

Political Science 417-0  
Congress: Legislative Organization and Development

Spring 2006  
9:00 – 11:50 T  
212 Scott Hall

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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 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.

Several books are required. All are available at the Beck's Bookstore:

- (1) E. Scott Adler. 2002. *Why Congressional Reforms Fail: Reelection and the House Committee System*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (2) Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- (3) Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (4) Keith Krehbiel. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- (5) Keith Krehbiel. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (6) Frances E. Lee and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 1999. *Sizing Up the Senate: The Unequal Consequences of Equal Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (7) David R. Mayhew. 2004. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Second Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

We will also read portions of the following books. They are recommended for purchase, but in the event that you choose not to do so, I will place the relevant chapters on reserve in the lounge.

- (8) Eric Schickler. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (9) David W. Rohde. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (10) Charles Stewart 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 should probably purchase the following book:

- (11) Walter J. Oleszek. 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, therefore, 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. 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: Introduction – General Overview and Discussion of the Syllabus**

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

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

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

Kenneth A. Shepsle, and John H. Aldrich. 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.

#### **Recommended:**

Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1989. “Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1: 131-49.

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

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

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

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

#### **Recommended:**

Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. “The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power.” *American Political Science Review* 81: 85-104.

Richard L. Hall. 1995. "Empiricism and Progress in Positive Theories of Legislative Institutions." In Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast, Eds., *Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

#### **Week 4: Positive Theories of Legislative Organization: Partisan Approaches**

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

Gary W. Cox, and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan*. All.

##### **Recommended:**

David W. Rohde. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chapters 3-6.

#### **Week 5: Legislative Organization – Where's the Party? Part I**

Keith Krehbiel. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23: 235-266. (JSTOR)

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

Gary W. Cox, 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)

Barbara Sinclair. 2002. "Do Parties Matter?" In David W. Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins, Eds., *Party, Process, and Political Change in Congress: New Perspectives on the History of Congress*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

##### **Recommended:**

Eric Schickler and Andrew Rich. 1997. "Controlling the Floor: Parties as Procedural Coalitions in the House." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 1340-75. (JSTOR)

Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins. 1997. "Toward a Theory of Legislative Rules Changes: Assessing Schickler and Rich's Evidence." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 1376-86. (JSTOR)

Eric Schickler and Andrew Rich. 1997. "Party Government in the House Reconsidered: A Response to Cox and McCubbins." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 1387-1394. (JSTOR)

## **Week 6: Legislative Organization – Where’s the Party? Part II**

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

### Recommended:

Sarah A. Binder. 1996. “The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990.” *American Political Science Review* 90: 8-20. (JSTOR)

Eric Schickler. 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)

Mark S. Hurwitz, Roger J. Moiles, and David W. Rohde. 2001. “Distributive and Partisan Issues in Agricultural Policy in the 104th House.” *American Political Science Review* 95: 911-22. (JSTOR)

## **Week 7: Legislative Organization – Procedural Cartel Theory Redux**

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

### Recommended:

Keith Krehbiel. 2005. “Partisan Roll Rates in a Non-Partisan Legislature.” Working paper, Stanford University, Graduate School of Business.  
<https://gsbapps.stanford.edu/researchpapers/library/RP1870R1.pdf>

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

## **Week 8: Legislative Institutions – Origins and Development**

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

John H. Aldrich, 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.

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

Gerald Gamm 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:  
Brian D. Humes 1989. “Congress at the Bicentennial: A Comment.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14: 135-45. (JSTOR)

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

Recommended:

Nelson W. Polsby. 1968. “The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives.” *American Political Science Review* 62: 144-168. (JSTOR)

Jeffery A. Jenkins 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.

**Week 9: Examining Institutional Change**

Eric Schickler. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism*. Chapters 1 and 6.

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

Recommended:

Eric Schickler. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism*, Chapters 2-5, Epilogue.

**Week 10: A Focus on the Senate**

Frances E. Lee and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 1999. *Sizing Up the Senate: The Unequal Consequences of Equal Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Recommended:

Gregory J. Wawro and Eric Schickler. 2006. *Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Senate*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.