The Legislative Process
Classic Questions and New Approaches
PLSC 826
Syllabus, Spring 2019

Prof. Eleanor Neff Powell
Seminar Schedule: Wednesday 1:20-3:15
Email: eleanor.powell@wisc.edu
Office Location: 216 North Hall
Office Hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30
Sign up for Office Hours Online:
https://calendar.wisc.edu/scheduling-assistant/public/profiles/kmkOorft.html

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 classic empirical pieces, and new approach pieces. 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

• Do the assigned readings before class.
• Attend class & participate in discussion.
• Weekly “Next Step Memo.” By noon on Tuesday (the day before) class, email me and 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)
• Research Proposal (10 pgs) due at the end of the semester.

Books:

**Grading**

| Class Participation & Weekly Next Step Memo | 50% |
| Research Proposal                          | 50% |
| **Total**                                  | **100%** |

**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 the most recent edition of Smith, Roberts and Vander Wielen’s *The American Congress* textbook.
If you find yourself particularly interested in matters of parliamentary procedure, I recommend seeking out the most recent edition of Olezek’s *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

- Identify and describe both the canonical literature on legislative politics.
- Analyze the limitations of the canonical literature and solve how to address those limitations in future research.
- Produce original legislative research ideas of publishable academic quality.

**Number of Credits Associated with the Course: 3**

**How the Credit Hours are Met by the Course:** The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instructor: student meeting times (115 minutes per week of seminar time) and extensive weekly reading and writing time outside of the classroom as described elsewhere in the syllabus.
### Course Outline

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Introduction, Syllabus Handout, Overview - The Study of Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Congress: How do Members decide? What do Members do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>-- Part II (New Empirical)</td>
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<td>2/20</td>
<td>Congress: How is Congress Organized? Congressional Committees &amp; the Legislative Process</td>
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<td>2/27</td>
<td>Electoral Accountability: Are Members Responsive to District Opinion?</td>
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<td>3/6</td>
<td>What are the Policy Consequences of Institutions?</td>
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<td>3/20</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>4/3</td>
<td>Congressional History</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
<td>Congress &amp; The Courts</td>
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<td>4/24</td>
<td>Comparative Legislatures - State Legislatures &amp; The U.S. Senate</td>
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<td>5/1</td>
<td>Race &amp; Gender in Legislative Politics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Final Papers Due: May 10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at 5pm</td>
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Introduction, Syllabus Handout, Overview - The Study of Congress

Classic Empirical:


Field Overview:


Congress: How do members decide? What do members do?

Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:

Volden, Craig and Alan E. Wiseman. 2014. Legislative Effectiveness in the United States Congress: The Lawmakers. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 2 & 3] [Posted on Learn @UW]


Curry, James M. Legislating in the Dark: Information and Power in the House of Representatives. Chicago University Press. [Chapters 1-2.]


Congress: How is Congress Organized? Committees and the Legislative Process

Formal:


Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Electoral Accountability: Are Members Responsive to District Opinion?

Formal:


Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Grimmer, Justin, Sean J. Westwood and Solomon Messing. 2014. The Impression of Influence: Legislator Communication, Representation and Democratic Accountability. Princeton University Press. [Chapters 1 & 2]

Butler, Daniel M. 2014. Representing the Advantaged: How Politicians Reinforce Inequality. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 1 & 2]
Policy Consequences of Institutions

Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Field Overview:


Roll Call Voting: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

Formal:


Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Congress, The Presidency & Separation of Powers

Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Field Overview:


Congressional History


Congress & The Courts

Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Field Overview:

**Interest Groups**

**Classic Empirical:**


**New Empirical:**


**Field Overview:**

Comparative Legislatures

Classic Empirical:

Key, V.O. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. [Ch 1 & 16]


New Empirical:


Field Overview:


Race and Gender in Legislative Politics


Field Overview:


Final Papers Due: May 10th.
Additional Recommended Readings for the Course:

Week 1:


Week 2:


Parties:


Carson, Koger, Lebo, Young. 2010.


Week 5:


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

Roberts & Smith (2007)


Electoral Accountability:


Roll Call Voting:


Presidency:


Diermeier & Myerson (1999).


Bureaucracy:

McCubbins and Schwarz. 1984.


Courts:


Spaeth, Harold J. and Jeffrey A. Segal. 1999. Majority Rule or Minority Will: Adherence to Precedent on the U.S. Supreme Court. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 9.


