

Congressional Leadership, Parties and Public Policy

PPAI 1701

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Friday at 10:00 pm. to 12:20 pm.

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This course will focus on the Congressional leadership, parties in Congress, and their impact on political interactions, and public policy outcomes. The course will examine the relationship between the formal leadership in the modern Congress and other powerful elements in the House and Senate such as the committee chairmen and the party caucuses as well as outside actors such as the media and lobbyists. Emphasis is on the decades long trend toward greater political polarization and its impact on the ability of the institution to respond effectively to address critical national priorities such as the ballooning federal debt, health reform, immigration, nuclear proliferation and global warming (to name a few). The course requires extensive reading, a detailed paper and active class participation. Students will be expected to closely follow events in the Congress and be prepared to discuss them in class.

Required Reading:

Legislators, Leaders, and Lawmaking: The U.S. House of Representatives in the Post Reform Era— Barbara Sinclair, John Hopkins University Press, 1995

Parties and Policies: How the American Government Works-- David R. Mayhew, Yale University Press, 2008

Party Polarization in Congress -- Sean M. Theriault, Cambridge University Press, 2008

Esteemed Colleagues: Civility and Deliberation in the U.S. Senate -- Burdett A. Loomis, editor, Brookings Institution Press, 2000

Course Structure: Students are expected to have read the assigned reading each week and come to class prepared to actively participate.

Paper: Students will be required to write a paper (approximately 10 pages) discussing how a particular federal policy debate and its outcome were impacted by the Congressional leadership and/or the interplay between the political parties in Congress.

Grading: Grades will be based on the paper (35%), participation in class (30%), and a take-home final exam (35%).

Some Useful Resources:

- http://wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1412
- <http://www.dirksencongressionalcenter.org/>
- <http://centerforpolitics.org/>
- <http://www.cbpp.org/>
- <http://rothenbergpoliticalreport.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.senate.gov/>
- <http://www.house.gov/>
- <http://thomas.loc.gov/>
- <http://library.cqpress.com/cqweekly/>
- <http://www.politico.com/>
- <http://congress.indiana.edu/>

Class Schedule and Assignments:

● September 11 General Overview

“If you let me write the procedure, and I let you write the substance, I’ll screw you every time.” [Congressman John Dingell, 1987]

● September 18 Congress and the Constitution

“In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.” [James Madison in Federalist No. 51, 1788]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Article I and Article II of the U.S. Constitution**

▶ **Charles Stewart III:**

http://www.mit.edu/~17.251/Congress_and_the_Constitutional_System.pdf

▶ **Federalist Papers Nos. 10, 51-53 & 62-65**

● September 25 Leadership in the House

“You don’t say filibuster in the House. It is a dirty word. Instead, you have dilatory tactics which can get tricky as a chess game.” [House Doorkeeper William “Fishbait” Miller in his memoir, “Fishbait”, 1977]

“...The Speakership as an institution has atrophied. The personal influence the Speaker may wield by means of bartering favors does not compensate for adequate legitimate authority” [House reformer, Congressman Richard Bolling in “House Out of Order”, 1964]

“She (Nancy Pelosi) is the most powerful Speaker in a generation-- she will be able to do whatever she wants.” [Former House Majority Leader Tom “the Hammer” DeLay, Nov. 2008]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Cooper and Brady, Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn, The American Political Science Review, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Jun, 1981) pp. 411-425**

▶ **Sinclair, Chapters 1-5**

● **October 2 Leadership in the Senate**

“Once, when I really needed his [Senator Barry Goldwater's] vote and leaned on him perhaps a little too hard, he said to his Majority Leader, 'Howard, you have one vote, and I have one vote, and we'll just see how this thing turns out.' It was at that moment that I formulated my theory that being leader of the Senate was like herding cats. It is trying to make ninety-nine independent souls act in concert under rules that encourage polite anarchy and embolden people who find majority rule a dubious proposition at best.” [Former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Loomis, Chapters 4 & 6**

● **October 9 The Whip System in the House and Senate**

" When it comes to working with the Democratic Caucus I have to fish in a lot of ponds. I go fishing with the Blue Dogs...I go fishing with the Hispanics...trying to cobble together the 218 votes I need. But, a lot of the time I have to be a hunter... They tell me a good hunter knows how to work both sides of the ditch. I fish among my caucus, Democratic Members, and I go hunting sometimes among my Republican Members.” [House Majority Whip, James Clyburn, Roll Call, 2006]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Sinclair, Chapters 6-7**

