

Political Science 517

Legislative Politics

Autumn Quarter, 2008

Instructor: Todd Makse

Class: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-3:18 in Baker Systems 0198
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:00-1:00, Thursday 4:00-5:00, and by appointment
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Course Description:

The purpose of the course is to understand the role of legislatures in the American political system. The course will explore various aspects of the United States Congress, including: the relationship between members of Congress and their constituents; the nature of Congressional elections; and, the relations between the two chambers of Congress and other political actors. Finally, we will compare the institutions and behavior of Congress with their counterparts in the fifty state legislatures.

The course will be taught as a seminar, and class sessions will encourage students both to consider the source of our knowledge about legislatures, and to apply that knowledge to analyze contemporary events in Congress and in the state legislatures. To that end, we will read contemporary academic journal articles on legislative politics while keeping an eye on media coverage of the 110th Congress and the 2008 congressional elections.

Students are expected to come into this class with a 101-level understanding of Congress and American politics in general. If you have not taken 101 or passed out of it, please speak to me about the suitability of this course.

Textbook

There are two required textbooks for this course.

Congress and Its Members, Eleventh Edition by Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek and Frances E. Lee

101 Chambers: Congress, State Legislatures and the Future of Legislative Studies by Peverill Squire and Keith E. Hamm

Other readings will be made available on the course's Carmen website. We will use Carmen somewhat frequently in this class, and you should make a habit of checking Carmen on a daily basis. If at any time during the quarter, you do not have Internet access on a regular basis, please let me know immediately so it does not adversely affect your standing in the course.

Grading components:

Quizzes 20%

Papers 30%

Case Study Journal 30%

Participation 20%

Grading scale:

The grading scale will be no more difficult than the following:

93-100 A	90-92 A-	
87-89 B+	83-86 B	80-82 B-
77-79 C+	73-76 C	70-72 C-
67-69 D+	60-66 D	59 and below E

More about grading criteria:*Quizzes:*

Each day, there will be a short quiz during the first ten minutes of class based on reading from the textbooks only. These quizzes will consist of five short questions, which should be straightforward if you have done the reading, and you will get full credit if you get at least three questions correct. You will also be able to drop two quizzes. **Late and absent students will not be able to make up quizzes.**

Papers:

In addition to the textbook reading, there will be additional article readings for each session. On the first day of class, each student will sign up for three class periods for which they will be responsible to write a paper in response to these additional readings. You may choose to base your paper on one or more of the articles. However, you will also be responsible to lead class discussion of the articles in question, so you should be thoroughly familiar with all papers even if you choose to focus on one in your writing. Students who are not assigned readings for the day are not required to read the extra articles, but are encouraged to at least peruse them.

Papers should consist of the following: a.) a discussion of the paper or papers' main argument and findings; b.) a critique, if you have any, of the paper's assumptions, measurement techniques or conclusions; c.) a discussion of how the paper's findings relate to the day's readings, or with previous readings; and d.) a discussion of the practical or normative implications of the paper's findings in terms of Congress, legislative studies in general, or American democracy. You may weight the attention given to these factors as you choose; papers should be generally be between 4-5 pages (1000-1500 words) in length. **Papers are due at midnight the night before class.**

Case Study Journal:

At the beginning of the quarter, you will choose two members of Congress to learn more about throughout the quarter. Questions associated with each day's reading will be posted on Carmen, and the questions should guide you to search for contemporary or historical news articles (using Lexis-Nexus) related to your member(s) of Congress. After finding one or more such articles, respond to the question(s) with a short discussion (no more than one page) of how the article's content relates to concepts in the day's reading. Also be prepared to discuss these in class, as time permits. You must have a total of six

journal entries, preferably one per week, during the portion of the course related to the U.S Congress (September 30-November 13). The exact choice of days is up to you, but all students must complete an entry on September 30. **The completed journal is due, either in class or posted on Carmen, by November 20.**

Late assignments:

Papers turned in late will be penalized one letter grade per day. If your journal is turned in late, it will be penalized one-half letter grade per day.

Participation:

Participation is a sizable portion of your grade. You are expected to take a leadership role during the three seminars for which you have written a paper, and be an active participant in other seminar sessions. Participation grades are holistic; I do not assign a grade each class session, so please do not feel pressure to speak a certain number of times each class.

Attendance:

There is no explicit attendance component to your grade, but note that 40% of your final grade depends on your being in class. If there are extenuating circumstances which force you to miss multiple classes, please speak to me and I will try to make fair accommodations.

