

*PS 121 Analyzing Congress
Winter 2016*

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Baxter 323
OH Tuesday 1-3

This class will introduce you to the study of the US Congress, with a focus on thinking analytically about the determinants of Congressional behavior. Among the factors examined will be the characteristics and incentives of legislators, Congressional elections, rules governing the legislative process and internal organization, separation of powers, and political parties. My hope is that this class will teach you a little bit both about the actual US Congress, and about the social scientific study of the US Congress.

FORMAT: Class will be taught as a mixture of lecture, discussion, and in class exercises; with emphasis on lecture. Course readings are listed by week.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Davidson, Roger H., Walter J. Oleszek and Frances E. Lee. *Congress and Its Members*, 14th Edition. CQ Press: Washington, DC.
- Stewart, Charles III. 2011. *Analyzing Congress*. W.W. Norton & Co: NY, NY.

READINGS

The course readings are a mixture of book chapters, academic journal articles, and popular press articles. The most updated information for the schedule and location of each reading (textbooks, web hyperlink, Moodle) is listed on the version of the syllabus in Moodle. I may also add short popular press articles to the readings as we move through the semester.

Note that there is sometimes considerable overlap between the two course textbooks. *Congress and its Members* is more descriptive, while *Analyzing Congress* is more theoretical. Both perspectives are important for giving you a fuller understanding of key course topics, but in general I will not test you on “facts and figures.”

Readings marked with [D] are generally descriptive and give the facts and trends associated with the topic. These can be pretty dry, but contain material you need to know to put the analytical material in context. Those with [C] are popular press articles that discuss contemporary happenings in Congress. These are chosen both to give you a general sense of what has been going on “recently” (i.e. the last 3 decades), and to illustrate key concepts in the theoretical readings. They’re not just for fun, so don’t skip them.

Those with [PS] represent political science articles. These are more interesting, but may use mathematical techniques you are not familiar with. Don’t get bogged down in the details of these analyses (which often leave much to be desired anyway); try to extract the gist of the authors’ argument and conclusions. But you may want to dig deeper if you are interested in pursuing political science further.

GRADING POLICIES: Grades will be determined as follows.

Participation & Exercises - 15%

Take Home Midterm - 35%

Take Home Final - 50%

Participation & Exercises:

Attendance and in-class participation are **mandatory**. I reserve the right to choose this portion of your grade based on your value added to class discussion.

There will be about five take home exercises over the course of the quarter. They will be graded for “on-time completion and honest effort” with either a 0 or a 1 (I may very rarely give a 2 for truly exceptional work). I strongly suggest that you make a serious effort on these, as they are representative of what you can expect on the exams. The grades will be folded into your participation grade. Detailed solutions will be distributed, and we sometimes discuss the solutions in class.

Exams

A third to a half of the content of the midterm and final will be formal mathematical problems that resemble the exercises. The remainder will ask you to respond in essay and short answer format, and test your analytical and substantive knowledge of Congress.

The midterm will be a 2-hour timed exam during the midterm period. The final will be a 24-hour take home exam during finals period. The exam policies are as follows.

- Exams are open book, open note, open internet.
- You may not discuss the exam, or course more generally, with anyone from the moment the window opens up to download, until the moment the window closes and all exams are submitted.
- “Discussion” is interpreted broadly to include the sharing of any course material, including lecture notes, reading notes, or problem sets; **even if these materials are unaltered from their original form and do not reflect any knowledge of the exam contents.**

Week 1 – Class Introduction

Introduction

- [C] Selection of popular press articles [**Moodle**]
- [D] *Congress and its Members* Ch. 2 [**textbook**]
- [PS] Fenno, R. 1990. “Political Scientists and Journalists,” *Watching Politicians*. pp. 27-54. [**Moodle**]

Week 2 – Congressional Elections, in theory and in practice

Politics as a Game and elections “in theory”

- [PS] Stewart, *Analyzing Congress*, pp. 3-49 [**textbook**]

Elections “in practice”

- [D] *Congress and its Members* pp 41-45, 96 - 100 [**textbook**]
 - [D] *Congress Reconsidered* (10th ed.), Chapter 4 [**Moodle**]

 - [PS] Herron & Bafumi. “Leapfrog Representation and Extremism.” *APSR* 2010 [Link](#)
 - [PS] Halberstam & Montagnes. “Presidential coattails vs. the median voter.” *JPubE* 2015. [Link](#).
- [Be prepared to discuss academic papers]

