

Syllabus

PL Sc 315 (Winter 2009)

Professor Adam Brown

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Course website: <http://adambrown.info/p/courses/2009/summer/315>

Office location: 772 SWKT

Office hours: 4-5 MWF or stop by whenever

What's this course about?

Although the Constitution provides for three branches, the legislative branch is considered the "First Branch"—the center of lawmaking authority. Regardless of the source, it is the Congress that shapes policy proposals into public law. The ultimate responsibility for the content and scope of American lawmaking and public policy rests with the Congress.

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an introduction to congressional politics. We will cover numerous topics as they relate to the U.S. Congress: legislative development, representation, congressional elections, congressional committees, party leadership and organization, legislative voting decisions, and the lawmaking and policy process. The course will cover some of the classic literature in congressional politics, and use readings, assignments, and class discussion to bring a contemporary perspective to long-standing theories of congressional behavior.

With that in mind, these are our goals this semester:

- To obtain a general working knowledge of the U.S. Congress, and where possible other legislative bodies,
- To learn to apply the academic literature on Congress to current congressional politics,
- To stimulate thinking and discussion about the role and effectiveness of Congress in particular and representative democracy in general,
- And to provide you with new perspective that will shape your future attempts to critically evaluate Congress and its members.

Grades and assignments

I use a variety of assessment methods to keep final grades as fair as possible, including closed-form questions (e.g. multiple choice, true/false), short answer questions, and essays. You will see all these question types on each exam. You will also write a substantial term paper outside of class.

- 3% Film paper 1
- 3% Film paper 2
- 29% Midterm
- 30% Final paper (details below)
- 5% Critique of a classmate's final paper

30% Final exam (partly comprehensive)

Final paper. The major assignment for this course is a 12-15 page paper, containing a detailed analysis of a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The paper will be a case study of the member and his or her district, analyzing the link between the member's district and his or her behavior at home and in Washington, D.C. Several smaller assignments related to the final paper will be completed throughout the quarter. The assignments will guide you in the collection and analysis of data for your final paper. With the exception of assignment 7 (the peer review), these assignments will not receive separate grades. Instead, your work on these assignments will be reflected in your overall term paper grade. Note, though, that failure to complete an assignment satisfactorily will result in a 10% penalty on the final paper (so if you skip three of the assignments, your paper starts off with a 30% penalty). Note also that late submission of these assignments will also result in significant penalties on the final paper. Further details about the assignments and paper [are available online](#).

Late penalties: All take-home work is due at the *beginning* of class unless you and I work out some other arrangement in advance. Any paper turned in on the due date but after the beginning of class gets a 5% penalty. One weekday late is a 10% penalty; two weekdays late is a 25% penalty; later is unacceptable. Papers must be turned in hard copy, not by email.

Missed exams: No makeups unless you (1) arrange it in advance for a valid reason or (2) have a genuine emergency and contact me as soon as possible to work things out.

Final exam: The final exam will be at **9:00am on Thursday, August 13th**; no exceptions.

Communication

Your email address appears on my rollsheets. For most of you, this is the hotmail/gmail/yahoo account that you have provided to BYU via your Route Y profile. You are expected to read anything I send to your email address. Check your email (and your spam folder) daily. Also, important changes to deadlines or to the syllabus might be announced in class. You are expected to know anything announced in class.

Other course policies

Many of my course policies are the same for every course. To save space, I don't print them here. For answers to general questions like the following, read my policies at this URL: <http://adambrown.info/p/courses/policies>

- How many hours per week should I schedule for this class?
- What do your tests and exams look like (and why)?
- What is plagiarism, and what happens if I do it?
- How do I request a regrade for a particular assignment?

What books do we need to buy?

We will use the most recent editions of the following books, with the exception of the Fenno and Mayhew books. The Fenno and Mayhew books are reprint editions of classic books published in the 1970s; other than the front matter (e.g. the preface), the 2nd edition of these two books is just a reprint of the classic 1st edition; for these two books (ONLY), either version is acceptable (or just get them from the library). For the other three books, though, you do need the most recent version; these books get updated each two years when new Congressional elections are held.

