

PSC 8218: Legislative Politics
Professor Sarah Binder
Fall 2017

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Class meets: M 5:10-7pm, 410 HoG
Office hours: by appointment

Seminar description

This seminar is designed as a theoretical and empirical examination of (the study of) legislative politics in the U.S. Congress, targeted especially for graduate students seeking to complete the department's comprehensive PhD exam in American politics (but also open to masters students). We start with an introduction to the major theoretical approaches that have been used to study Congress. Then we examine Congressional politics along two dimensions: electoral (representation, recruitment, and elections) and institutional (committees, parties, leaders, historical development and inter-branch relations).

Learning objectives

1. Develop strong substantive understanding of the legislative subfield in American politics
2. Develop ability to explicate, synthesize, and criticize vast array of classic and new scholarship on Congress, including relevant theoretical and methodological debates
3. Think, research and write critically about the study of legislative politics

Requirements

There are a number of requirements for this seminar. All must be completed to receive a passing grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows: participation (20%), response memos (40%), and research paper (40%).

Participation (20%): Your primary assignment is to complete the readings and to participate effectively in seminar discussions each week.

Response memos (40%): To bolster the quality of our weekly discussion, you are required to submit a weekly response memo for each of the eleven seminars with assigned readings. (*You can take TWO passes during the semester, but you must keep track!*) Memos are due each Monday by 3 pm. The papers should be 1-2 pages long (single or double spaced), and should critically engage at least one reading (or compare readings).

- Very briefly summarize the reading(s)
- Identify elements you found convincing or unconvincing (e.g. theory or lack thereof assumptions, evidence, analysis etc.)
- Raise question(s) about the reading for discussion
- Suggest a next step for research in this area

Research proposal/paper (40%): This will be a paper (roughly 10-15 pages) that focuses on a research question or puzzle of your choice in the study of legislative politics. The paper will present the

question, explain why we should care about the answer, survey the state of the literature and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of existing work, and sketch a research design for tackling the question. We will use our October 16 seminar meeting to present proposed research questions. You should come to class with a short (3-5 page) paper outlining your question on October 16. 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.

Note: This is a 3-credit, seminar-based course. Federal regulations for 3-credit seminars require 112.5 semester hours of instruction. This seminar is comprised of 110 minutes/week of direct instruction (in-class) and 340 minutes/week of independent learning (out of class, including reading and preparing written response papers, projects and studying).

Required and other books:

There is one required book to purchase for the class. (Because it is widely available to buy on-line, I have not ordered the book through the GW textbook service.)

David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (Yale University Press, 1974 or 2nd ed. 2004)

We will also read portions of the following books. I will make PDFs available of the assigned chapters on Blackboard. But if you are planning to write a dissertation in the legislative field, I would encourage you to consider owning some or all of these books:

R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (Yale 1990)

David Canon, *Race, Representation, and Redistricting* (Chicago 1999)

Gary Cox and Matthew McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda* (Cambridge 2005)

Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics* (Chicago 1998)

Frances E. Lee, *Beyond Ideology* (Chicago 2009)

Steven S. Smith, *Party Influence in Congress* (Cambridge 2007)

Eric Schickler and Frances E. Lee, *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress* (Oxford 2011)

All other assigned readings are available on-line. Articles can be located through Gelman's e-journal collection. I will make copies of the other readings electronically through the course's Blackboard page (indicated as "BB" below). I may adjust the readings as necessary – you are responsible for any changes to the readings.

I assume that seminar participants will 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* (9th ed., Cambridge).

Academic integrity

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see: <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/>.

Support for students outside the classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS): Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at (202) 994-8250 in

Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>

Mental Health Services: The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations and confidential assessment, counseling services, and referrals. See <http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu>. Or call (202) 994-5300.

Policy on Religious Holidays: You should notify me during the first week of the semester of your intention to be absent from class on a day(s) of religious observance.

Course outline

August 28 Introduction to the course and the study of Congress

Binder, "Challenges Ahead for Legislative Studies," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 40 (February)5-11.

