

P SC 5263: Congress in the Political System

Spring 2023
Thursdays 1:30–4:20pm
Dunham Residential College A0128
University of Oklahoma

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Course Description: This course is a research seminar on the U.S. Congress. As such, we will be reading contemporary scholarly work, along with some “classics,” on the electoral and institutional arenas of congressional behavior and organization. Some of the topics to be covered include: representation, elections, parties, committees, rules and procedures, roll-call voting, House-Senate comparisons and relations, and institutional development and organization. This course is integral in the field of American politics, and will be beneficial to students with interests in comparative politics and political institutions more broadly.

Learning Outcomes: Students who successfully complete the course will demonstrate the ability to:

- identify and describe the key theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of Congress
- apply and evaluate theories and evidence relating to legislative politics
- actively and deeply participate in class discussion
- identify unresolved questions in the literature
- produce an original piece of scholarly research that contributes to existing knowledge of congressional politics.

Prerequisite(s): While there are no formal prerequisites for this course, it is tailored for Ph.D. students in political science. Students will benefit from having taken the field seminar in American politics in a previous semester. While I generally do not recommend that M.A.-level students take this course, I am happy to discuss it as an option.

Credit Hours: 3

Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Materials: Required readings for the course will be drawn primarily from selected books and numerous journal articles. Books should be purchased in advance, and all of the articles are available either online via the OU Libraries’ electronic journal subscriptions (including JSTOR) or posted on Canvas. When referring to the Course Schedule, materials made available on Canvas are identified by a † while books that may be reserved in the library are identified by a ‡. Students should bring all required readings with them to class on the day they are assigned.

Required Books:

- Mayhew (Electoral Connection)
- Curry and Lee 2020
- Lee 2016

- Lewallen 2020
- Reynolds 2017
- Blum 2020

Recommended Books:

- Stewart 2012
- Jacobson and Carson 2019
- Oleszek et al 2019
- Rubin 2017

Expectations and Evaluation

Because this is a graduate-level research seminar and not a lecture-oriented course, the success of the class will depend on the full participation of each student. Students will be expected to do all the required reading prior to each scheduled meeting and to participate actively and thoughtfully in class discussion. Additionally, one or more students will be assigned the task of leading discussion for particular weeks or topics, and in that case are expected to read well beyond the requirements (the recommended readings in the course schedule are a good starting point).

You have now moved past the “consumer” stage of your academic career and into the phase in which your interaction with what you read takes on the form of a dialogue as you become a “producer” of knowledge. This requires reading and writing much more than you may be accustomed to doing. I cannot stress enough how important it will be to keep on schedule, to constructively give and receive criticism, to take intellectual risks, to communicate proactively with me about any problems, and to persevere. What that means for this class is that you should not hesitate to engage deeply in discussion, start thinking right now about your research paper, and begin reading beyond the syllabus.

Grades for the course will be comprised of the following three components:

1. Class participation and discussion (25%)

As described above, it is imperative that every student attend each class session prepared to be an active participant in discussion. Both the quantity and the quality of comments are important, including leading discussion on the days that correspond with submission of a critical review. Let me emphasize that you will not earn higher than a B+ in this course unless you are a frequent, well-prepared, and thoughtful participant in class discussion. This also means that you should be prepared to lead discussion on any article when called upon to do so, even if it is not your “assigned” week.

2. Homework (5%)

At least one brief homework assignment, covering the basic tools and logic of a current methodology (students will select their topic) will be due over the course of the semester. Any additional assignments of a similar nature will be counted toward this component of the course grade.

3. Critical Reviews (30%)

Students will be required to complete at least two critical reviews of the literature assigned for specific weeks. These papers need not be excessively long (3-5 double-spaced pages is often adequate), but they should concisely *synthesize* the theory, methods, and findings while most importantly, and at greater length, *critiquing* the literature for that particular week. More effort and attention should be focused on analysis and criticism and comparatively less on summarization; the best reviews will go beyond the required readings for the week. In addition to the critical reviews, students may be asked to submit smaller written assignments and/or brief reactions to the readings. More details on these assignments will be provided separately.

4. Research paper (40%)

The capstone of the course is an original research paper, which will be judged according to the same criteria applied to a paper presented at a professional conference or submitted to a journal. This means that it must address an interesting question related to legislative institutions, relate that question to the existing literature, develop a theoretical account, and provide evidence in support of the conclusion(s) drawn. Over the course of the semester, we will devote time inside and outside of class to discussing progress, challenges, etc., with respect to students' projects. Toward that end, a brief research proposal (identifying the question, key literature, theoretical contribution, and method of analysis) is due **check dates: Wednesday, March 3**. An annotated bibliography covering the relevant literature is due Wednesday, March 31. In-class presentations of your work in progress, ideally accompanied by a draft version of the paper, will occur during the last class session on Wednesday, May 5. The final paper is due by noon on Thursday, May 13. While these represent the formal deadlines relating to the research paper, students are strongly encouraged to consult informally with me throughout the semester regarding the development of their papers. Further details on the research paper (and related assignment deadlines) will be provided separately.