- Loomis, Burdett A. and Wendy J. Schiller. *The Contemporary Congress*, 5th edition. Belmont, CA: Thompson/Wadsworth. At Amazon.com.
- Fenno, Richard F. 2003. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. New York: Longman. Or buy the 1978 edition published by HarperCollins (ISBN 0-673-39440-9). Either version is acceptable. Amazon: [2003 edition](#) or [1978 edition](#).
- Herrnson, Paul S. *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, 5th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. <http://herrnson.cqpress.com> or [Amazon](#)
- Mayhew, David R. 2004. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd edition. New Haven: Yale University Press. Or buy the 1974 edition (also from Yale University Press, ISBN 0-300-10587-8). With the exception of the preface and introduction, the two editions are identical. Cheap at [Amazon](#).
- Sinclair, Barbara. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Lawmaking Processes in the U. S. Congress*, 3rd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN 1-56802-510-6. [Amazon](#)

Reading schedule

Dates are approximate. Changes will be announced in class. Under each date you may find the following headings:

- Lecture title, usually given as one or more questions. You should be able to answer these questions by the end of the lecture. Similar questions will appear on the exams.
- Terms: Keywords to help you identify key points. I'll update these as we go depending on the direction we take. These will appear on the exams.
- Readings: Required readings. Read them before the indicated lecture.
 - Some URLs may be accessible only from on-campus.
 - Some URLs may take you only to an article's abstract, but I **do** expect you to read the entire article; look above or below the abstract for a link to the full article.
 - If a URL is broken, let me know; then, head over to [Google Scholar](#) and look for a correct URL. A broken URL is not an excuse to skip the reading.
 - Remember to follow the newspaper, too.
- Resources: You are not required to read these, but I might draw on them during lecture. (These won't be visible until after the lecture.)

Although my lectures may diverge considerably from the readings—more so for some topics than for others—be advised that anything from lecture or the readings is fair game for the exams.

Unit 1: Congress—The Basics

Mon, Jun 22nd, 2009: Congress in the Constitution. Why don't we like Congress? Why did the founders design Congress the way they did?

- Terms: Congress vs most members of Congress vs your member of Congress; tyranny vs efficiency tradeoff
- Readings: The Constitution, Article I ([online](#))

Wed, Jun 24th, 2009: Legislative development. How/why do the internal institutions of Congress change over time? What is the role of norms?

- Terms: Institutionalization; well-bounded; internal complexity; universalism; centralization/decentralization; norms; sociological learning vs rational apprenticeship
- Readings: Loomis and Schiller, chs 2-3 [54 pages]
- DUE: Assignment 1 (see term paper instructions)

Fri, Jun 26th, 2009: Member goals (details coming soon)

- DUE: Assignment 2 (see term paper instructions)

Mon, Jun 29th, 2009: Representation (details coming soon)

Unit 2: Congressional Elections

Wed, Jul 1st, 2009. Reapportionment and redistricting. What method do we use to apportion House seats, and why? What values influence redistricting, and when do these values conflict? How do redistricting committees and legislators have competing interests?

- Terms: Apportionment vs districting; Alabama paradox; Method of equal proportions (Huntington-Hill method); Texas redistricting controversy
- Readings:
 - Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek. *Congress and Its Members*, 11th ed., pp. 40-58 [19 pages]
 - Alan I. Abramowitz, Brad Alexander, and Matthew Gunning. 2006. "Incumbency, Redistricting, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Politics* 68:75-88 [14 pages]
 - Read ahead; there are some heavy reading loads coming up.
- DUE: Assignment 3

Mon, Jul 6th, 2009. Recruitment, nominations, and strategy. Why do some people run for Congress but others don't? What kinds of people run? When do the "best" candidates run?

- Terms: Ambition (discrete, static, progressive); types of amateur vs professional; strategic entry calculus; opportunity costs of running
- Readings:
 - Loomis and Schiller, ch 4 [25 pages]
 - Herrnson, chs 1-2 [64 pages]

Wed, Jul 8th, 2009. Campaigns and voting. Who wins? How many Americans can name their representatives, and why does it matter? What factors influence Congressional elections? Why are there presidential coattails? How big is the incumbency advantage, and why? How are Congressional campaigns run?

- Terms: Recall vs recognition; rolloff; incumbent; challenger; open seat; incumbency advantage; frank; Chaffetz; Spencer; Hatch; Bennett
- Readings: Herrnson, chs 3-4 and 7-9 [135 pages]
- DUE: Assignment 4

Fri, Jul 10th, 2009. Campaign finance. Why regulate campaign finance? How do these regulations affect Congressional campaigns? Can money buy an election? Can money buy floor votes?

- Terms: Campaign finance; FECA; Buckley v Valeo; BCRA; soft money; hard money; PAC; 527; issue advocacy
- Readings: Herrnson, chs 5-6 and 10-11 [103 pages]

Mon, Jul 13th, 2009. Midterm.

Wed, Jul 15th, 2009. *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*

- Readings: Read ahead.

Unit 3: Organization. Who Runs This Place?

Fri, Jul 17th, 2009. Congressional committees. Why do we have committees? When are committees most autonomous? What powers do committees have (negative, positive)? What are the limits on these powers? Which committees are most powerful?