Week 3 – Candidates and Legislators, Introduced

Congressional Candidates

- [D] Herrnson, *Congressional Elections*, “Candidates and Nominations,” Ch. 2 [**Moodle**]
- [D/PS] *Analyzing Congress* Ch 4 [**textbook**]
- [C] “Why would anyone ever want to run for Congress?” *The Atlantic* [**Moodle**]
- [C] “Joe Sestak, the 60th Democrat,” *New York Times* [**Moodle**]

Congressional Incumbents

- [D] *Congress and its Members* Ch. 5 [**textbook**]
- [C] “A Day in the Life of US Rep. Cynthia Lummis” (VIDEO) [Link](#).
- [PS] Shively, “The Craft of Political Research,” pp. 12-18 [**Moodle**]

Week 4 – Theorizing about Legislators

The Electoral Connection, Introduced

[D / PS] Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, pp. 29-51 [Moodle]

[PS] Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, pp 1-77 [Moodle]

[No lecture; discussion of Mayhew]

Voters and Legislators as Principals and Agents

[PS] Ashworth, S. “Electoral accountability: recent theoretical and empirical work.” ARPS 2012. [Link](#)

[PS] Dropp & Peskowitz. 2012. “Electoral Security & Provision of Constituency Services...” JoP [Link](#).

[PS] Snyder & Stromberg. 2010. “Press Coverage and Political Accountability.” JPE [Link](#).

[PS] Broockman. 2013. “Black Politicians Are More Intrinsically Motivated...” AJPS [Link](#).

[Be prepared to discuss academic papers]

Week 5 – What Congress actually does, and how

What Congress does

[D] *Congress and Its Members* Ch. 14 [textbook]

[D] “Ten things I wish...,” Lee Hamilton, 2000 APSA Meeting. [Moodle]

“How a bill becomes a law”

[D] *Congress and its Members* Ch. 8 (we will cover the details again) [textbook]

MIDTERM – 2 hour take home during midterm period

Week 6 – Legislative Procedures 1

Midterm Review, Modeling Policymaking and Legislative Procedures Game

[In class game]

Scheduling and Floor Procedures in the House, Agenda Power

[PS] Stewart, *Analyzing Congress*, pp. 361 - 397 [textbook]

[C] Cochran, “The Vote That Never Happened”, *Inside Congress: A CQ Reader* [Moodle]

Week 7 – Legislative Procedures 2

Scheduling and Floor Procedures in the Senate

[PS] Binder & Smith. 1997. *Politics or Principle?* Chs 1 & 2 [Moodle]

[PS] Wawro & Schickler. 2007. *Filibuster*. pp 1-17, 44-51, 181-209 [Moodle]

Reform in the House and Senate

[C] Assorted popular press articles on filibuster reform [Moodle]

[D] Gold & Gupta. "The Constitutional Option to Change Senate Rules ..." *JLPP* 2005 [Moodle]

[No lecture; discussion of reform readings]

Week 8 – Modeling Separation of Powers, Introduction to Committees

“Pivotal Politics” Lawmaking Model

- [PS] Stewart, *Analyzing Congress*, pp. 3-49 [**textbook, review**]
- [PS] Stewart, *Analyzing Congress*, pp. 70 – 87 [**textbook**]
- [PS] Brady, David and Craig Volden. 2006. *Revolving Gridlock*. Chapter 2. [**Moodle**]
- [D] Stanford GSB case on Health Care Reform [**Moodle**]

Introduction to Committees

- [D] *Congress and its Members* Ch. 7 [**textbook**]
- [D] *Analyzing Congress*, pp. 306-339 [**textbook**]
- [C] Assorted popular press articles on committee assignments [**Moodle**]
- (Optional) [PS] Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*, Ch 4 p. 81-138 [**Moodle**]

Week 9 – Committees, cont.

Explaining agenda power & Distributive Theories

- [D] *Analyzing Congress*, pp. 339-352 [**textbook**]
- [PS] Krehbiel *Information and Legislative Organization*, Ch. 2 [**Moodle**]
- Handout on Distributive Theories of Committee Organization [**Moodle**]

Informational Committee Theories & Game

- [PS] Krehbiel *Information and Legislative Organization*, Ch. 3 [**Moodle**]
- Handout on Informational Theories of Committee Organization [**Moodle**]
- [In class game]

Week 10 – Parties in Congress

Introductory Material

- [D] *Congress and its Members* Ch. 6 [**textbook**]
- [C] Assorted popular press articles on *party whipping* [**Moodle**]
- [C] Assorted popular press articles on *party punishment* [**Moodle**]

