General Synopsis:
This course is an introduction to the “behavioral” literature on Congress, and will serve as a complement to my course on Congressional institutional organization and development. Our general approach will have a distinct rational-choice flavor, as we will assume that the preferences and goals of individual members of Congress (MCs) shape how they behave as elected representatives. The course will be fairly evenly split between the literatures on representation, roll-call voting, and elections. However, as these topics are often intertwined, readings intended to focus on a given topic will often directly or indirectly touch on another topic.

Course Requirements:
There are several requirements for this class:

(1) You must come to class prepared, which means that you have done the week’s readings in advance. You are also expected to participate in class discussion. Participation is what makes a seminar a useful learning experience – you learn as much from the in-class discussion as you do from the readings themselves. Moreover, given that this is your chosen vocation, you should be active in fostering your professional development.

(2) Each week, each of you will serve as a “discussion leader” for a given paper (or section of a book). This means that you will present the paper (book section) in class – covering the theory, substance, and empirics in a thorough and critical manner.

(3) A “final assignment” will be due at the end of the quarter. This assignment can take two forms. First, you may write a research paper (or research design). This option may allow you to make strides toward the completion of a piece that may eventually be publishable. Second, you may opt for a take-home final exam. This option may be more attractive to you, should you not want to pursue research in the Congress field.
Course Grades:
Participation and quality of discussion leadership will make up 50% of the course grade, while
the final assignment will be worth the other 50%.

If you do the readings and participate in a thoughtful way in class, you will do fine. The most
important thing is that you endeavor to learn – do not be afraid to make mistakes. If you
show me that you are serious and thoughtful, you will be rewarded.

Several books are required. All are available at the Norris Center bookstore:

Press.
Brookings Institution.
Call Voting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Longman.

The following book is also available as a supplement:


Other Issues:

We will not spend a lot of time discussing the “nuts and bolts” of Congress. I will assume that
you have taken an undergraduate Congress course and, therefore, have a working knowledge of
the institution. If you feel that you are not quite up to speed, the book by Stewart offers a solid
basic primer. When a particular issue/concept is especially important to understand a given
reading – for example, the cloture rule in the Senate – we will spend a bit of time discussing its
substance. In addition to the books above, I will assign a number of articles from scholarly
journals. Many of the articles are available electronically (the source of which I indicate next to
the citation), but some are not. In those latter cases, I will provide versions for you to photocopy.

**Week 1: Course Overview (9/29)**

Introduction and discussion of the syllabus.

**Week 2: The Electoral Connection (10/6)**

Press. All.

*American Political Science Review* 71: 883-917. [JSTOR]


**Week 3: Race and Representation (10/13)**


**Week 4: Representation: The Effects of Rules (10/20)**


**Week 5: Policy Responsiveness (10/27)**


**Week 6: Roll-Call Voting: Some Basics (11/3)**


Peter Van Doren. 1990. “Can We Learn the Causes of Congressional Decisions from Roll Call Data?” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15: 311-40.


**Week 7: Roll-Call Voting: Examining Constituency Influence (11/10)**


**Week 8: Roll-Call Voting: Disentangling Party Influence (11/17)**


**Week 9: Elections, Part I (11/24)**


Week 10: Elections, Part II (12/1)


Week 11: Exam Week

Final paper or exam due.