- Terms: Committee; floor; chamber; committee-dominant model; party-dominant model; informational (chamber-dominant) model; standing committee; joint committee; select committee; conference committee; negative power vs positive power; discharge petition; multiple referral
- Readings:
 - Loomis and Schiller, ch 8 [23 pages]
 - Review Mayhew, pp 81-96
- DUE: Film paper #1

Mon, Jul 20th, 2009. Parties and leadership. If committees are really autonomous, what four things would you expect to observe? What evidence is there that party leaders are more powerful than committees? What makes some leaders more powerful than others?

- Terms: Reciprocity; unrepresentativeness; preference outliers; seniority; continuity; self-selection; specialization; conditional party government; coolies; cartel theory; the Johnson treatment
- Readings:
 - Loomis and Schiller, ch 5 [20 pages]
 - Review Mayhew, pp 97-180
 - Read ahead; there are some heavy reading loads coming up.
- DUE: Assignment 5.

Unit 4: The Legislative Process

Wed, Jul 22nd, 2009. Rules and procedures. Why do rules matter? How do structural (Constitutional) differences between the Senate and House influence the types of procedures that each chamber adopts? What role does the Rules committee play in the House? Given that it has no Rules committee, how does the Senate control floor time?

- Terms: Arrow's paradox; transitivity; Powell amendment; Rules committee; open rule, closed rule, etc.; unanimous consent agreement; filibuster; cloture
- Readings:
 - Loomis and Schiller, ch 7 [15 pages]
 - Sinclair, chs 1-4 [90 pages]

Mon, Jul 27th, 2009. *The Congress*

- Readings: Read ahead.
- DUE: Assignment 6

Wed, Jul 29th, 2009. TBA

- DUE: Film paper #2

Fri, Jul 31st, 2009. Voting decisions. What kind of information do members of Congress like best? What sources do they look to the most? How important is content relative to source? Why do members of Congress sometimes ignore district opinion? What incentives do members of Congress have to vote sincerely or strategically?

- Terms: Brevity; political relevance; evaluative; gatekeepers; "revolving door"; intensity; Powell amendment; strategic voting; sincere voting
- Readings: Catch up on readings, or read ahead.

Mon, Aug 3rd, 2009. Public opinion. To what extent do MCs follow public opinion? What strategies do MCs use to lead public opinion? What would Mayhew and Fenno predict about how MCs would use public opinion data? Why do Americans disapprove of Congress?

- Terms: Delegate vs trustee (Burke); crafted talk; pandering
- Readings:
 - John R. Hibbing and Christopher W. Larimer. 2005. "[What the American Public Wants Congress to Be.](#)" In Dodd and Oppenheimer, eds. *Congress Reconsidered*, 8th ed. pp. 55-75 [20 pages]
 - Hibbing and Theiss-Morse. 1996. "[Civics is Not Enough: Teaching Barbarics in K-12](#)" [6 pages]
- DUE: TERM PAPER (for review). Bring a complete copy of your paper. It should be final draft quality. You will exchange with another student for peer reviews.

Wed, Aug 5th, 2009. Interbranch conflict. What are the president's formal and informal legislative powers? What sorts of authority does Congress delegate to the executive branch? Why? What tools do members of Congress have at their disposal to ensure that delegated authority is not abused?

- Terms: Bully pulpit; veto; signing statement; bureaucracy; police patrol; fire alarm; the Federal Register; oversight
- Readings:
 - Loomis and Schiller, ch 6 [15 pages]
 - Sinclair, chs 5-6 [47 pages]
- DUE: Assignment 7 (peer review)

Fri, Aug 7th, 2009. The budget and policy process. How do Congressional politics vary by policy type?

- Terms: distributive; regulatory; redistributive; iron triangle; earmark
- Readings:
 - Sinclair, ch 12 [20 pages]
 - Loomis and Schiller, ch 10 [20 pages]

Mon, Aug 10th, 2009. Student presentations.

- DUE: Presentation, assignment 8 (abstract), and final paper

Final exam: The final exam will be at **9:00am on Thursday, August 13th.** Be there.

I will make every effort to be available to you in my office all day on the reading day in case you have any last-minute questions.

Notices

The following are notices from the political science department.

Plagiarism: While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. General information about the honor code can be found at honorcode.byu.edu. Details about Academic Honesty at the Honor Code site can be found by moving your mouse over "Honor Code" in the second grey bar and then move down then right and click on "Other Clarifications", then move your mouse down and click on "Academic Honesty."

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current Harbrace College Handbook, the MLA Handbook, and James D. Lester's Writing Research Papers.

Discrimination: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Disabilities: Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB

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