The Legislative Process
Classic Questions and New Approaches

PLSC 826
Syllabus, Fall 2014

Prof. Eleanor Neff Powell
Seminar Schedule: Thursday 2:30-4:30
Email: epowell4@wisc.edu
Office Location: 216 North Hall

Course Description
This is a graduate course designed to introduce students to research and theoretical approaches to studying the U.S. Congress. We will examine different explanations for and models of the sources of institutions, discuss their internal organization and governance, and consider the effects of institutions on outcomes of interest. Each week we will tackle a classic question in the field by reading a formal model, a classic empirical piece, and a new approach piece. The goal is to think constructively and creatively about how to move this research agenda forward. Each week participants will write a “Next Step Memo” describing what you think the next steps in this research area should be. Use your creativity here. Think outside the box. Take risks. The idea is to start thinking constructively and creatively about research building toward your own full blown research proposal final project.

Requirements

1. Do the assigned readings before class.

2. Attend class & participate in discussion.

3. Weekly “Next Step Memo.” By 9pm Wednesday evening before class, you will have emailed to the other class participants a memo on what you think the next steps in this research area should be. Use your creativity here. Think outside the box. Take risks. The idea is to start thinking constructively and creatively about research building toward your own research proposal final project. (2 pgs)

4. Research Proposal (10 pgs) due at the end of the semester.
Grading

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Class Participation &amp; Weekly Next Step Memo</th>
<th>50%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
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Academic Integrity
All papers should be your own independent work citing sources where appropriate. I strongly encourage you to review Wisconsin’s policies regarding academic honesty. These policies will be strictly enforced in this class. In general, if you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

The writing assignments for this class cannot be combined with or used jointly for another class without express written permission from both the other instruction and myself.

Background Materials
If you are new to the study of Congress and political institutions and/or have never taken an undergraduate Congress course, I recommend reading Smith, Roberts and Vander Wielen’s *The American Congress* textbook (8th edition).

If you find yourself particularly interested in matters of parliamentary procedure, I recommend seeking out Olezek’s *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process (9th edition).*
## Course Outline

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>Congress: How do Members decide? What do Members do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/18</td>
<td>Congress: Do Parties Matter? How and Why?</td>
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<td>9/25</td>
<td>Congress: How is Congress Organized? Congressional Committees &amp; the Legislative Process</td>
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<td>10/2</td>
<td>Electoral Accountability: Are Members Responsive to District Opinion?</td>
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<td>10/9</td>
<td>What are the Policy Consequences of Institutions?</td>
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<td>10/16</td>
<td>Roll Call Voting: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly</td>
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<td>10/23</td>
<td>Congress, The Presidency &amp; Separation of Powers</td>
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<td>10/30</td>
<td>Congress &amp; The Bureaucracy</td>
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<td>11/6</td>
<td>Congress &amp; The Courts</td>
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<td>11/20</td>
<td>Comparative Legislatures</td>
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<td>12/4</td>
<td>Blending Institutional Approaches – Models &amp; History</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/11</td>
<td>New Debates – Selections from Congress &amp; History Conference</td>
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<td>Final Papers Due: December 20th</td>
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Readings

9/4 - Introduction, Syllabus Handout, Overview – The Study of Congress


9/11 – Congress: How do members decide? What do members do?


9/18 – Congress: Do Parties Matter? How and Why?


Carson, Koger, Lebo, Young. 2010.


9/25 – Congress: How is Congress Organized? Congressional Committees and the Legislative Process


** Sinclair (2012)**, Ch 2-6, 10,

Roberts & Smith (2007)
10/2 – Electoral Accountability: Are Members Responsive to District Opinion?

**Formal:**

**Classic Empirical:**


**New Empirical:**


**Field Overview:**

**Recommended:**
Fox & Shotts (2009)

Mayhew (2000)


Aldrich & Rohde 2000.

10/9–Policy Consequences of Institutions


10/16- Roll Call Voting: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly


Recommended:


10/23- Congress, The Presidency & Separation of Powers


Diermeier & Myerson (1999).


10/30–Congress & The Bureaucracy


11/6- Congress & The Courts


Recommended:
Rosenberg (1991) Ch 1-5
Epstein & Knight (1998) Ch 1-3
Lax & Rader (2010)
Lax & Kastellec (2008)


11/13- Interest Groups

Formal:


Recommended: Baumgartner et al (2009) - Ch 1, 11, 12
11/20- Comparative Legislatures


12/4- Blending Institutional Approaches – Models & History


12/11 – New Debates – Selections From 2014 Congress & History Conference.
Noel, Hans. “Separating Ideology from Party in Roll Call Data: Why NOMINATE Doesn’t Measure Ideology But Can be Used to Measure Polarization.”


Bateman, David, Josh Clinton and John Lapinski. “A House Divided?: Policy Differences and Polarization.”


Jamie L. Carson and Joel Sievert. “Electoral Accountability in an Era of Party Ballots.”

Final Papers Due: December 20th.