

# POLSCI 146 – The Development of Congress as an Institution

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**Instructor:** Michael Brady

**Day and Time:** Tu & Th 6:00 – 7:15 PM

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**Office Hours:** Wed 2-4pm or by appt.

“In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever characters composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob.”

- James Madison, Federalist 55

“... if a group of planners sat down and tried to design a pair of American national assemblies with the goal of serving members’ electoral needs year in and year out, they would be hard pressed to improve on what exists.”

- David R. Mayhew (*Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 1974)

The U.S. Congress is often considered the “First Branch” of the federal government, and by its construction is easily the most complex. Part of this complexity follows from Article I of the Constitution which essentially allows each chamber to organize itself as it sees fit, but at the same time requires intra- and inter-chamber agreement for a bill to be passed. Over the course of this semester we will consider the institutional development of Congress with an eye towards how they help solve classic problems in political science. We will consider how various institutions such as parties, committees, and procedures help legislators reach their goals and help solve problems such as collective action, voting cycles, and ambition. While we begin by looking at Congress at its inception the course will quickly move to the institutions and procedures of textbook era in the early Twentieth Century (pre-1974) and the contemporary era. Ultimately, we will apply our institutional study of Congress to current events including pending legislation and the 2006 midterm elections.

## Course objectives:

- Increased understanding of the inner workings of both the House and Senate, their procedures, and the legislative process
- Increased understanding of problems with collective action, social choice, ambition and how they relate to Congress
- Increased ability to discuss the development of congressional institutions and how they affect the legislative process and individual members’ lives
- Increased ability to analyze, discuss, and write about legislation and members’ choices through the politics of the institution as opposed to simply understanding the substantive issues
- Develop additional resources for gathering information about congressional politics

## Textbooks:

The first three required texts should be available in the university textbook store. The fourth is most readily available (and most cheaply) available on Amazon.com or some other used text vendor. Additional readings as specified in the course schedule will either be available through JSTOR, Blackboard, or the Internet (not the big truck you just dump things on).

## REQUIRED

1. *The American Congress (4<sup>th</sup>)*. Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen (2006).
2. *Analyzing Congress*. Charles Stewart III (2001).
3. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress (2<sup>nd</sup>)*. Barbara Sinclair (2005).
4. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. David R. Mayhew (1974).

## RECOMMENDED

1. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process, (6th Edition)*. Walter J. Oleszek (2003).

NOTE: This is a good resource on the actual rules and procedures of both chambers

## Assignments/Grading:

Studying Congress can and should be interesting. Graded work for the course is intended to compliment the readings, reinforce difficult concepts, and provide a chance to apply knowledge to interesting contemporary problems.

- Short homework assignments and periodic in-class quizzes on readings and current events (10%)
- 1<sup>st</sup> paper on a representative and the electoral connection (20%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> paper analyzing the legislative process of a recent bill (25%)
- Presentation/Podcast/Analysis (10%)
- Comprehensive final (25%)
- Class participation (10%)

## HOMEWORK:

These assignments will usually be short and either geared towards the readings in Stewart or serve as a stepping stone towards the two research papers.

## QUIZZES:

By definition these will not be announced ahead of time, but will only be on Thursdays. They will be short with questions on assigned readings for that week and current events. One of these will be dropped from the average.

## 1<sup>st</sup> PAPER (5-7 pages):

For this paper you will choose a representative of Congress that is seeking re-election and in 5-7 pages analyze their recent behavior with respect to the electoral connection. This paper should focus more on the member's congressional behavior as it relates strategically to the campaign rather than the campaign itself. While some attention should be paid to the home district and the opponent(s), the crux of the paper is to show how congressional decisions, roles, and institutions are used to further (or hinder) his/her electoral goals.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> PAPER and PRESENTATION:

This paper will synthesize all of the concepts from the course into a rigorous analysis of the institutional politics behind a single bill. In 12-15 pages you will present the political story behind a bill from inception to conference committee. Though some discussion of the policy goals will be relevant the goal here is to use the bill as a window to show how the institutions of Congress can be used strategically to influence outcomes. One should attempt to explain why the bill took the path it did, what choices shaped its outcome, who benefits/pays, and why. The final product should weave the actions of different players into a compelling story of political intrigue worthy of note in a CQ style publication. The presentation will likely be in the form a 3-4min podcast.

## iPods:

This course is designed to integrate current events into a rigorous study of the U.S. Congress and its various institutions. We will listen to ABC's "Afternote" podcast and NPR's "All things politics." As the semester progresses we will try new programs in different groups and round out the list to a reliable set of sources for Congress material.

