ESM 595II: Congressional Decision-making and the Environment
Professor Sarah Anderson
sanderson@bren.ucsb.edu
Bren School of Environmental Science and Management
University of California, Santa Barbara
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Class: Wednesdays 2-4pm, Bren 3526
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-4:30 and Wednesdays 4:00-5:00

Overview:
This course will introduce graduate students to the literature on congressional politics. There are four types of reading in this class. Most weeks will begin with a grounding in the classics of congressional scholarship. Then we will read scholarship that has grown up around the major questions in political science. The discussion leader for each week will also identify a new paper on the subject to identify cutting edge research and open research questions. Finally, where possible, we will read works focusing on the environment. This class is designed to help prepare graduate students for comprehensive exams in American Politics and for independent scholarly contributions to the study of legislative institutions.

Requirements:
1) Participation. I expect everyone to read all of the required readings and be prepared to critically discuss them. For each session, one person will be responsible for helping to lead the class. This person should prepare discussion questions. In addition, the discussion leader will identify a newly published (or even a working paper) relevant to the class topic. The citation for this work must be provided at the prior class so that we can all read it and prepare to discuss it.

2) Short discussion papers. Each student will prepare 4 discussion papers. A good response paper will briefly summarize the reading(s) then identify weaknesses or extensions. Each response paper should end with two researchable hypotheses following from the week’s readings. These papers will be due by noon on Tuesday so that we can all read them in advance of class.

3) Final paper. You will have a choice of final paper.
   a. a review of the literature regarding one particular question. Rather than a recitation of what others have done, this paper should advance your thesis. In other words, use the literature to present and support your own thesis, just as you would in an article. Or
   b. a research prospectus of your choice. Although it may not include the findings, this paper should present a puzzle or unanswered question, situate it in the literature, develop hypotheses, and describe how you plan to test your argument.
Week 1: Intro and History: This week will offer a brief history of the study of Congress.


Week 2: The Electoral Connection: How do electoral incentives shape the behavior of members of Congress?


Recommended:
Engstrom and Kernell. 2005 “Manufactured Responsiveness: The Impact of State Electoral Laws on Unified Party Control of the Presidency and House of Representatives, 1840-1940.” AJPS.
**Week 3: Institutions and Equilibrium - Parties:** What role do parties play in Congress? How do they shape policy outcomes?


**Recommended:**
Binder, Lawrence and Maltzman. 1999. “Uncovering the Hidden Effect of Party.” *JOP.*

**Week 4: Institutions and Equilibrium – Committees:** What role do committees play in Congress? Do they shape policy outcomes? If so, how?


Recommended:

Baumgartner, Jones, and MacLeod. 2000. The Evolution of Legislative Jurisdictions. *JOP.*


Katz and Sala. 1996. “Careerism, Committee Assignment, and the Electoral Connection.” *APSR.*


**Week 5: Institutions and Equilibrium - Evolution and Change:** *How do institutions of governance change? What do we mean by endogenous institutions?*


Recommended:
Dion and Huber. 1997. “Sense and Sensibility: The Role of Rules.” AJPS.

Week 6: Agendas: What shapes the policy agenda?


Week 7: Voting: How do elected officials decide how to vote?


Recommended:
Week 8: Politics of Coalitions: How are coalitions formed? What role do organized interests play?


Recommended:

Week 9: Congress and President: What drives gridlock? How do the President and Congress interact?


Recommended:

Week 10: Presentation of Papers