Syllabus

PLS 824: Research Seminar on Congress
D. Rohde
Spring 2004
Mondays, 104 BH (3:00-5:50)
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Required Readings

The following books are required, and should be available in the appropriate book stores. All are paperback editions except Black and Black.


David Mayhew: Congress: The Electoral Connection (Yale University Press 1974) 0-300-01809-6 (paper)


Richard Hall: Participation in Congress . (Yale University Press 1996) 0-300-07651-7 (paper)

David Rohde: Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House (University of Chicago Press 1991) 0-226-72407-7 (paper)

Gary Cox & Mathew McCubbins: Legislative Leviathan (University of California Press 1993) 0-520-07220-0 (paper)

Barbara Sinclair: The Transformation of the U.S. Senate (Johns Hopkins University Press 1989) 0801841100 (paper)

Keith Krehbiel, Pivotal Politics (University of Chicago Press 1998) 0-226-45272-7 (paper)

Sarah A. Binder: Stalemate (Brookings 2003) 0-8157-0911-0 (paper)


Gary Cox and Jonathan Katz: Elbridge Gerry’s Salamander (Cambridge 2002) 0-521-00154-4 (paper)

There is no course pack. Most articles are available on J-Stor. Most or all unpublished papers will be available on the course web site (www.msu.edu/~rohde/pls824.htm). Items marked with an asterisk will be made available.

Evaluation

You will be required to complete a number of written assignments. First, there will be two critical evaluations of the assigned readings, each for one of the weeks of the course. I would expect this to run something like 6-8 double-spaced pages. You are encouraged to draw on and discuss additional, unassigned literature related to the subject matter for
that week. You will also be expected to lead class discussion of the readings that week; the paper will be due the day the readings are discussed, with copies for all seminar members. You may sign up for the weeks you prefer, in most cases one before Spring break and one after (first come, first served, one student per week until all are taken, then we will double up), starting after the first class meeting. I will seek volunteers for the first few weeks during the first class.

The other written assignment will be a research proposal, due by noon, April 30. The papers will be judged by the criteria I would apply to a paper delivered at a professional conference, or one submitted to a journal [as if, of course, the research had actually been conducted]. In addition, the proposal will be judged by its realism (i.e., whether it could actually be completed within the next year).

A significant part of your grade will depend on your participation in class. On some days you will be responsible for leading the discussion, on most you will not. In either case you will be expected to participate. Let me be clearer. You are expected to read the assigned material, to analyze it seriously, and to demonstrate that you have read and mastered that material by sharing your views and evaluations with the class. (You will want both to understand what the author is trying to say and do, and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the author's theory, methodology, and substantive conclusions.) If you do not do this, you will not be able to receive a top grade in the class. If your writing assignments are excellent and you do not participate extensively, you will not receive a final grade higher than a 3.5; if your writing assignments are very good and you do not participate extensively, you will not receive a final grade higher than a 3.0; and so on.

We will not cover the "nut and bolts" of congressional organization in this class. I will assume a certain amount of background, equivalent to a good undergraduate course on Congress. One book [Walter Oleszek: Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process, 6th ed. (CQ Press 2004)] is intended to serve as a supplement to your knowledge and a reference on congressional procedures. Browse through it during the first month of class, and then refer back to it as needed.

Assignments

(To be completed before the class meeting)

*= copies to be made available

Jan. 12 Introduction and Theoretical Overviews

David Mayhew: Congress: The Electoral Connection (Yale University Press 1974)

Jan. 19 NO CLASS: MLK Holiday

Jan. 26 Theoretical Overviews (Continued)


Recommended:

Kenneth Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast: Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions


Douglas Arnold: The Logic of Congressional Action

Keith Krehbiel: Information and Legislative Organization.

Feb. 2 Elections: Voter Choice and Public Opinion


Fiorina, Morris P. 1999. "Whatever Happened to the Median Voter." (manuscript)


Recommended:

John Hibbing and Beth Thiess-Morse: Congress as Public Enemy

Bruce Cain, John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina: The Personal Vote
Feb. 9 **Elections: Elite Behavior**


**Recommended:**

Thomas Kazee (ed.): *Who Runs for Congress?*

John Hibbing: *Congressional Careers*

Linda Fowler: *Candidates, Congress, and the American Democracy*

Kim Kahn and Patrick Kenney: *The Spectacle of U.S. Senate Elections*

Richard Fenno: *Senators on the Campaign Trail*


Feb. 16 **Elections: Districting and Money**


Recommended:


Feb. 23 Elections: Outcomes and Representation


Recommended:

Morris Fiorina: Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies

Gary Jacobson: The Electoral Origins of Divided Government


Alan Abramowitz and Jeffrey Segal: Senate Elections

Fenno: Home Style


Mar. 1 Internal Organization: Structure, Rules and Procedures


Recommended:

Douglas Dion: Turning the Legislative Thumbscrew

Sarah Binder: Minority Rights Majority Rule

Barbara Sinclair: Unorthodox Lawmaking

Stanley Bach and Steven Smith: Managing Uncertainty

Mar. 8 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Mar. 15 Internal Organization: Parties and Leaders 1

Rohde, David W. Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House (University of Chicago Press 1991)


Recommended:

John Bader: Taking the Initiative


Mar. 22 Internal Organization: Parties and Leaders 2

Gary Cox & Mathew McCubbins: Legislative Leviathan (University of California Press 1993)


Mar. 29 Internal Organization: Committees 1

Richard Hall: Participation in Congress. (Yale University Press 1996)


Recommended:

Richard Fenno: Congressmen in Committees

Christopher Deering and Steven Smith, Committees in Congress, 3d ed.

Randall Strahan: New Ways and Means

Kenneth A. Shepsle: The Giant Jigsaw Puzzle.


Apr. 5 Internal Organization: Committees 2


Recommended:

Lawrence Longley and Walter Oleszek: *Bicameral Politics*


Apr. 12 **Senate Perspectives**


Recommended:

Frances Lee and Bruce Oppenheimer: *Sizing Up the Senate*

Wendy Schiller: *Partners & Rivals*

Richard Fenno: *The Senate: A Bicameral Perspective*


Richard Fenno: *The United States Senate: A Bicameral Perspective*

Sarah Binder and Steven Smith: *Politics or Principle?*

C. Lawrence Evans: *Leadership in Committee*

Apr. 19 **Historical Perspectives**


April 26 Congress and the President

Keith Krehbiel, Pivotal Politics (University of Chicago Press 1991)


Recommended:

David Mayhew: Divided We Govern


David Brady and Craig Volden: Revolving Gridlock

George Edwards: At the Margins

Mark Peterson: Legislating Together

Jon Bond and Richard Fleischer: The President in the Legislative Arena