Advanced Material

- [D] *Analyzing Congress* pp. 263-289 [**textbook**]
- [PS] Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda*; Chs. 1 & 2 [**Moodle**]
- [PS] Krehbiel, “Paradoxes of Parties in Congress” *LSQ* 1999 [Link](#)
- [C] WaPo, “Campaign Bill Heads for a Vote”, Jan 25 2002 [**Moodle**]
- [C] Assorted popular press articles on *fiscal cliff battles* [**Moodle**]

FURTHER READING ON SELECTED TOPICS

The Incumbency Effect

- [PS] Fiorina, Morris P. 1989. "Congress: Keystone of the Washington ..." Ch 1,3,5,6,7
- [PS] Cox & Wright. "Why Did the Incumbency Advantage ... Grow?" *AJPS* 1996. [Link](#)
- [PS] Ansolabehere et al "Old Voters, New Voters,..." *AJPS* 2000 [Link](#)
- [PS] Stone et al "Quality Counts..." *AJPS* 2004 [Link](#)
- [PS] Ashworth & Bueno de Mesquita. "Electoral Selection, Strategic Challenger ..." *JoP* 2008. [Link](#)
- [C] "Safe House: Incumbents Face Worry-Free Election" 5/18/2004 [Link](#)

Representativeness and Representation

- [PS] Weisberg, et. al. 1999. *Classics in Congressional Politics*. pp. 68-82, 87-101
- [PS] Canes-Wrone. Brady and Cogan. "Out of Step, Out of Office." *APSR* 2002. [Link](#)
- [PS] Ansolabehere et al "Candidate Positioning..." *AJPS* 2001 [Link](#)
- [PS] Ansolabahere et. al. Constituents' Responses to Congressional Roll-Call Voting. *AJPS* 2010. [Link](#)
- [C] Giroux "Pursuing the Political Prize of America's Hispanic Vote" 6/29/2002 [Link](#)
- [C] Minitier "The McCain Myth" 5/31/2005
- [C] Nagourney "Political Parties Shift Emphasis to Core Voters" *New York Times*, 9/1/2003 [Link](#)

Campaign Finance Law & Motives for Giving

- [D / PS] *Analyzing Congress* pp. 226 – 244 [**textbook**]
- [D] Herrnson, *Congressional Elections*, "The Campaign for Resources," Ch. 6 [**Moodle**]
- [PS] Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, Snyder. "Why is there so Little Money ... ?" *JEP* 2003 [Link](#)
- [C] WaPo, "House Rules" June 10 2007 [**Moodle**]

Districting

- [D] *Congress and its Members* pp 45-56 [**textbook**]
- [D/PS] *Analyzing Congress* pp. 210 – 226
- [C] Giroux "Remaps Clear Trend: Incumbent Protection" 11/3/2001 [Link](#)
- [C] Giroux "For Redistricting Control, the Future is Now" 9/19/2005 [Link](#)
- [C] Giroux "New Turf No Blessing for Some Incumbents" 12/8/2001 [Link](#)
- [PS] Cain "Assessing the Partisan Effects of Redistricting" *APSR* 1985 [Link](#)
- [PS/C] Monkey Cage "Redistricting didn't win Republicans the House"
- [C] "The House GOP can't be beat"
- [PS] "Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?" *AJPS* 2009 [Link](#)
- [PS] "Unintentional Gerrymandering" *QJPS* 2013 [Link](#)
- [PS] Shotts "Does Racial Redistricting Cause Conservative Policy Outcomes?" *JOP* 2003 [Link](#)

Congressional Parties

- [D] Herrnson, *Congressional Elections* "The Parties Campaign," Ch. 4 [**Moodle**]
- [C] Bai "The Inside Agitator," *New York Times*, 10/1/2006. [**Moodle**]
- [C] "Vulnerable House Dems Declare Their Independence" [**Moodle**]

Polarization

[PS] Fiorina. 2006. *Culture War*. Chs. 1, 2, and 4

[PS] McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America* Ch. 2.

Lobbying

[D] Levine, Bertram. 2009. "The Art of Lobbying," Ch. 2, 4, 5

[PS] Kollman, Ken. 1998. "Outside Lobbying," Chs 1 & 2

Congress and the Bureaucracy

[D] Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, "American Government," Ch. 7

[D] *Congress and its Members*, ch 11

[D / PS] Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch 13

[PS] Handbook of Political Economy, Ch.14, "Politics, Delegation, & Bureaucracy," Huber and Shipan