

**POLI 433: Comparative Legislatures:
The US Congress in Comparative Perspective
FALL 2015
Rice University**

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Course Description

The course begins from the contemporary challenges in the US Congress -- especially polarization and gridlock -- and seeks to identify the sources as well as possible institutional alternatives arising in the legislative policy-making processes of other nations. In addition to recent and current political discourse on potential failures of representation Congress, the course will cover both classic and recent literature on Congress and emphasize putting the US Congress in comparative context, using examples from Europe, Latin America and Asia. We will study in comparative perspective the policy-making process in the legislature: incentives and goals of legislators and parties, how legislatures are organized, how legislative coalitions are built, how legislatures interact with executives.

This course is designed to teach students 1. understand the origins of how the policy making process in American politics shapes major issues 2. understand the rest of the democratic world and how policy issues and political questions are addressed elsewhere and 3. how to use data to analyze these questions and effectively communicate arguments.

Breakdown of course grade:

25% -- Class Participation and Attendance

Coming to class prepared to share your own perspective on the readings -- questions, critiques, ideas -- is necessary for creating an environment where we can learn from each other. In addition to participation in the discussion, each week students will be responsible for finding one article or essay in the popular press -- generally an editorial piece -- which will relate current events to the topic of the class. The student will introduce the article and explain the relationship to the topic of the assigned reading. These should be posted in Forums on OWL-Space by the Friday before class at 5 pm to enable us all time to read them. Faculty and/or your TA will also post articles. All students are expected to read all articles posted in the Forum each week.

15% -- Three Short Topic Summaries

For three weeks of the semester you you must submit a short overview of the assigned reading. You should distill the main point(s) of the reading(s).

- The essay **must not exceed two pages**.
- These essay are due by **12:00 pm** on the day of class. These should be uploaded to your dropbox within the course OWL-Space site.
- If you wish to do this assignment for additional weeks, you may do so and I will use the three highest grades.

Components of research paper, turned in separately:

Research Proposal -- due **Due by 12:00 pm on Feb 23 -- 5%**

Draft of Literature Review & Argument Sections -- **Due March 30 at 12:00pm -- 15%**

Class presentation of your findings on the last day of class: **April 20 - 5%**

Final Draft with Empirical Analysis due on **day of scheduled final at 5:00 pm – 30%**

The following book is assigned in its entirety.

- Mayhew, David R. 2004. *Congress*. Yale University Press.

1/12 Week 1

Introductions and Class Organization (no reading)

1/19 No Class

1/26 Week 2: Current issues in Congress

- Michael Barber and Nolan McCarty "Causes and Consequences of Polarization" *APSA task force 2013 Negotiating Agreement in Politics*. ([OWL-Space](#))
- Sinclair, Barbara. 2014. "Is Congress Now the Broken Branch?" *Utah L. Rev.* Vol 2014 (4). ([OWL-Space](#))
- Ornstein, Norman. 2014 ([OWL-Space](#))
- Poole and Hare 2014 ([OWL-Space](#))

2/2 Week 3: Congress in the Constitution

- Federalist papers 9, 10, 47, 51
- Stewart - Congress and the Constitutional System ([pdf](#))
- Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991, Ch. 2 (on Delegation) ([pdf](#))
- Hardin, Russell. *Collective Action*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, Chapter 2 ([pdf](#))

2/9 Week 4: Congress as a means for Local Accountability and Distributive Politics

- Mayhew *Congress* Ch 1
- Mayhew *Congress* Ch 2

2/16 Week 5: Congress as a means to represent Ideology and Policy Preferences.

- *C. Stewart. 2001. "[An 'Unusual' Introduction to the Study of Congress](#)" in *Analyzing Congress*
 - part one: "The politics of lineland" (single dimensional, candidate competition) p 1-9 of the PDF
 - part two: "The politics of flatland" (multiple dimensions) p 10-15 of the PDF
- *[Krehbiel Pivotal Politics](#) -- focus on p 20-34
- Poole, K. T., & Rosenthal, H. (1991). Patterns of congressional voting. *American Journal of Political Science*, 228-278.