● **October 16 Congressional Leadership and the President**

"Calm down with the threats. There's a new Congress in town. We respect your constitutional role. We want you to respect ours." [Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi publicly sending a message to President George W. Bush, 2007]

“I've been criticized for going over the heads of the Congress. So, what`s the fuss? A lot of things go over their heads.” [Ronald Reagan]

“It is important ...that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department, to encroach upon one another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. ” [President George Washington, Farewell Address, 1796]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Loomis, Chapter 9**

● **October 23 Party Organizations in the Congress**

“Congress is a World War I rather than a World War II operation. You have to move huge bodies of men a few feet at a time” [Former Congressman Clem Miller]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Sinclair, Chapters 8-10**

▶ **Theriault, Chapters 1-3**

● **October 30 Congressional Parties and Elections**

“Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. (14th Amendment alteration of original clause)... The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such manner as they shall by Law direct.” [As originally stated in Article I, Section 2]

“The idea that a congressman would be tainted by accepting money from private industry or private sources is essentially a socialist argument.” [Newt Gingrich]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Fiorina, Morris, “Parties and Partisanship: A 40 Year Retrospective”, Political Behavior, Vol. 24 No. 2 Special Issue: Parties and Partisanship, Part One (Jun., 2002), pp. 93-115**

▶ **Sinclair, Barbara, “Bipartisan Governing: Possible, Yes; Likely, No”, PS: Political Science and Politics, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar, 2001), pp. 81-83**

▶ **Mayhew, Chapters 1-5**

▶ **Theriault, Chapters 4-6**

- **November 6 Congressional Parties and Political Polarization**

“Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction.” [James Madison, Federalist No. 10, 1787]

“The unnecessary partisan behavior... has poisoned the well enough to make any action to restrain the growth of entitlement program sand to restructure health care policy impossible and has badly strained the long tradition of bipartisanship on foreign policy...” [Thomas Mann and Norm Ornstein in “The Broken Branch”]

“The best system is to have one party govern, and one party watch.” [Speaker Thomas Reed, 1880]

Assigned Readings:

- ▶ **Sinclair, Chapter 11**
- ▶ **Mayhew, Chapters 6-10**
- ▶ **Theriault, Chapters 7-8**

- **November 13 Holds and the Filibuster in the Senate – Undemocratic or Minority Rights?**

“Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.” Benjamin Franklin (unconfirmed)

“The Founders, in their wisdom gave the Senate the power to establish for itself the rules governing exercise of its powers. Unlike the unwieldy House, which had to adopt rules that inhibited debate, the Senate became the true deliberative body that the Framers had envisioned by maintaining the ability of its members to debate as long as necessary to reach a just result.... The right of extended debate in the Senate is an integral part of our system of checks and balances and an important historic protection of the rights of the minority in our country.” [Historian Robert Caro]

“Once the tool of Southern segregationists, unending debate has become as acceptable as it is undemocratic.” [Political Scientist Jean Edward Smith in the New York Times, March 9, 2009]

Assigned Readings:

- ▶ **New York Times:**
<http://100days.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/01/filibusters-the-senates-self-inflicted-wound/>
- ▶ **Loomis, Chapter 5**
- ▶ **Mayhew, Chapter 11**
- ▶ **Theriault, Chapter 9-10**

- **November 20 Informal Congressional Leaders**

[paper due]

“Frankly, I don't give a crap for titles. This whip, Majority Leader crap doesn't interest me. The sooner everybody around here realizes that we're all part of the leadership, the better off we'll be.” [Unidentified midwestern Congressman quoted in “Leadership in Congress”, Robert Peabody, 1976]

“Some were liberals, some were moderates, some were conservatives. All thought that the hyperpartisan and double standards that led to this stalemate needed to end. Each was willing to offend the ideological purists in his or her respective party...Trust and good faith between members of both parties - the glue that made the deal possible. Two terms not heard too often these days in Washington.” [referring to the Senate “Gang of 14” which led the Senate out of the “nuclear option” confrontation over judicial nominations, Lanny Davis, in the “Huffington Post”, January, 2009]

Assigned Readings:

▶ **Sinclair, Chapter 12**

▶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/07/us/politics/07blacks.html>

- **December 4 Congressional Parties and the Message**

“Both parties attempt to structure the agenda in a manner that highlights their own message priorities and undermines the message of the opposition.” [Lawrence Evans & Mark Oleszek]

Assigned Readings:

▶ Evans & M. Oleszek, “Message Politics and Partisan Theories of Congress”:
http://clevan.people.wm.edu/Message_Politics.pdf

- **December 11 Reading Period *[take-home exam due]***