Extra Credit:

There will be extra credit opportunities throughout the quarter. More details will be announced later.

Miscellaneous:

Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct is defined by Ohio State University Rules as “any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution, or subvert the educational process. (Rule 3335-31-02).” Examples include violation of program or course rules stated in the syllabus, cheating on tests, plagiarism, dishonesty in reporting research results, and alteration of grades or forms.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities who feel they may need special assistance should inform me of their needs in a timely manner. These discussions will remain confidential. Course materials are available in alternative formats upon request. For such materials, please contact Mr. Wayne DeYoung, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, 292-2880.

Availability: Students should feel free to post questions on Carmen with any concerns about the class, assignments, or course material. I will make every effort to respond to all messages within 24 hours, and I will always monitor the discussion boards the night before classes. If you wish to ask questions in more confidence, feel free to email me as well. In addition, if my office hours are inconvenient for your schedule, I will be happy to set up an appointment to the extent that my schedule allows.

Class and Readings Schedule

September 25 (Thursday): Organizational session, no reading

September 30 (Tuesday): The two houses of Congress

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 1 and 2

Supplemental reading for everyone:

-Barry C. Burden, Greg Caldeira and Timothy Groseclose. 2000. "Measuring the Ideologies of U.S. Senators: The Song Remains the Same." Legislative Studies Quarterly 25: 237-258.

Readings for discussion leaders:

-John D. Griffin. 2006. "Senate Apportionment as a Source of Political Inequality." Legislative Studies Quarterly 31: 405-432

-Brian Frederick. 2007. "The People's Perspective on the Size of the People's House." PS: Political Science and Politics 41(2): 329-336.

October 2 (Thursday): Congressional elections; recruitment and candidacy

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 3

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Jonathan S. Krasno and Donald P. Green. 1988. "Preempting Quality Challengers in House Elections." Journal of Politics 50(4): 920-936.

-Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless. "To Run or Not to Run for Office: Explaining Nascent Political Ambition." American Journal of Political Science 49 (3): 642-659.

October 7 (Tuesday): Congressional elections; electoral rules

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 4

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Thomas Brunell. 2005. "Rethinking Redistricting: How Drawing Uncompetitive Districts Eliminates Gerrymanders, Enhances Representation and Improves Attitudes Toward Congress." PS: Political Science and Politics 39: 77-86.

-Alan Abramowitz, Brad Alexander and Matthew Gunning. 2005. "Don't Blame Redistricting for Uncompetitive Elections." PS: Political Science and Politics 39: 87-90.

-Michael P. McDonald. 2005. "Drawing the Line on District Competition." PS: Political Science and Politics 39: 91-94.

October 9 (Thursday): Representation

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 5

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Richard Fenno. 1978. Home Style: House Members in their Districts. Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-30.

-John D. Griffin and Brian Newman. 2006. "Are Voters Better Represented?" Journal of Politics 67 (4): 1206-1227.

October 14 (Tuesday): Representation; descriptive and substantive representation

Textbook reading: None

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Adrian D. Pantoja and Gary Segura. 2003. "Does Ethnicity Matter? Descriptive Representation in the Statehouse and Political Alienation Among Latinos." Social Science Quarterly 84(2): 441-460.

-Katherine Tate. 2002. "The Political Representation of Blacks in Congress: Does Race Matter?" Legislative Studies Quarterly 26: 623-38.

October 16 (Thursday): Leadership in Congress

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 6

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Douglas B. Harris. 2007. "Introduction to Symposium: Leadership Choice and Party Performance: The Democratic Takeover of the 110th Congress." PS: Political Science and Politics 41 (1): 43-48.

-Douglas B. Harris and Garrison Nelson. 2007. "Middlemen No More? Emergent Patterns in Congressional Leadership Selection." PS: Political Science and Politics 41 (1): 49-56.

-Matthew N. Green. 2007. "The 2006 Race for Democratic Majority Leader: Money, Policy and Personal Loyalty." PS: Political Science and Politics 41 (1): 63-68.

-Eric Heberlig, Marc Hetherington and Bruce Larson. 2007. "The Price of Leadership: Campaign Money and the Polarization of Congressional Parties." Journal of Politics 68(4): 992-1005.

October 21 (Tuesday): Political parties in Congress

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 7

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Steven S. Smith. 2000. "Positive Theories of Congressional Parties." Legislative Studies Quarterly 25: 193-215

-Gregory L. Hager and Jeffrey Talbert. 2000. "Look for the Party Label: Party Influences on Voting in the U.S. House." Legislative Studies Quarterly 25: 75-99.