2/23 Week 6: Legislative Parties in the US Congress

- APSA 1950 Report: [Toward a More Responsible Party System](#)
- Selections from Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (see PDFs in 'Resources', focus on Intro, 4-5)
- *Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science*. 23: 235-266

3/2 No Class

3/9 Week 7: Institutions, Accountability and Representation: Global Variation in how Representative are Elected

- Carey 2009 [Legislative Voting and Accountability Ch 1](#)
- Norris 2002 "[Ballot Structures and Legislative Behavior](#)"
- Mala Htun and G. Bingham Powell, Jr " [Between Science and Engineering: Political Science, Electoral Rules, and Democratic Governance](#)" from APSA Task Force on Electoral Rules and Democratic Governance 2013.
- Shugart "[Why Ballot Structure Matters](#)" from APSA Task Force on Electoral Rules and Democratic Governance 2013.
- McCubbins, Mathew D. and Frances M. Rosenbluth. 1995. "[Party Provision for Personal Politics: Dividing the Vote in Japan.](#)"

3/16 Week 8: Comparing Presidential and Parliamentary Legislatures

- Strom, K. 2000. Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies. *European Journal of Political Science*, 37, 261-289
- George Tsebelis "Veto Players and Law Production in Parliamentary Democracies" in *APSR* 1999
- Cheibub, J. A., A. Przeworski, and S. M. Saiegh. 2004. "Government coalitions and legislative success under presidentialism and parliamentarism." *British Journal of Political Science* 34(04): 565-587
- Hallerberg, Mark, & Marier, Patrik. (2004). Executive authority, the personal vote, and budget discipline in Latin American and Caribbean countries. *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(3), 571-587

3/23 Week 9: Historical Development of Legislatures

- Selections from Gary Cox, *The efficient secret : the cabinet and the development of political parties in Victorian England* Part
- Keith E. Hamm and Robert Harmel 2006. "Legislative Party Development and the Speaker System: The Case of the Texas House"

3/30 Week 10: Comparing Party Discipline, Loyalty and Unity

- Carey 2009 *Legislative Voting and Accountability* (Book), Chapters 2-4 (on recorded votes)
- Carey 2009 Chapters 5-7 (on voting unity) ([pdf on owlspace](#))
- Ames , Barry (2002) '[Party Discipline in the Chamber of Deputies](#)', Ch. 7 *Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil*

4/6 Week 11: The Legislative Agenda

- *Cox, Gary W. and McCubbins, Mathew D., "[Agenda Power in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1877 to 1986](#)" . *Parties, Procedure And Policy: Essays On The History Of Congress*, David W. Brady, Mathew D. McCubbins, eds., Stanford University Press, 2002
- Fechner "[Hastert Rule](#)"
- *Jones, Mark P. and Wonjae Hwang. 2005. "Party Government in Presidential Democracies: Extending Cartel Theory Beyond the U.S. Congress," *American Journal of Political Science*.

4/13 Week 12: Executives, Legislatures and Policy Outcomes

- Amorim Neto 2006 "The Presidential Calculus: Executive Policy Making and Cabinet Formation in the Americas" CPS
- Cox, Gary W. and Scott Morgenstern. 2001. "Latin America's Reactive Assemblies and Proactive Presidents."
- Martin, Lanny W., and Georg Vanberg. 2004. "Policing the Bargain: Coalition Government and Parliamentary Scrutiny." *American Journal of Political Science* 48(1): 13-27
- Blais, A., Kim, J. and Foucault, M. (2010) 'Public Spending, Public Deficits, and Government Coalitions', *Political Studies*, 58 (5), 829–46.

4/27 Week 13: What next in the US Congress? (Project presentations on this day)

Redistricting reform

Primary reform

Campaign finance reform

Aldrich, J. H. (2015). Did Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison "Cause" the US Government Shutdown? The Institutional Path from an Eighteenth Century Republic to a Twenty-first Century Democracy. *Perspectives on Politics*, 13(01), 7-23.