

PLS 5173: Seminar on Congress
T 12:30-3 pm, Coleman 3752

Spring 2009

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Office hours: MWF 10-10:50 am, T 8:30-10:30 am, and by appointment

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Course Objectives: The purpose of this graduate-level seminar is to analyze major theories and concepts about the U.S. Congress. This course focuses on current and classic scholarly literature on Congress, ranging from constituent relations and congressional elections, to roll-call voting behavior and committee politics. We will explore the extent to which our current national legislature is effective—in passing policy, providing checks and balances, and representing voters. While our focus is on the U.S. Congress, many of the concepts and frameworks introduced can be used to study any legislative body. This course fulfills requirements for the major and minor concentration in American politics. Your grade in this course should reflect your ability to:

- Understand and analyze theories and concepts that explain Congressional behavior,
- Apply research methodologies used to study Congress, and
- Develop critical thinking and writing skills.

Requirements: Required texts for this course are Mann and Ornstein's *The Broken Branch*, Cox and McCubbins's *Legislative Leviathan* (2nd ed.), Mondak and Mitchell's *Fault Lines: Why the Republicans Lost Congress*, and Sinclair's *Unorthodox Lawmaking* (3rd ed.). Additional readings will be required through JSTOR and Booth's online periodical database. Naturally, you should keep informed of current political events that are related to the class. Your grade will be based on the following:

- Participation, 150 points, based on:
 - Completing all assigned weekly readings. Everyone must participate in this seminar—I will not lecture. Participation includes raising questions, ideas, and criticisms, beyond simple one-word responses. You should provide some *substantive, in-depth* participation at least four times during a class period in order to earn full credit. Use your reading responses to prepare for this participation. You will also earn points as we discuss our research proposals, progress reports, and respond to one another with questions and useful feedback (10 points per week).
- Weekly Reading Responses, 130 points (10 points per week):
 - During all but two class meetings, you will turn in a series of questions/comments/criticisms to help guide our class discussion. You must turn in one substantive question/comment/criticism about *each* required reading. This assignment should not exceed one page single-spaced, and must be typed. Your response may be a list of the readings, with a bulleted list with your response after each reading. Refer to the articles by the author(s)' last name(s).
 - Your responses should follow one of the following approaches:
 - Critiquing a reading or readings—are there methodological questions? Are there normative questions? Are there theoretical or logical questions?
 - Compare two opposing arguments and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each.
 - Considering how we can synthesize or integrate a set of readings, creating a new framework for understanding some issue, or applying some theory or concept.
 - Ask how a set of readings can be used to understand a real-world political event. Provide some development.
 - Consider how a reading can be a springboard for a new research question. Provide and develop that research question.
 - The goal of the responses is to illustrate your critical thinking skills and to provide further discussion and learning in class. You will receive lower grades for poor writing. In addition, picking apart an author's writing style, telling me you didn't like the reading, or focusing too much on ideological biases, is not graduate-level analysis.

- Research Project:
 - Research Proposal, 25 points
 - Provide a one page, single-spaced summary of your research project topic. This proposal should include your research question or hypothesis, references to scholarly literature, and an explanation of how you will conduct your research. Attach a preliminary bibliography, with at least three scholarly sources which you cite in your proposal. You will briefly present your topic to the rest of the class for discussion. Consider meeting with me to discuss your ideas.
 - Research Progress Report, 50 points
 - Your progress report should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced. This report should provide me with a draft of your final paper. Your report should include a completed introduction, methodology, and either a completed literature review or analysis. Attach a bibliography. You will briefly present your findings with the rest of the class for discussion. Feel free to meet with me to discuss your progress.
 - Final Research Project, 120 points
 - You will write a 15-20 page double-spaced paper analyzing some aspect of the U.S. Congress. Your paper must include a research question or hypothesis, a discussion of the relevance of your topic, a review of the relevant scholarly literature for your topic, an explanation of your methodology, analysis, and a discussion/conclusion. You must use APSA style for your bibliography and citations, and should cite at least 15 different sources—most of them scholarly sources. You may use either qualitative or quantitative methods (or a mix) to conduct your analysis. More information will be provided in class. You should also meet with me at least once to discuss your paper.
 - Research Presentation, 25 points
 - You will make a 15 minute presentation of your research project during the last week of class. Discussion and Q&A to follow.
- Grading: A 450-500 B 400-449 C 350-399 D 300-349 F 0-299

Disabilities: Students with disabilities requiring special accommodations should contact me as soon as possible. If you have any questions about this, contact the Office of Disabilities Services, at 581-6583.

Student Assistance: If you are struggling with courses or with college in general, please seek help. Come talk to me, or contact the Academic Success Center (581-6696) for academic problems, and the Counseling Center (581-3413) for personal problems.