October 23 (Thursday): Congressional committees

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 8

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Laura W. Arnold. 2001. "The Distribution of Senate Committee Positions: Change or More of the Same?" Legislative Studies Quarterly 26: 227-248.

-Scott A. Frisch and Sean Q. Kelly. 2004. "Self-Selection Reconsidered: House Committee Assignment Requests and Constituency Characteristics." Political Research Quarterly 57: 325-336.

October 28 (Tuesday): Pork barrel politics

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 9

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Robert M. Stein and Kenneth Bickers. 1994. "Congressional Elections and the Pork Barrel." Journal of Politics 56: 377-399.

-Steven J. Balla, Eric D. Lawrence, Forrest Maltzman and Lee Sigelman. "Partisanship, Blame Avoidance, and the Distribution of Legislative Pork." American Journal of Political Science 46: 515-525.

October 30 (Thursday): Congressional-executive relations

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 10

Readings for discussion leaders:

-William Howell, Scott Adler, Charles Cameron and Charles Riemann. 2000. "Divided Government and the Legislative Productivity of Congress, 1945-94." Legislative Studies Quarterly 25: 285-312.

-Scott Meinke and William Anderson. 2001. "Influencing from Impaired Administrations: Presidents, White House Scandals, and Legislative Leadership." Legislative Studies Quarterly 26: 639-659.

November 4 (Tuesday): The 2008 elections

Textbook reading: None

Supplemental reading for everyone: TBA

November 6 (Thursday): Post-election wrap-up

Textbook reading: None

Supplemental reading for everyone: TBA

November 11 (Tuesday): No class

November 13 (Thursday): Congress and the judiciary

Textbook reading: Davidson et al, Ch. 12

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Timothy R. Johnson and Jason Roberts. 2005. "Pivotal Politics, Presidential Capital and Supreme Court Nominations." Congress and the Presidency 32: 31-48.

-Sarah A. Binder and Forrest Maltzman. 2002. "Senatorial Delay in Confirming Federal Judges, 1947-1998." American Journal of Political Science 46: 190-199.

November 18 (Tuesday): State legislative institutions

Textbook reading: Squire and Hamm, Ch. 1-2

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Peverill Squire. 1988. "Member Career Opportunities and the Internal Organization of Legislatures." Journal of Politics 50: 726-744.

-Gary F. Moncrief, Richard G. Niemi and Lynda W. Powell. 2004. "Time, Term Limits, and Turnover: Trends in Membership Stability in U.S. State Legislatures." Legislative Studies Quarterly 29: 357-377.

November 20 (Thursday): State legislative elections

Textbook reading: Squire and Hamm, Ch. 3

Readings for discussion leaders:

-Thomas H. Holbrook and Emily Van Dunk. 1993. "Electoral Competition in the American States." The American Political Science Review 87: 955-962.

-Robert E. Hogan 2003. "Institutional and District-Level Sources of Competition in State Legislative Elections." Social Science Quarterly 84: 543-560.

November 25 (Tuesday): State legislative procedures

Textbook reading: Squire and Hamm, Ch. 4

Readings for discussion leaders:

- Richard A. Clucas. 2001. "Principal-Agent Theory and the Power of State House Speakers." Legislative Studies Quarterly 26: 319-338.
- L. Marvin Overby and Thomas A. Kazee. 2000. "Outlying Committees in the Statehouse: An Examination of the Prevalence of Committee Outliers in State Legislatures." Journal of Politics 62: 701-728.

November 27 (Thursday): No class

December 2 (Tuesday): State legislative careers

Textbook reading: Squire and Hamm, Ch. 5

Readings for discussion leaders:

- Rebekah Herrick and Sue Thomas. 2005. "Do Term Limits Make A Difference? Ambition and Motivations Among U.S. State Legislators." American Politics Research 33: 726-747.
- Jerome Maddox. 2004. "Working Outside of the State House (and Senate): Outside Careers as an Indicator of Legislative Professionalism in American State Legislatures." State Politics and Policy Quarterly 4: 211-226.

December 4 (Thursday): State legislative policymaking and policy diffusion

Textbook reading: Squire and Hamm, Ch. 6

Readings for discussion leaders:

- Frances Stokes Berry and William D. Berry. 1990. "State Lottery Adoptions as Policy Innovations: An Event History Analysis." American Political Science Review 84: 395-415.
- Craig Volden. 2006. "States as Policy Laboratories: Emulating Success in the Children's Health Insurance Program." American Journal of Political Science 50: 294-312.