

Political Science 324
American Legislative Process

Spring 2000
1:50 - 2:40 MWF
228 Erickson Hall

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Office hours: By appointment

General Synopsis:

This course is an introduction to the politics of the U.S. Congress. Rather than focusing simply on facts and figures, however, my intent is to examine the workings of the U.S. Congress in a *scientific* manner. At the heart of our study will be the individual member of Congress (MC). Why? Because by analyzing the preferences and goals of individual MCs, we will begin to understand how Congress actually works. That is, many of the questions surrounding the Congressional experience — why Congress has developed as it has, why certain rules are in place, why committees assignments are important, why electoral outcomes occur as they do, why voting outcomes break down as they do — can be traced back to the particular interests of individuals MCs. To understand the individual MC, then, is to understand the U.S. Congress.

Required Text:

Four texts are required:

Steven S. Smith. 1999. *The American Congress*, 2nd Edition. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin

Hebert F. Weisberg, Eric S. Heberlig, and Lisa M. Campoli. 1999. *Classics in Congressional Politics*. New York: Longman.

David R. Mayhew. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

David W. Rohde. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Occasional hand-outs also may be distributed, pertaining to the various subjects covered.

Class Format:

The class will be mainly lecture, but I happily encourage discussion. I will cover the main points of each chapter and highlight current examples from the news, and, at times, I also will elicit responses from the class. Questions and examples from everyday life are encouraged.

Attendance:

Attendance in my class is not mandatory. No grades will be lowered for missing classes. It will be left up to you whether or not to attend. However, there are clearly incentives available to those who attend: exam questions will be structured around lectures and classroom discussion, as well as course readings.

Grading:

The final course grade will be based upon three in-class, closed-book exams — two midterms and one comprehensive final. Each midterm will be worth 30% of the final grade, and the comprehensive final will be worth 40%. Make-up exams will be given only upon receipt of a note from the Dean.

I will follow a strict scoring system in tallying the final grade:

A-range: 90-100

B-range: 80-89

C-range: 70-79

D-range: 60-69

F-range: below 60

If there is a dispute regarding a grade on an exam or written assignment, I will reassess the grade under two conditions:

- (1) The request for a grade reexamination be timely (immediately following receipt of the grade).
- (2) The entire exam be subject to regrading. This means that I will regrade the entire exam, not just the section under dispute. Thus, it is very possible that a lower grade could eventually result.

Academic Integrity:

Michigan State University has detailed its policies on academic integrity in the *Student Handbook and Resource Guide*. Students should acquaint themselves with policies concerning cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and academic interference. Any submission of work by a student in this course constitutes a certificate that the work complies with university policies on academic integrity. Violations could lead to automatic failure of the course or expulsion from the university.

Class Conduct:

I only have a few rules concerning class conduct; however, I feel each is important:

- (1) Each person's opinion is valuable and should be respected. Please do not intimidate, patronize, or ridicule anyone else during the course of classroom discussion.
- (2) Do not make a habit of arriving late to class. Walking in after 1:50 will disrupt the lecture/discussion. I do not penalize absences, so do not feel compelled to attend.

Calendar of Events:

Below is a tentative schedule for the next 17 weeks. I reserve the right to alter the reading assignments and test dates, depending on the progress of course. “WHC” refers to the Weisberg-Heberlig-Campoli text.

Week 1 (1/10, 1/12, 1/14):

Smith: Chapter 1, Representation and Lawmaking in Congress

THERE WILL BE NO CLASS ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 14.

Week 2 (1/17, 1/19, 1/21):

Smith: Chapter 2, The Constitutional and Historical Context

WHC: Chapter 3, N. Polsby --- The Institutionalization of the U.S. House

THERE WILL BE NO CLASS ON MONDAY, JANUARY 17 (KING DAY).

Week 3 (1/24, 1/26, 1/28):

Smith: Chapter 3, The Rules of the Legislative Game

WHC: Chapter 13, D. Matthews --- The Folkways of the Senate

WHC: Chapter 14, H. Asher --- The Learning of Legislative Norms

WHC: Chapter 15, B. Sinclair --- Multiple Paths

Week 4 (1/31, 2/2, 2/4):

Smith: Chapter 4, Congressional Elections and Policy Alignments

WHC: Chapter 8, How Do Candidacies Affect Elections?

WHC: Chapter 9, D. Rohde --- Risk-Bearing and Progressive Ambition

WHC: Chapter 10, D. Mayhew --- Congressional Elections

WHC: Chapter 11, G. Jacobson and S. Kernell --- Strategic Politicians

Week 5 (2/7, 2/9, 2/11):

Smith: Chapter 5, Members' Goals, Resources, and Strategies

WHC: Chapter 5, What Is Representation?

WHC: Chapter 6, W. Miller and D. Stokes --- Constituency Influence in Congress

WHC: Chapter 7, R. Fenno --- U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies

Week 6 (2/14, 2/16, 2/18):

David Mayhew. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. All.

Week 7 (2/21, 2/23, 2/25):

FIRST MIDTERM EXAM: FEBRUARY 21

Smith: Chapter 6, Parties and Leaders

WHC: Chapter 21, J. Stewart --- Two Strategies of Leadership

WHC: Chapter 22, J. Cooper and D. Brady --- Institutional Context and Leadership Style

David Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. All.

Week 8 (2/28, 3/1, 3/3):

Continue with Week 7 reading.

Week 9 (3/6, 3/8, 3/10):

Spring Break

Week 10 (3/13, 3/15, 3/17):

Smith: Chapter 7, The Standing Committees

WHC: Chapter 17, R. Fenno --- The House Appropriations Committee

WHC: Chapter 18, B. Hinckley --- Policy Content, Committee Membership, and Behavior

WHC: Chapter 19, G. Cox and M. McCubbins --- Controlling the Legislative Agenda

Week 11 (3/20, 3/22/ 3/24):

Smith: Chapter 8, The Floor and Voting

WHC: Chapter 24, How Do Legislators Decide How to Vote?

WHC: Chapter 25, J. Kingdon --- Models of Legislative Voting

WHC: Chapter 26, H. Asher and H. Weisberg --- Voting Changes in Congress

WHC: Chapter 27, R. Arnold --- Strategies for Coalition Leaders

Week 12 (3/27, 3/29, 3/31):

Continue with Week 11 reading.

Week 13 (4/3, 4/5, 4/7):

SECOND MIDTERM EXAM, APRIL 3

Smith: Chapter 9, Congress and the President

Week 14 (4/10, 4/12, 4/14):

Smith: Chapter 10, Congress and the Courts

Week 15 (4/17, 4/19, 4/21):

Smith: Chapter 11, Congress, Lobbyists, and Interest Groups

Week 16 (4/24, 4/26, 4/28):

Smith: Chapter 12, Congress and Budget Politics

Week 17 (5/1, 5/3, 5/5):

FINAL EXAM, MAY 2, 12:45 - 2:45 pm