Late Policy/Attendance Policy: As a graduate student, you should not miss class at all, save for serious emergencies or illness. Late assignments will be reduced by 10% for each day that they are late. You will not receive participation credit on days that you miss class. Please see me if you have any questions.

Academic Honesty: Become familiar with Eastern’s Student Conduct Code. Academic violations of this code include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating on examinations, plagiarism, collusion, misrepresentation or falsification of data.
- Theft or the unauthorized possession of examinations; alteration, theft, or destruction of the academic work of others.
- Submitting work previously presented in another course unless specifically permitted by the instructor.
- Conduct which disrupts the academic environment; disruption in classes.
- Complicity with others in violations of this standard.

Instructors are obligated to report all instances of academic dishonesty. The University’s recommended penalty for any academic dishonesty is at minimum, an F in the course. If you have any questions, please see me or the Judicial Affairs Office.

Classroom Rules:

- Turn off all electronic devices. I prefer that you not use laptops in class.
- Arrive to class on time and prepared, with your readings and notes.
- This class is not a TV talk show, where people with opposing views demean one another. Furthermore, as a graduate seminar, current events may be relevant and useful for class discussion—but the focus remains on the literature and research.

Course Outline: Readings and assignments listed for each day are due on that day. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class. Students should also check their EIU email accounts on a regular basis.

January 13 Introductions

Discussion of the syllabus & research project
Getting to know each other ☺

January 20 A Normative Argument on Congress

Mann, Thomas and Norman Ornstein. 2006. *The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*. New York: Oxford.
Further discussion of Congressional research
Reading response #1

January 27 How Congress Evolves

Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives," *American Political Science Review* 62: 144-168.
Sinclair, Barbara. 2007. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly. Chapters 1-6.
Reading response #2

February 3 Cases of Congressional Evolution.

Sinclair, Barbara. 2007. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly. Chapters 7-13.
Reading response #3
Research proposal due—be prepared to briefly present them in class.

February 10 Congressional Candidacies & Campaigns

Rohde, David. 1979. "Risk-Bearing and Progressive Ambition: The Case of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives," *American Political Science Review* 23: 1-26.
Stone, Walter, Nathan Hadley, Rolfe Peterson, Cherie Maestas and Sandy Maisel. 2009. "Candidate Entry, Voter Response, and Partisan Tides in the 2002 and 2006 Elections." In *Fault Lines: Why the Republicans Lost Congress*. Eds. Jefferey Mondak and Dona-Gene Mitchell. New York: Routledge.
Mariani, Mack. 2008. "A Gendered Pipeline? The Advancement of State Legislators to Congress in Five States" *Politics & Gender* 4 (2): 285-308.
Hendry, David, Robert Jackson, and Jefferey Mondak. 2009. "Abramoff, Email, and the Mistreated Mistress: Scandal and Character in the 2006 Elections" in *Fault Lines: Why Republicans Lost Congress*. Eds. Jefferey Mondak and Dona-Gene Mitchell. New York: Routledge.
Lawless, Jennifer and Kathryn Pearson. 2008. "The Primary Reason for Women's Under-Representation? Re-Evaluating the Conventional Wisdom" *Journal of Politics* 70 (1): 67-82.
Reading response #4

February 17 Congressional Voting and Outcomes

Buttice, Matthew, Robert Huckfeldt and John Barry Ryan. 2009. "Polarization, Attribution, and Communication Networks in the 2006 Congressional Elections" in *Fault Lines: Why Republicans Lost Congress*. Eds. Jefferey Mondak and Dona-Gene Mitchell. New York: Routledge.
Mitchell, Dona-Gene. 2009. "Perceptions and Realities of Issue Voting" in *Fault Lines: Why Republicans Lost Congress*. Eds. Jefferey Mondak and Dona-Gene Mitchell. New York: Routledge.
Jacobson, Gary. 2009. "The President, the War, and Voting Behavior in the 2006 House Elections" in *Fault Lines: Why Republicans Lost Congress*. Eds. Jefferey Mondak and Dona-Gene Mitchell. New York: Routledge.
McGhee, Eric. 2008. "Cohort Effects and the Incumbency Advantage" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33 (1): 113-130.
Highton, Benjamin. 2008. "Job Approval and Senate Election Outcomes" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33 (2): 245-262.
Reading response #5

February 24 Research on Representation

- Fenno, Richard. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration," *American Political Science Review* 71: 883-917.
- Miller, Kristina. 2007. "The View from the Hill: Legislative Perceptions of the District." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32: 597-628.
- Wagner, Michael. 2007. "Beyond Policy Representation in the U.S. House: Partisanship, Polarization, and Citizen's Attitudes about Casework." *American Politics Research* 35: 771-789.
- Hibbing, John, Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, and Eric Whitaker. 2009. "Americans' Perceptions of the Nature of Governing" in *Fault Lines: Why Republicans Lost Congress*. Eds. Jefferey Mondak and Dona-Gene Mitchell. New York: Routledge.
- Reading response #6