Formatting: All papers should be prepared professionally. This means using standard fonts and formatting (such as double spacing), as well as disciplinary conventions for citations and references. It would be a good idea to begin familiarizing yourself now with the APSA Style Manual, which covers the format required for submissions to many (albeit not all) political science journals. I have posted a copy of it on Canvas. While not required, I encourage production of papers in L^AT_EX.

A Note on Grading: A grade less than a "B" is typically considered unsatisfactory. All work will be graded internally on a nuanced letter scale, with an "A" representing exceptional work, a "B+" good performance, and a "B" minimally satisfactory output.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Any student with a disability that may prevent the full demonstration of his or her abilities should contact the Disability Resource Center (University Community Center, 730 College Ave, 405-325-3852) to make a formal request for accommodation. Please inform me as soon as possible, as well, so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.

Title IX Resources: For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates who are on call 24/7, counseling services, mutual no contact orders, scheduling adjustments and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office at 405-325-2215 (8-5, M-F) or OU Advocates at 405-615-0013 (24/7) to learn

more or to report an incident.

Incompletes and Academic Integrity: All work must be turned in no later than the start of class on the day when it is due. I do not give incompletes save for truly exceptional circumstances of a serious and unforeseen nature. In accordance with the OU Honor Code and professional standards, I expect that all work will be your own and take very seriously any form of academic misrepresentation, including improper or omitted citation of sources and misappropriation of another's work. Students are also expected to conduct themselves in a professional and civil manner.

Course Schedule

(‡ = course reserve; † = Canvas)

Week 1 (Jan. 19): Introduction: theoretical foundations and Congress primer

† Stewart12 Chapter 1.
Kingdon77.

Recommended:

Oleszek19, Jacobson19, Fiorina89, Shepsle89Studying.

Module 1: Getting to Congress

Week 2 (Jan 26): Congressional elections 1: candidates, voters, and party elites

† Mayhew04, Ansolabehere et al. 2001, Kanthak and Woon 2015, Dowling and Wichowsky 2015, Henderson and Brooks 2016

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Recommended:

** Homework from Stewart due (# 1-5, 7.1, 7.3, 8, 10.1, 10.2, 11, 12)*

Week 3 (Feb. 2): Congressional Elections 2: incumbents, money, and primaries

Recommended:

Week 4 (Feb. 9): Congressional elections 3: representation and responsiveness

Recommended:

Week 5 (Feb. 23): Congressional elections 4: redistricting

Recommended:

Module 2: Party institutions

Week 6 (Mar. 2): theories of parties * *Paper proposal due 3/2*

Bawn et al 2012 (add link or upload to Canvas), Curry and Lee 2020,

Recommended:

Week 7 (Mar. 9): Roll call voting, polarization, and cooperation

† *Recommended:*

Mar. 11-19: Spring vacation week

Week 8 (Mar. 23): State legislative politics

With guest speaker Professor Michael Kistner

How representative are state legislatures?

Rogers, Steven. “Electoral Accountability for State Legislative Roll Calls and Ideological Representation.” *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 3 (2017): 555–71.

Caughey, Devin, and Christopher Warshaw. “Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936–2014.” *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 2 (2018): 249–66.

Ideology and polarization in state legislatures

Shor, Boris, and Nolan McCarty. “The Ideological Mapping of American Legislatures.” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 03 (2011): 530–51.

Testing theories using institutional variation in state legislatures

Kistner, Michael R. “Fighting for Majorities? Explaining the Development of Caucus Fund-Raising in American Legislatures.” *Journal of Politics* 84, no. 1 (2022): 321–34.

Harden, Jeffrey J., and Justin H. Kirkland. “Does Transparency Inhibit Political Compromise?” *American Journal of Political Science* 65, no. 2 (2021): 493–509

Week 9 (Mar 30): Factions and voting blocs

** Annotated bibliography due 3/30*

Add: Bloch-Rubin chapters (I need to pick), Clarke's 2020 article on factions, Victor and Ringe 2009 (link below), Blum 2020 ch 1, 2, and 6 (not scans – they need the book); Disalvo 2009 (link below)

Recommended:

DiSalvo 2012, Madison's federalist 10, Nils and Ringe book (2013); Koger et al 2010; Bendix and McKay 2017

0.0.1 Module 3: How Congress Works

Week 10 (Apr. 6): Committee Politics

Recommended:

Week 11 (April 13): Alternate class format – MPSA

Each student will choose a recent article related to legislative institutions (published since 2018) and write a short summary of it on a Canvas discussion board

Week 12 (Apr. 20): The Senate, the Filibuster, and Procedural Politics

Recommended:

Week 13 (Apr. 27): Peter's class

Week 14 (May 4): Research Presentations