

POL 433F: Congressional Politics in America

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TEXTS: Lawrence C. Dodd, Bruce I. Oppenheimer and C. Lawrence Evans (eds.)
Congress Reconsidered, 12th edition (CR)

Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse and Michael W. Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 15th edition

A selection of articles and other materials which will be posted on Quercus (Q)
or made available by the instructor

MEDIA / INTERNET:

Students are expected to keep up to date with the events of the mid-term election campaign using some of the many sources that are readily available for this purpose. The *New York Times* [www.nytimes.com] offers an inexpensive on-line subscription to students and is the best overall reference for current information as well as op-ed pieces by regular columnists such as Paul Krugman, Maureen Dowd and Ross Douthat. The *Washington Post* [www.washingtonpost.com] covers Congress intensively. Other useful sources are *Vox* [www.vox.com], *Real Clear Politics* [www.realclearpolitics.com], *C-Span* [www.c-span.org], *Politics1* [www.politics1.com] and *Fivethirtyeight* [<http://fivethirtyeight.com/politics/>]

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

The literature on the U.S. Congress and American political parties and elections is vast. The following are recommended as additional reference sources, but are only a small sampling of the Political Science literature in this area. Note that there are multiple editions of many of these books. The Hetherington/Larson or Poloni-Staudinger/Wolf books may be particularly useful for students with little background in the field. The Routledge and Bartels anthologies, both published just before the 2016 elections, contain much useful background material and are available on-line.

John H. Aldrich et al, *Change and Continuity in the 2020 Elections*

Roger Davidson et al, *Congress and Its Members*

Paul S. Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*

Gary C. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*

L. Sandy Maisel & Mark Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America*

Thomas E. Mann & Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*

Jeffrey Stonecash, *Understanding American Political Parties*

Steven S. Smith et al, *The American Congress*
David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*
James A. Thurber & Jordan Tama (eds), *Rivals for Power*
Joseph A. Pika et al, *The Politics of the Presidency*
Michael Nelson (ed), *The Presidency and the Political System*
Michael Nelson (ed), *The Elections of 2020, 2016 (2012, 2008, etc.)*
Marc J. Hetherington & Bruce A. Larson, *Parties, Politics and Public Policy in America*
Lori M. Poloni-Staudinger & Michael R. Wolf, *American Difference*
Routledge FreeBooks, *United States Election Primer*, 2016 (Q)
Larry M. Bartels (ed.), "Elections in America", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 667 (September, 2016) (Q)

OFFICIAL SOURCES

Elections in the United States are administered by state and local authorities. Web sites maintained by the states are particularly useful sources of information. See, for example, the election information sites maintained by the office of the California Secretary of State [www.sos.ca.gov/elections] or the Maryland State Board of Elections [www.elections.maryland.gov]. There are 48 others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Two essays. See essay guidelines (Q). The first essay (25%) will deal with some aspect of any one of the three areas of U.S. public policy scheduled for discussion in the classes of October 18th, 25th or November 1st. The essay should be approximately 6-8 pages in length and should begin with (although not rely exclusively on) the readings listed on the syllabus under the topic chosen. The due date for the first essay is **Tuesday, November 1st**, but students are expected to make a very brief class presentation based on their preliminary work for the essay in one of the three class sessions mentioned above. The second essay (35%) will deal with a topic of your choice falling under one of the four broad areas scheduled for discussion in the classes of November 15th, 22th, 29th and December 6th. It should be approximately 10-12 pages in length, and should address some of the themes found in the core readings for the appropriate class session. Although the second essay is not due until **Tuesday, December 6th**, students should similarly expect to make a short class presentation based on their research in one of the four class sessions commencing on November 13th.

Participation/seminar (20%). Each student will be expected to contribute to and participate in all class discussions, and to make two short class presentations based on research undertaken for the essays (see above).

Final oral exam (20%). An oral exam based on the required readings, seminar presentations, and written work will be scheduled, either virtually or in person, at a mutually agreeable time from **December 8th to 16th**.

COURSE SYLLABUS (* denotes required reading for all students)

September 13th — Introduction: Before and After November 8th

Theiss-Morse & Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 1
New York Times, *2022 Mid-term Elections Calendar and Primary Results*
[<https://www.nytimes.com/news-event/2022-midterm-elections>]

September 20th — Studying Congress and the American Political System

- * Theiss-Morse & Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 2
- * C. Lawrence Evans & Wendy J. Schiller, “The U.S. Senate and the Meaning of Dysfunction.” *CR*, ch. 1
- * Lawrence C. Dodd & Bruce I. Oppenheimer, “The 2020 Congressional Elections in a Time of COVID-19, Economic Turmoil, and Trump.” *CR*, ch. 17

Steven S. Smith et al, *The American Congress*, ch. 1, 2, 4
Marc J. Hetherington & Bruce A. Larson, *Parties, Politics and Public Policy in America*, ch. 2

September 27th — Congress and the Presidency from Bush to Biden

- * Gary C. Jacobson, “Partisanship, Money and Competition: Elections and the Transformation of Congress since the 1970s.” *CR*, ch. 4
- * Sarah Binder, “The Struggle to Legislate in Polarized Times.” *CR*, ch. 9
- * Nolan McCarthy, “How Congressional Polarization is Transforming the Separation of Powers.” *CR*, ch. 16

Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*
James A. Thurber & Jordan Tama (eds.) *Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations*, ch. 1, 2, 7

October 4th — American Political Parties and Electoral Politics in 2022

- * Theiss-Morse & Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 5
- * Jason Zengerle, “The Vanishing Moderate Democrat.” *New York Times Magazine*, June 29, 2022 (*Q*)
- * Charles Homans, “How ‘Stop the Steal’ Captured the American Right.” *New York Times Magazine*, July 22, 2022 (*Q*)
- * Vox, *A Guide to the 2018 Mid-term Elections*
[<https://www.vox.com/midterm-elections-2022>]

Marc J. Hetherington & Bruce A. Larson, *Parties, Politics and Public Policy in America*, ch. 5
Jeffrey Stonecash, “Voters and the Media,” in Routledge FreeBooks, *United States Election Primer*, ch 5 (*Q*)

October 11th — Polarization and Intraparty Democracy

- * Matt Grossman & David A. Hopkins, “Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats: The Asymmetry of American Party Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics*, March 2015 (Q)
- * Ruth Bloch Rubin, “House Parties Divided: Intraparty Organization in the Contemporary Congress.” *CR*, ch. 8
- * Craig Volden & Ian E. Wiseman, “Party, Ideology and Legislative Effectiveness in the U.S. Senate.” *CR*, ch. 14
- * Farah Stockman, “Many Americans Think That Congress Is More Broken Than It Actually Is.” *New York Times*, August 14, 2022 (Q)

Larry M. Bartels, “Elections in America” and “Failure to Converge: Core Partisans and the Missing Middle in American Electoral Politics” both in *Annals*, September 2016 (Q)
Thomas E. Mann & Norman J. Ornstein, *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks*

October 18th — The Economy and Elections Since 2008

- * Robert S. Erikson and Gerald C. Wright, “Voters, Candidates and Issues in Congressional Elections.” *CR*, ch. 3
- * Michael Lewis-Beck & Mary Stegmeier, “Economic Determinants of Electoral Outcomes.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2000 (Q)

October 25th — Social Policy Issues in 21st Century America

- * Leslie McCall & Lane Kenworthy, “America’s Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality.” *Perspectives on Politics*, September 2009 (Q)
- * Kevin Boyle, “We Are Living In Richard Nixon’s America: Escaping It Won’t Be Easy.” *New York Times*, July 31, 2022 (Q)
- * Theiss-Morse & Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 6

November 1st — Foreign Policy and National Security

- * John Gerard Ruggie, “The Past as Prologue: Interests, Identity and American Foreign Policy.” *International Security* 1997 (Q)
- * Sebastian Rosato & John Schussler, “A Realist Foreign Policy for the United States.” *Perspectives on Politics*, December 2011 (Q)
- * Mark Landler, “Trump, the Insurgent, Breaks With 70 Years of American Foreign Policy.” *New York Times*, December 28, 2017 (Q)

November 8th — Election Day. Reading Week: no class

November 15th — Election Retrospective: What Happened and Why

- * Theiss-Morse & Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 3, 7
- * Lawrence LeDuc & Richard G. Niemi, “Voting Behavior: Choice and Context.” in Lawrence LeDuc et al, *Comparing Democracies 4: Elections and Voting in a Changing World* (Q)

November 22nd — Organizing and Managing the 118th Congress

- * Steven S. Smith & Gerald Gamm, “The Dynamics of Party Government in Congress.” *CR*, ch. 7
- * John H. Aldrich & David W. Rohde, “Lending and Reclaiming Power: Majority Leadership in the House From the 1950s to Trump.” *CR*, ch. 2
- * Molly E. Reynolds, “The Politics of the Budgetary and Appropriations Process in a Polarized Congress.” *CR*, ch. 13

Danielle M. Thomsen, “Women Running, Women Winning: Voter Preferences in 2018.” *CR*, ch. 5

Robert R. Preuhs & Rodney E. Hero, “Black-Latino Relations in Congress: Examining Institutional Context and Inter-Minority Group Relations Further.” *CR*, ch. 6

November 27th — Political Issues and Divisions in the 118th Congress

- * James M. Curry & Frances E. Lee, “Enduring Continuities in Congressional Lawmaking.” *CR*, ch. 11
- * Douglas L. Kriner & Eric Schickler, “Congressional Investigations in a Polarized Era.” *CR*, ch. 15
- * Gregory Koger, “The War Over Judges in the U.S. Senate.” *CR*, ch. 10

December 6th — Predicting (?) the Future: The Next Cycle

- * Theiss-Morse & Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, ch. 8
- * Tracy Sorkin, “Legislative Styles and the Dynamics of Congressional Behavior.” *CR*, ch. 12
- * Peter Wehner, “What in the World Happened to Elise Stefanik?” *New York Times*, July 26, 2022 (*Q*)
- * Lee Drutman, “Political Divisions in 2016 and Beyond.” (*Q*)

December 8th - 16th — Final oral exams (as scheduled)