## Expectations:

- Changes to the syllabus and schedule are likely to happen but will be communicated as far in advance as possible, both in class and through Blackboard. Check Blackboard regularly.
- Keeping up with current events relating to Washington politics and congress is a key component of the course and will hopefully shape class discussions on a regular basis. Reading the politics/Washington section of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* are good ways to stay on top of national news, while CQ and *The National Journal* are good for more Congress specific stuff.
- All Duke policies and honor codes abide; students are expected to maintain the highest levels of academic integrity.
- To get the most out of class, readings should be done before the class meeting.
- Class is designed to incorporate discussion and Q&A so attendance is strongly encouraged.
- Paper and assignment deadlines are communicated well in advance so late work will not be accepted. Unless otherwise stated, work is expected to be an individual effort
- Papers should adhere to a coherent citation style (I don't necessarily care which but as long as it is used consistently). The Chicago Manual of Style is dominant in political science and is a good place to start. I will happily look at one draft per paper as long as it is provided at least a week before the due date. Strong writing (syntax, style, and diction) is a must for top marks.

## Schedule:

The course is roughly divided into three sections. The first consists of preliminaries and some history of congressional development. The second section focuses more on the electoral connection of congressional institutions culminating in the 1<sup>st</sup> paper. The final section is on the contemporary congress and legislative procedures which concludes with the 2<sup>nd</sup> paper. Unless otherwise noted the articles are available on JSTOR.

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| August 29    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Introductions, syllabus, shared expectations</li><li>2. Current events</li><li>3. What's an institution and why should anyone care? What's in a majority anyway?</li></ol>   |
| August 31    | CLASS CANCELLED --- Annual Meeting of the Political Science Assoc.  |
| September 5  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The constitutional moment and institutional choices<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The U.S. Constitution – Appendix B in Stewart</li><li>b. <a href="#">Articles of Confederation</a></li><li>c. <a href="#">Federalist 10, 52, 53, 55, 62, 63</a></li><li>d. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 2</li></ol></li></ol>  |
| September 7  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Thinking analytically about the choice of institutions<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Listen to <a href="#">Amar: 'The Constitution: A Biography'</a> (~1 hr.)</li></ol></li><li>2. Politics in outer space or how to think about politics more formally<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Stewart, Ch. 2</li><li>b. RECOMMENDED: Stewart, Ch. 1</li></ol></li></ol> <p>HOMEWORK (Due 9/12): in Stewart Ch. 1 - Q 9-10, Ch. 2 – Q 1-2</p> |
| September 12 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The problem of social choice and parties as institutional solutions</li></ol>  |

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|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Why Parties?</i> Aldrich, Ch. 3 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>b. <a href="#">“The Anti-Federalists, the first congress...”</a> Aldrich, Grant (1993)</li> <li>c. <a href="#">“Examining the bonding effects of Party”</a> Jenkins (1999)</li> </ul>   |
| September 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The development of congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Smith, Robert, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 1</li> <li>b. <a href="#">“The Institutionalization of the US House.”</a> Polsby (1968) APSR</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| September 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The electoral connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Stewart, Ch. 3</li> <li>b. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 3</li> <li>c. 2006 Election Primer Handout (<i>National Journal</i>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>HOMEWORK (Due 9/21): choose 1 House campaign from the most competitive (no duplicates) and write a 1pg summary of the incumbent’s electoral profile and history.</p>  |
| September 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Running for election and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mayhew, Part I, and first 20 pps. of part II</li> <li>b. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 5</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| September 26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deciding to run and then run again <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Stewart, Ch. 4</li> <li>b. <a href="#">“Risk Bearing and Progressive Ambition”</a> Rohde (1979)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Promoting and controlling ambition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Why Parties?</i> Aldrich, Ch. 5 (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| September 28 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raising and spending money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Stewart, Ch. 6</li> <li>b. <a href="#">“The Allocation of Party Resources...”</a> Damore, Hansford (1999)</li> <li>c. “The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act...” Herrnson (handout)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| October 3    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do MC’s do and representation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <a href="#">“US House Members in their Constituencies”</a> Fenno (1977) APSR</li> <li>b. “Hill Styles and Home Styles” Davidson and Oleszek (On Blackboard)</li> <li>c. <a href="#">“Unfastening the Electoral Connection:”</a> Herrick, et.al. (1994)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| October 5    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Position taking, voting, and the electoral connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <a href="#">“Candidate Positioning in House Elections”</a> Ansolbehere et.al. (2001)</li> <li>b. <a href="#">“Out of Step out of Office”</a> Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan (2002)</li> <li>c. <a href="#">"The vulnerable American politician"</a> King (2000)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| October 10   | FALL BREAK --- ENJOY  |
| October 12   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Rules of the Game a.k.a. “I’m just a bill on capital hill...” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 4</li> <li>b. Sinclair, Ch. 1</li> <li>c. House and Senate Procedures CRS handout (on black board)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>OTHER RESOURCES: Oleszek and the many reports available <a href="#">here</a></p>  |
| October 17   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Textbook versus unorthodox/post-reform procedure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Sinclair, Chs. 2, 3, &amp; 6</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| October 19   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If everyone is doing their own thing how does anything get done? The Problems of Collective Action, organization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Legislative Leviathan, Ch. 4 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>b. Parties and Leaders in the Post Reform House Chs. 1 &amp; 2 (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>HOMEWORK (Due 10/24): Choose a bill that went all the way through conference committee in one of the last 2 Congresses. In no more than one page provide all the bill names and numbers, a brief description, who sponsored in both chambers, and the voting history</p> |
| October 24   | <p>1<sup>st</sup> PAPER DUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parties in the Senate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. “The Senate Whip System” Bradbury et.al. (2006) (on Blackboard)</li> <li>b. TBD</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <a href="#">“Institutional context and leadership style”</a> Cooper and Brady (1981)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |

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|             | b. <a href="#">“The Institutionalization of Leadership in Congress”</a> Canon (1989)  |
| October 26  | 1. Parties and leaders across capital hill<br>a. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 6<br>b. Stewart, Ch. 7  |
| October 31  | 1. Committees<br>a. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 7<br>b. Stewart Ch. 8<br><br>HOMEWORK (Due 11/5, by 5PM): Update your working knowledge of the candidate you profiled for your 1 <sup>st</sup> paper and create a podcast 3-5 min max that serves to fill in everyone on the status of that race. Make sure to connect to the concepts from class regarding any recent congressional behavior then make and defend a prediction about the outcome. |
| November 2  | 1. Rules and Procedures<br>a. <a href="#">“The Transition to Republican Rule in the House”</a> Aldrich, Rohde (1997)<br>b. <a href="#">“Special Rules and the Institutional Design Controversy”</a> Sinclair (1994)<br>c. <a href="#">“Managing the Senate Floor”</a> Smith, Flathman (1989)<br>d. <a href="#">“Political Goals and Procedural Choice”</a> Binder and Smith (1998)  |
| November 7  | ELECTION DAY – go vote (or not), but come to class<br>1. Floor Voting<br>a. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 8<br>b. Stewart Ch. 9  |
| November 9  | Election round-up. Listen to podcasts, review your 1 <sup>st</sup> papers, and come ready to discuss how your member fared, the political landscape, and the future of the 110 <sup>th</sup> Congress<br>1. Conference committees<br>a. TBD?<br>b. <i>Bicameral Politics</i> , Longely and Oleszek Chap. 2 and 3 (Blackboard)<br>c. “An Evolving Endgame” Van Houweling (Blackboard)  |
| November 14 | 1. Dealing with the President<br>a. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 9<br>b. <i>Divided We Govern</i> , Chs 1 & 5, Mayhew (Blackboard)<br>c. <i>Veto Bargaining</i> , Cameron Ch. 2 (Blackboard)  |
| November 16 | 1. Putting it all together: The Budget Process<br>a. Smith, Roberts, Vander Wielen, Ch. 12<br>b. Sinclair, Chs. 5, 10, & 11<br><br>HOMEWORK (For 11/28) We will form 3 groups each to present one of chapters 7, 8, or 9 from Sinclair for next week. Everyone should read them all, but focus on the one you were assigned and chapter 12.   |
| November 21 | 1. FLEX WEEK - Oversight and a bit of interest groups<br>a. “Police Patrols and Fire Alarms” McCubbins and Schwartz (1984)<br>b. Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, Ch. 11  |
| November 23 | THANKSGIVING --- EAT SOME FOOD!   |
| November 28 | 1. Unorthodox procedures<br>a. Sinclair, Chs. 7, 8, 9, 12   |
| November 30 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> PAPER (5PM, Fri. 12/1) and PODCAST PRESENTATIONS DUE (5PM, Sun. 12/3)<br>1. Putting it all together into a coherent theory: Pivots v. CPG<br>a. “The Consequences of Party Organization...” Aldrich, Rohde (Blackboard)<br>b. <i>Pivotal Politics</i> Krehbiel Chs. 1 & 2 (Blackboard)  |
| December 5  | 1. Discussion of 1 <sup>st</sup> half of podcasts   |
| December 7  | LAST CLASS MEETING<br>1. Discussion of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of podcasts   |
| December 17 | SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM --- 7:00 – 10:00 PM  |