The Legislative Process
Classic Questions and New Approaches
PLSC 826
Syllabus, Fall 2016

Prof. Eleanor Neff Powell
Seminar Schedule: Monday 2:45-4:45pm
Email: eleanor.powell@wisc.edu
Office Location: 216 North Hall

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 a formal model, a classic empirical piece, and a new approach piece. 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 9pm Sunday evening (the night before) class, email 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.
Grading

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<tr>
<td>Class Participation &amp; Weekly Next Step Memo</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>50%</td>
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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 Outline

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>9/12</td>
<td>Introduction, Syllabus Handout, Overview - The Study of Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>Congress: How do Members decide? What do Members do?</td>
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<td>10/3</td>
<td>-- Part II (New Empirical)</td>
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<td>10/10</td>
<td>Congress: How is Congress Organized? Congressional Committees &amp; the Legislative Process</td>
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<td>10/17</td>
<td>Electoral Accountability: Are Members Responsive to District Opinion?</td>
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<td>10/24</td>
<td>What are the Policy Consequences of Institutions?</td>
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<td>10/31</td>
<td>Roll Call Voting: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly</td>
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<td>11/7</td>
<td>Congress, The Presidency &amp; Separation of Powers</td>
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<td>Congressional History</td>
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<td>Congress &amp; The Courts</td>
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<td>12/12</td>
<td>The U.S. Senate</td>
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<td>Final Papers Due: December 20th</td>
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9/12 - Introduction, Syllabus Handout, Overview - The Study of Congress

Formal:

Classic Empirical:

Field Overview:

9/19 - Congress: How do members decide? What do members do?

Formal:


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]


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


10/10 - Congress: How is Congress Organized? Committees and the Legislative Process

Formal:


Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


10/17 - 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]
10/24-Policy Consequences of Institutions

Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Field Overview:

10/31- Roll Call Voting: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

Formal:


Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


11/7- Congress, The Presidency & Separation of Powers

Formal:


Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Field Overview:

11/14—Congressional History


11/21- Congress & The Courts

Formal:


Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Field Overview:

11/28- Interest Groups

Classic Empirical:


New Empirical:


Field Overview:

12/5- Comparative Legislatures

Formal:


Classic Empirical:

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


New Empirical:


Field Overview:


12/12 - The Senate


Final Papers Due: December 20th.
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.