September 4 No class (Labor Day)

September 11 Theories of legislative behavior

Mayhew, "Theorizing about Congress," *Oxford Handbook of the American Congress* 2011 (BB)
Fenno, "[The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System](#)" *APSR* 56 (June 1962): 310-324.
Matthews, "[The Folkways of the United States Senate](#)" *APSR* 53 (December):1064-89.
Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*, pp. xiii-xvii, 1-2 (BB)
Mayhew, *The Electoral Connection*, Introduction and Chapter 1
Stewart, *Analyzing Congress* (New York: Norton, 2001): Chapter 1 (BB)
Dodd, "Congress and the Quest for Power," in *Congress Reconsidered*, 1st edition (1977) (BB)

September 18 Elections (Representation)

Mayhew, *Congress: Electoral Connection* (review part 1)
Miller and Stokes, "[Constituency Influence in Congress](#)," *APSR* 57 (March, 1963): 45-57
Fenno, "[U.S. House Members and Their Constituencies](#)," *APSR* 71 (September, 1977): 883-917
Grimmer, "Appropriators not Position Takers" *AJPS* 57 (July 2013):624-642
Canes-Wrone et al "[Out of Step, Out of Office](#)" *APSR* 96(1):127-140
Carson et. al. "The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress." *AJPS* 54(3): 598-616
Hall, "What Happens When Extremists Win Primaries," *APSR*, 109(1) 2015: 18-42
Bernhard, Sewell and Sulkin, "A Clustering Approach to Legislative Styles," *LSQ* (2017):477-506

September 25 Elections (Incumbency advantage)

Mayhew, "[Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals](#)" *Polity* 6 (Spring 1974)
Fiorina, "[The Case of the Vanishing Marginals: The Bureaucracy Did It](#)" *APSR* 71 (March 1977)
Jacobson, "[The Marginals Never Vanished](#)" *AJPS* 31 (February 1987): 126-41

Cox and Katz, [Why did the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections Grow?](#) *AJPS* 40 (1996)
Carson, Engstrom, and Roberts, "Candidate Quality, the Personal Vote, and the Incumbency Advantage in Congress," *APSR* 101 (2007): 289-301
Jacobson, "It's Nothing Personal: The Decline of the Incumbency Advantage in US House Elections," *JOP* 77(2015):861-873

October 2 Elections (race and gender)

Canon, *Race, Redistricting and Representation*, Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6
Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran, ["Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?"](#) *APSR* 90 (December 1996)
Lublin, ["Racial Redistricting and African-American Representation: A Critique of Do Majority-Minority ..."](#) *APSR* 93 (March 1999)
Fox and Lawless, "Gendered Perceptions and Political Candidacies: A Central Barrier to Women's Equality in Electoral Politics." *AJPS* 55(2011):59-73.
Thomsen, "Why So Few (Republican) Women? Explaining the Partisan Imbalance of Women in the U.S. Congress." *LSQ* 40(2015): 295-323.

October 9 No class (fall break)

October 16 Research paper updates

Come prepared to make a brief presentation on your research paper project. What is your research question/puzzle? Why is it important, relevant, interesting? How will your research proceed?

October 23 Theories of legislative organization

Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (Chapter 2)
Shepsle and Weingast, ["Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions,"](#) *LSQ* 19(1994):149-179
Weingast and Marshall, ["The Industrial Organization of Congress; or Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets,"](#) *Journal of Political Economy* 96 (1988): 132-163
Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization* (Michigan 1991), Chapters 1-3 (BB)
Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda*, Chapters 1-2 (BB)
Rohde, "Reflections on the Practice of Theorizing: Conditional Party Government in the Twenty-First Century," *JOP* 75(4) 849-864.

October 30 Congressional committees

Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees* (1973), Chapters 1-4 (BB)
Shepsle and Weingast, ["Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models,"](#) *AJPS* 23 (February 1979)
Shepsle and Weingast, ["The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power,"](#) *APSR* 81 (March 1987)
Krehbiel, ["Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?"](#) *APSR* 84 (March 1990)

- Maltzman and Smith [“Principals, Goals, Dimensionality and Congressional Committees.”](#) *LSQ* (November 1994)
- Vander Wielen, “The Influence of Conference Committees on Policy Outcomes,” *LSQ* 35 (2010): 487–518.
- Hall and Wayman, [“Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.”](#) *APSR* (September 1990)

November 6 Theories of decision making

- Kingdon, *Congressmen’s Voting Decisions* (1989, 3rd ed.) Chapters 1, 9, 10 (BB)
- Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, (BB Chapters 1-3)
- Poole and Rosenthal, “Patterns of Congressional Voting,” *AJPS* 35 (February 1991):228-78.
- Roberts, Smith, Haptonstahl, “The Dimensionality of Congressional Voting Reconsidered,” *APR* (2016) 794–815
- Lee, *Beyond Ideology* (Chicago 2009), Chapters TBA (BB)
- Wright, [“PACs, Contributions, and Roll Calls: An Organizational Perspective.”](#) *APSR* 79 (1985)

