

PLAP 835
Congress: Legislative Organization and Development

Spring 2008
1:00 – 3:30 TH
The Miller Center

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General Synopsis:

This course is an introduction to the theoretical and empirical literature on Congressional 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 Congress is organized and how the institution has developed over time. The first half of the course will focus on legislative organization, as we examine three different perspectives – the distributive, informational, and partisan – that have sought to explain the structure and process of Congress. The second half of the course will focus on legislative development, as we examine why certain structures and processes in Congress have been chosen (or not chosen) at various points in time.

Course Requirements:

There are a number of 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 student will serve as a “discussion leader” for a given paper (or a 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, if you so desire, you may write a research paper (or detailed 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 grade, while the final assignment (exam) will also be worth 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 a serious student, you will be rewarded.

A number of books are required. All are available at the UVA Bookstore:

- (1) Adler, E. Scott. 2002. *Why Congressional Reforms Fail: Reelection and the House Committee System*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (2) Binder, Sarah A. 1997. *Minority Rights, Majority Rule: Partisanship and the Development of Congress*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (3) Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*, Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (4) Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (5) Dion, Douglas. 1997. *Turning the Legislative Thumbscrew: Minority Rights and Procedural Change in Legislative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- (6) Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- (7) Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (8) Mayhew, David R. 2004. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Second Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- (9) Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (10) Sinclair, Barbara. 2006. *Party Wars: Polarization and the Politics of National Policy Making*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- (11) Smith, Steven S. 2007. *Party Influence in Congress*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (12) Wawro, Gregory J., and Eric Schickler. 2006. *Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Senate*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

We will also read portions of the following book. It is recommended for purchase, but I will place the relevant chapters on reserve in the Scripps Library.

Stewart, Charles, III. 2001. *Analyzing Congress*. New York: Norton.

Finally, in the event that you need a “nuts and bolts” overview of the institutions of Congress, you might purchase the following book:

Oleszek, Walter J. 2004. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Sixth Edition. Washington: CQ Press.

Other Issues:

I will assume that you have taken an undergraduate Congress course and thus have a working knowledge of the institution. If you feel that you are not quite up to speed, the books by Oleszek and Stewart are solid primers. In particular, chapters 7-9 of the Stewart book will provide a nice substantive overview as we move through the various theories of legislative organization. When a particular issue/concept is especially important to understand a given reading – for example, the discharge rule in the House – 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 and chapters from edited volumes. Many are available electronically (the source of which I indicate next to the citation), but some are not. In those cases, I will provide PDF versions via email.

Week 1: Introduction – General Overview and Discussion of the Syllabus

Week 2: Theoretical Direction – Rational Choice and the Study of Congress

Stewart, Charles, III. 2001. *Analyzing Congress*. Chapter 1.

Poole, Keith T., and Howard Rosenthal. 2007. *Ideology and Congress*. Chapters 1-3.

Mayhew, David R. 2004. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Second Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press. All.

Aldrich, John H., and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2000. "Explaining Institutional Change: Soaking, Poking, and Modeling in the U. S. Congress." In William Bianco, Ed., *Congress on Display, Congress at Work*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Week 3: Positive Theories of Legislative Organization: Distributive and Informational Approaches

Shepsle, Kenneth A., and Barry R. Weingast. 1981. "Structure-Induced Equilibrium and Legislative Choice." *Public Choice* 36: 221-37.

Weingast, Barry R., and William Marshall. 1988. "The Industrial Organization of Congress." *Journal of Political Economy* 96: 132-63. (JSTOR)

Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. All.

Week 4: Positive Theories of Legislative Organization: Partisan Approaches

Rohde, David W.. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chapters 1-2.

Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan*, Second Ed. All.

Week 5: Legislative Organization – Where’s the Party?

Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. “Where’s the Party?” *British Journal of Political Science* 23: 235-266. (JSTOR)

Rohde, David W. 1994. “Parties and Committees in the House: Member Motivations, Issues, and Institutional Arrangements.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 19: 341-59. (JSTOR)

Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1994. “Bonding, Structure, and the Stability of Political Parties: Party Government in the House.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 19: 215-31. (JSTOR)

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*. All.

Week 6: Legislative Organization – Here’s the Party!

Aldrich, John H., and David W. Rohde. 2000. “The Consequences of Party Organization in the House: The Role of Majority and Minority Parties in Conditional Party Government.” In Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, Eds., *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*. Washington: CQ Press.

Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda*. All.

Krehbiel, Keith. 2007. “Partisan Roll Rates in a Nonpartisan Legislature.” *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 23: 1–23. (Oxford journals on-line)

— make sure to read the Appendix in *Setting the Agenda*, which deals directly with an early working paper of Krehbiel’s (2007) article.

Week 7: Legislative Organization and Parties – Current Last Word

Smith, Steven S. 2007. *Party Influence in Congress*. All.

Gailmard, Sean, and Jeffery A. Jenkins. 2007. “Negative Agenda Control in the Senate and House: Fingerprints of Majority Party Power.” *Journal of Politics* 69: 689-700. (Available at my website)

Den Hartog, Chris, and Nathan W. Monroe. 2008. “The Value of Majority Status: The Effect of Jeffords’s Switch on Asset Prices of Republican and Democratic Firms.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Forthcoming. (Ingenta)

Week 8: Spring Break

Week 9: Legislative Institutions – Origins and Development

Stewart, Charles, III. 2001. *Analyzing Congress*. Chapters 2 and 3.

Aldrich, John H., Calvin C. Jillson, and Rick W. Wilson. 2002. “Why Congress? What the Failure of the Confederation Congress and the Survival of the Federal Congress Tell Us About the New Institutionalism.” In David W. Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins, eds. *Party, Process, and Political Change in Congress*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties?* Chapter 3.

Gamm, Gerald, and Kenneth Shepsle. 1989. “Emergence of Legislative Institutions: Standing Committees in the House and Senate, 1810-1825.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14: 39-66. (JSTOR)

— Also, read the section in the following article that deals directly with Gamm/Shepsle:
Humes, Brian D. 1989. “Congress at the Bicentennial: A Comment.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14: 135-45. (JSTOR)

Katz, Jonathan N., and Brian R. Sala. 1996. “Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection.” *American Political Science Review* 90: 21-33. (JSTOR)

Week 10: Minority Rights and Procedural Change, Part I

Dion, Douglas. 1997. *Turning the Legislative Thumbscrew*. All.

Jenkins, Jeffery A., and Charles Stewart III. 2003. “Out in the Open: The Emergence of *Viva Voce* Voting in House Speakership Elections.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 28: 481-508. (Available at my website)

Week 11: Minority Rights and Procedural Change, Part II

Binder, Sarah A. 1997. *Minority Rights, Majority Rule*. All.

Schickler, Eric. 2000. “Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models.” *American Political Science Review* 94: 269-288. (JSTOR)

Week 12:

NO CLASS

Week 13: Examining Institutional Change

Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism*. All.

Adler, E. Scott. 2002. *Why Congressional Reforms Fail*. All.

Week 14: A Focus on the Senate

Wawro, Gregory J., and Eric Schickler. 2006. *Filibuster*. All.

Binder, Sarah A., Anthony J. Madonna, and Steven S. Smith. 2007. "Going Nuclear, Senate Style." *Perspectives on Politics* 5: 729-40. (Cambridge Journals On-line)

Week 15: Polarization in Congress

Sinclair, Barbara. 2006. *Party Wars*. All.

McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Chapters 1 and 2.