles from the assigned readings. These presentations (roughly 5-10 minutes) should:

- Describe the main *themes* of the reading
- Explain what its *contributions* are to our understanding of legislative politics

- Provide specific *criticisms* of the study (e.g., its theoretical argument, hypotheses, evidence, analysis, etc.)
- Raise *questions* about specific theoretical or empirical issues that you did not understand

The readings for presentation are marked by an asterisk (*) in the readings below.

Literature critique. This will be a paper (roughly 10-15 pages) that focuses on a topic of your choice in the study of legislative politics. The paper will survey the state of the literature on the topic or research question, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of existing work, and identify an interesting research question that is either new or in your view has not yet been well addressed. Finally, you are asked to sketch a research design for how one might go about answering the research question. We will use our March 6th seminar meeting for you to present your proposed topics/research questions. A short (3-5 page) paper outlining your topic/question will be due in class on March 20th. The paper will be due May 10th. This is an excellent opportunity for you to explore any of the many literatures on Congress or legislative politics that we are not able to cover in the course of a single semester.

Final exam. The final exam will be a take-home, closed book two-hour exam. The question(s) will be similar to the type(s) of questions that appear on the American politics comprehensive exam. Thus, preparing for and taking the exam will be good practice for those of you intending to take the department's comprehensive exam in American politics. (You'll have the opportunity to write the exam on a computer at home or school.)

Required texts:

All of the texts for this course are available in the GW Bookstore in the basement of the Marvin Center. In addition to these texts, there are weekly articles that are available on JSTOR, Blackboard, or made available for you to photocopy each week. Be sure you have a functioning Blackboard account.

David Canon, *Race, Representation, and Redistricting* (Chicago 1999)
 Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda* (Cambridge 2005)
 Nelson Polsby, *How Congress Evolves* (Oxford 2004)
 David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (Yale 1974)
 R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (Yale 1990)

I assume that seminar participants have a working knowledge of the nuts and bolts of Congress. For anyone looking for an accompanying text, I recommend Smith, Roberts, and VanderWielen, *The American Congress* (4th ed., Cambridge). For a set of synthetic essays on the state of congressional institutions and elections, you might consult Paul Quirk and Sarah Binder, Eds. 2005, *The Legislative Branch* (Oxford).

Course outline:

January 23 Introduction to course

No assignment.

January 30 Theories of behavior

- Richard Fenno, "[The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System](#)" *APSR* 56 (June 1962): 310-324. (JSTOR)
- Donald Matthews, "[The Folkways of the United States Senate](#)" *APSR* 53 (December): 1064-89. (JSTOR)
- Richard Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*, pp. xiii-xvii, 1-2 (Copy)
- David Mayhew, *The Electoral Connection*, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Charles Stewart, *Analyzing Congress* (New York: Norton, 2001): Chapter 1 (Copy)
- Lawrence C. Dodd, "Congress and the Quest for Power," in *Congress Reconsidered*, 1st edition (1977) (Copy)
- *Richard Hall, "[Participation and Purpose in Congressional Decision-Making](#)" *APSR* 81 (March 1987) (JSTOR)
(Peter)

February 6 Elections (voters and representation)

- Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes, "[Constituency Influence in Congress](#)," *APSR* 57 (March, 1963): 45-57 (JSTOR)
- Fenno, Richard F. "[U.S. House Members and Their Constituencies](#)," *APSR* 71 (September, 1977): 883-917 (JSTOR)
- Erickson, Robert "[Constituency Opinion and Congressional Behavior](#)," *AJPS* 22 (August 1978): 511-35 (JSTOR)
- Cain, Bruce E., John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina, "[The Constituency Service Basis of the Personal Vote](#)" *APSR* 78 (March 1984) JSTOR
- Canon, David, *Race, Redistricting and Representation* Preface, Intro, Chapters 1 and 5.
- *Weissberg, Robert "[Collective vs. Dyadic Representation in Congress](#)," *APSR* 72 (June 1978): 535-47 (JSTOR)
(Caitlin)

February 13 Elections (incumbency advantage)