November 13 Parties and leaders

- Froman and Ripley, [“Conditions for Party Leadership: The Case of the House Democrats.”](#) *APSR* 59 (March 1965)
- Jones, [“Joseph G. Cannon and Howard W. Smith: An Essay on the Limits of Leadership in the House of Representatives.”](#) *JOP* 30 (August 1968)
- Cooper and Brady, [“Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn.”](#) *APSR* 75 (June 1981)
- Krehbiel and Wiseman, “Joseph G. Cannon: Majoritarianism from Illinois,” *LSQ* 26(2001):357-89.
- Lawrence, Maltzman, and Wahlbeck, [“The Politics of Speaker Cannon’s Committee Assignments.”](#) *AJPS* 45 (July 2001)
- Gaimard and Jenkins, “Negative Agenda Control in the Senate and House: Fingerprints of Majority Party Power,” *JOP* 60(August 2007):689-700.
- Smith, *Party Influence in Congress* (Cambridge 2007), Chapters TBA (BB)

November 20 Do parties matter?

- Krehbiel, [“Where’s the Party?”](#) *BJPS* 23 (1993):235-266
- Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda* (Cambridge 2005), Chapters TBA (BB)
- Krehbiel, “Cosponsors and Wafflers from A to Z,” *AJPS* 39(1995):906-23
- Binder, Lawrence and Maltzman, “Uncovering the Hidden Effects of Party,” *JOP* 61(1999):815-31
- Smith, Ostrander, and Pope, “Majority Party Power and Procedural Motions in the U.S. Senate,” *LSQ* 38(2013):205-36.

November 27 Institutional development

- Polsby, [“The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives.”](#) *APSR* 62 (1968):144-68
- Gamm and Shepsle. [“Emergence of Legislative Institutions: Standing Committees in the House and Senate: 1810-1825.”](#) *LSQ* 14 (1989)
- Katz and Sala, [“Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection.”](#) *APSR* 90(1996)
- Binder, [“The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990.”](#) *APSR* 90(1996):8-20.
- Schickler, “Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998,” *APSR* 94(2000):269-88

Smith and Gamm, "The Dynamics of Party Government in Congress," *Congress Reconsidered*, Eds. Dodd and Oppenheimer, 11th ed. (BB)

December 4 Congress and the executive

Mayhew, *Divided We Govern*. Chapters TBA (BB)

Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics*. Chapters TBA (BB)

Binder, "[The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-96.](#)" *APSR* 93 (1996)

Canes-Wrone and de Marchi, "[Presidential Approval and Legislative Success.](#)" *JOP* 64 (May 2002)

McCubbins, and Schwartz. "[Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms.](#)" *AJPS* 28 (1984)

Deering and Maltzman, "The Politics of Executive Orders: Legislative Constraints on Presidential Power," *APQ* (1999):767-83.

Ferejohn, John, and Charles Shipan, "[Congressional Influence on the Bureaucracy.](#)" *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 6 (Special issue 1990)

Howell and Pevehouse, "[Presidents, Congress, and the Use of Force.](#)" *International Organization* (2005):209-232

Hassell and Kernell. "Veto Rhetoric and Legislative Riders," *AJPS* 60 (2016):845–859

December 11 Reschedule—catch up week

More books on Congress to be familiar with...

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*
Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*
Binder, *Minority Rights, Majority Rule*
Binder, *Stalemate*
Binder and Smith, *Politics or Principle? Filibustering in the United States Senate*
Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, *The Personal Vote*
Cameron, *Veto Politics*
Cox and Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: Electoral Consequences of...*
Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan*
Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda*
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*
Grimmer, *Representational Style in Congress: What Legislators Say and Why It Matters*
Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*
Jacobson and Kernell, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*
Jenkins and Stewart, *Fighting for the Speakership*
Koger, *Filibustering: A Political History of Obstruction in the House and Senate*
Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization*
Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics*
Kriner, *After the Rubicon: Congress, Presidents, and the Politics of Waging War*
Lee and Oppenheimer, *Sizing Up the Senate*
Lee, *Beyond Ideology*
Lee, *Insecure Majorities*
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*)
Sulkin, *Issue Politics in Congress*
Volden and Wiseman, *Legislative Effectiveness in the United States Congress*
Wawro and Schickler, *Filibuster*
Wilson, *Congressional Government*