March 3 Substantive v. Descriptive Representation

- Tate, Katherine. 2001. "The Political Representation of Blacks in Congress: Does Race Matter?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26 (4): 623-638.
- Lawless, Jennifer. 2004. "Politics of Presence? Congresswomen and Symbolic Representation" *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (1): 81-99.
- Swers, Michele. 2007. "Building a Reputation on National Security: The Impact of Stereotypes Related to Gender and Military Experience." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32: 559-596.
- Gamble, Katrina. 2007. "Black Political Representation: An Examination of Legislative Activity Within U.S. House Committees." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32: 421-448.
- Brunell, Thomas, Christopher Anderson and Rachel Cremona. 2008. "Descriptive Representation, District Demography, and Attitudes toward Congress among African Americans." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33(3): 223-244.
- Reading response #7

March 10 Committees in Congress

- Krehbiel, Keith. 1990. "Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?" *American Political Science Review*. 84: 149-163.
- Krutz, Glenn. 2005. "Issues and Institutions: 'Winnowing' in the U.S. Congress," *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 313-26.
- Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. New York: Cambridge. Introduction and Chapters 1-3.
- Adler, Scott and John Wilkerson. 2008. "Intended Consequences: Jurisdictional Reform and Issue Control in the U.S. House of Representatives" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33 (1): 85-112.
- Reading response #8

March 24 Parties in Congress

- Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23: 235-66.
- Aldrich, John and David Rohde. 2000. "The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee," *Journal of Politics* 62: 1-33.
- Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. New York: Cambridge. Introduction and Chapters 4-6.
- Reading response #9

March 31 Comparing Party and Floor Models of Congress

- Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. New York: Cambridge. Introduction and Chapters 7-10.
- Finocchiaro, Charles and David Rohde. 2008. "War on the Floor: Partisan Theory and Agenda Control in the U.S. House of Representatives" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33(1): 35-62.
- Gailmard, Sean and Jeffery Jenkins. 2007. "Negative Agenda Control in the Senate and House: Fingerprints of Majority Party Power" *Journal of Politics* 69 (3): 689-700.
- Research progress report due—be prepared to briefly discuss them in class
- Reading response #10

April 7 Exploring the Role of Leaders

Cooper, Joseph and David Brady. 1981. "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn." *American Political Science Review* 75:411-425.

Krehbiel, Keith and Alan Wiseman. 2001. "Joseph G. Cannon: Majoritarian from Illinois" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26 (3): 357-390.

Herrnson, Paul and Irwin Morris. 2007. "Presidential Campaigning in the 2002 Congressional Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32: 629-648.

Kanthak, Kristin. 2007. "Crystal Elephants and Committee Chairs: Campaign Contributions and Leadership Races in the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Politics Research* 35: 389-406.

Reading response #11

April 14 Congressional Voting

Kingdon, John. 1977. "Models of Legislative Voting" *Journal of Politics* 39 (3): 563-595.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David Brady and John Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting" *American Political Science Review* 96 (1): 127-140.

Highton, Benjamin and Michael Rocca. 2005. "Beyond the Roll-Call Arena: The Determinants of Position Taking in Congress" *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (2): 303-316.

Finocchiaro, Charles and Jeffery Jenkins. 2008. "In Search of Killer Amendments in the Modern U.S. House" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33 (2): 263-294.

Reading response #12

April 21 Congress, Interest Groups, the Media & the Public

Esterling, Kevin. 2007. "Buying Expertise: Campaign Contributions and Attention to Policy Analysis in Congressional Committees" *American Political Science Review* 101 (1): 93-110.

Carmines, Edward, Jessica Gerrity and Michael Wagner. 2009. "Did the Media Do It? The Influence of News Coverage on the 2006 Congressional Elections" in *Fault Lines: Why Republicans Lost Congress*. Eds. Jefferey Mondak and Dona-Gene Mitchell. New York: Routledge.

Fogarty, Brian. 2008. "The Strategy of the Story: Media Monitoring Legislative Activity" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33 (3): 445-470.

Witko, Christopher. 2006. "PACs, Issue Context, and Congressional Decisionmaking" *Political Research Quarterly* 59 (2): 283-295.

Lipinski, Daniel. 2009. "Congressional Careers from the Inside: A Political Scientist as Congressman" in *Congress Reconsidered*. 9th ed. Eds. Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.

Reading response #13

April 28 Research Presentations

May 1 Final Research Paper Due

May 5 Research Presentations (& Lunch)