- Mayhew, David "[Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals](#)" *Polity* 6 (Spring 1974) JSTOR
- Fiorina, Morris, "[The Case of the Vanishing Marginals: The Bureaucracy Did It](#)" *APSR* 71 (March 1977) JSTOR
- Jacobson, Gary, "[The Marginals Never Vanished](#)" *AJPS* 31 (February 1987): 126-41 (JSTOR)
- Cox, Gary, and Jonathan Katz, "[Why did the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections Grow?](#)" *AJPS* 40 (May 1996) JSTOR
- Carson, Jaime, Erik Engstrom, and Jason Roberts "[Redistricting, Candidate Entry, and the Politics of Nineteenth Century U.S. House Elections](#)," *AJPS* 50 (April 2006).
- Abramowitz, Alan, Brad Alexander, Matthew Gunning, "Incumbency, Redistricting, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections" *JOP* 68 (February 2006) [Blackwell website](#)
- *Ansolabehere, Stephen, David Brady; Morris Fiorina, [The Vanishing Marginals and Electoral Responsiveness](#) *BJPS* 22 (January 1992) JSTOR
(Steve)

February 20 No seminar for Presidents' Day

February 27 Elections (race and redistricting)

- Canon, *Race, Redistricting and Representation*, Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6

Cameron, Charles, David Epstein, and Sharyn O'Halloran, "[Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?](#)" *APSR* 90 (December 1996) JSTOR

*Lublin, David, "[Racial Redistricting and African-American Representation: A Critique of Do Majority-Minority](#)" *APSR* 93 (March 1999) JSTOR
(Laura)

March 6 Paper discussions

Please come prepared to make a brief presentation on your proposed topic/research question for your literature critique. What issue/question will you be investigating? Why is it important/relevant/interesting? What have you found so far?

March 13 No seminar for Spring break

March 20 Theories of legislative organization

Kenneth Shepsle and Barry Weingast, "[Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions.](#)" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 19 (May 1994): 149-179 (JSTOR)

Krehbiel, Keith, *Information and Legislative Organization* (Michigan 1991), Chapters 1-3 (COPY)

Mayhew, David, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (Chapter 2)

Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda*, Chapters 1-2

*Weingast, Barry R. and William J. Marshall, "[The Industrial Organization of Congress; or Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets.](#)" *Journal of Political Economy* 96 (1988): 132-163 (JSTOR)
(Maeve)

March 27 Congressional committees

Fenno, Richard, *Congressmen in Committees* (1973), Chapters 1-4 (Copy)

Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry Weingast, "[Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models.](#)" *AJPS* 23 (February 1979) (JSTOR)

Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry Weingast, "[The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power.](#)" *APSR* 81 (March 1987) (JSTOR)

Krehbiel, Keith, "[Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?](#)" *APSR* 84 (March 1990) (JSTOR)

Maltzman, Forrest and Steven S. Smith "[Principals, Goals, Dimensionality and Congressional Committees.](#)" *LSQ* (November 1994) (JSTOR)

Smith, Steven S. "[An Essay on Sequence, Position, Goals, and Committee Power](#)" *LSQ* (May 1988) (JSTOR)

*Aldrich, John H. and David W. Rohde. "[The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee.](#)" *JOP* 62 (February 2000) (JSTOR)
(Karen)

April 3 Voting behavior and decision-making

Arnold, R. Douglas, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, Chapters 1-6, skim 8, 10.

- Evans, Diana, *Greasing the Wheels: Using Pork Barrel Projects to Build Majority Coalitions in Congress* (Cambridge 2004), Chapter 5 (Copy)
- Frances E. Lee, "[Senate Representation and Coalition Building in Distributive Politics.](#)" *APSR* 94 (March 2000) JSTOR
- Kingdon, John. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions* (Michigan 1989, 3rd ed.) Chapters 1, 9, 10 (copy)
- Wright, John R. "[PACs, Contributions, and Roll Calls: An Organizational Perspective.](#)" *APSR* 79 (1985) (JSTOR)
- Hall, Richard, and Frank Wayman, "[Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.](#)" *APSR* (September 1990) (JSTOR)
- *Canes-Wrone, Brandes, David Brady, and John Cogan, "[Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting.](#)" *APSR* (March 2002) (JSTOR) (Jennifer)

April 10 Leadership

- Froman, Lewis and Randall Ripley, "[Conditions for Party Leadership: The Case of the House Democrats.](#)" *APSR* 59 (March 1965) (JSTOR)
- Cooper, Joseph and David Brady, "[Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn.](#)" *APSR* 75 (June 1981) JSTOR
- Jones, Charles O. "[Joseph G. Cannon and Howard W. Smith: An Essay on the Limits of Leadership in the House of Representatives.](#)" *JOP* 30 (August 1968) JSTOR
- Sinclair, Barbara, "[Transformational Leader or Faithful Agent? Principal-Agent Theory and House Majority Party Leadership.](#)" *LSQ* 24 (August 1999) JSTOR
- Smith, Steven S. "Parties and Leaders in the Senate." In Quirk and Binder, *The Legislative Branch* (Oxford University Press 2005). (Copy)
- *Lawrence, Eric D., Forrest Maltzman, and Paul J. Wahlbeck, "[The Politics of Speaker Cannon's Committee Assignments.](#)" *AJPS* 45 (July 2001) (JSTOR) (Stacey)

April 17 Do parties matter?

- Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda* (Cambridge 2005), read all (except 4 and 8)
- Krehbiel, Keith, "[Where's the Party?!](#)" *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 23 (1993), pp. 235-266. (JSTOR)
- *Ansolabehere, Stephen, James Snyder, and Charles Stewart, "The Effects of Party and Preferences on Roll-Call Voting," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* Nov. 2001 (Copy)
- Evans, C. Lawrence, and Christopher Renjilian, "[Cracking the Whip in the U.S. House: Majority Dominance or Party Balancing?](#)" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the APSA, 2004. (Jacob)

April 24 Institutional development of Congress

- Polsby, *How Congress Evolves*, all
- *Polsby, Nelson, "[The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives.](#)" *APSR* 62 (March 1968) (JSTOR)
- Binder, Sarah "[The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990.](#)" *APSR* 90(March 1996):8-20. (JSTOR)
- Schickler, Eric, *Disjointed Pluralism*, Chapter 1, Appendix A (Copy)

- Gamm, Gerald and Kenneth Shepsle. [“Emergence of Legislative Institutions: Standing Committees in the House and Senate: 1810-1825,”](#) *LSQ* 14 (February 1989) JSTOR
- Katz, Jonathan and Brian Sala, [“Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection.”](#) *APSR* 90 (March 1996)
- Gamm, Gerald, and Steven S. Smith. 2003. “Policy Leadership and the Development of the Modern Senate.” In David W. Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins, eds., *Party, Process, and Political Change in Congress*. Stanford University Press. (COPY)
(Caity)

May 1 Congress and the executive

- Mayhew, David. *Divided We Govern*. Chapters TBA (Copy)
- Krehbiel, Keith. *Pivotal Politics*. Chapters TBA (Copy)
- Binder, Sarah A. [“The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-96.”](#) *APSR* 93 (September 1996) (JSTOR)
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, and Scott de Marchi, [“Presidential Approval and Legislative Success,”](#) *JOP* 64 (May 2002) (JSTOR)
- McCubbins, Mathew D., and Thomas Schwartz. [“Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms.”](#) *AJPS* 28 (February 1984) (JSTOR)
- Calvert, Randall, Mark Moran, and Barry Weingast, “Congressional Influence over policy making: The case of the FTC,” in McCubbins and Schwartz, *Congress: Structure and Policy* (Copy)
- *Ferejohn, John, and Charles Shipan, [“Congressional Influence on the Bureaucracy,”](#) *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 6 (Special issue 1990), JSTOR

More books on Congress to be familiar with...

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*
Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*
Binder, *Minority Rights, Majority Rule*
Binder and Smith, *Politics or Principle? Filibustering in the United States Senate*
Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, *The Personal Vote*
Cameron, Charles, *Veto Politics*
Cox and Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: Electoral Consequences of...*
Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan*
Deering and Smith, *Committees in Congress*, 3rd ed.
Dodd and Oppenheimer, *Congress Reconsidered* (multiple editions)
Epstein and O'Halloran, *Delegating Powers*
Evans, C. Lawrence, *Leadership in Committee*
Fenno, *Homestyle*
Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*
Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*
Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*
Jacobson and Kernell, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*
Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization*
Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics*
Lee and Oppenheimer, *Sizing Up the Senate*
Maltzman, *Competing Principals*
Matthews, *U.S. Senators and their World*
Mayhew, David, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*
Mayhew, David, *Divided We Govern*
Poole and Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political Economic History of Roll-Call Voting*
Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*
Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism*
Schiller, *Partners and Rivals*
Sinclair, *The Transformation of the United States Senate*
Sinclair, *Legislators, Leaders, and Lawmaking*
Smith, *Call to Order*
Stewart and Weingast, "Stacking the Senate, Changing the Nation" (article in *SAPD*)
Wilson, *Congressional Government*