

# PSC 322: The American Congress

Professor Matthew Platt

Fall 2019

Office: Wheeler 307  
Office hr.: MWF 11-1pm

Class: MWF 9-9:50am  
Room: Wheeler 316

## Course Description

This course seeks to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Congress as a representative institution that makes policy. Using rational choice theory as an analytic framework, we will explore the relationships between race, representation, and institutional design. Ultimately, our goal is to develop a foundation of knowledge and skills to critically examine the centerpiece of the American republic. By the end of the term students should be able to:

1. Describe the basic functions and processes of Congress.
2. Use rational choice theory to explain congressional behavior and/or procedures.
3. Make arguments about the historic and potential roles of Congress in black liberation.
4. Write a clear and concise review of congressional literature.
5. Collect, manage, and describe small-to-medium sized congressional datasets.

## Requirements

### Readings

Students are expected to complete the reading assignments each week. The class lecture is not a summary of the reading. Instead, the lecture provides applications and more in-depth discussion of the assigned reading. **You cannot do well in this course if you do not do the reading.** There is one required book for class:

- Stewart III, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company. 2nd edition.

The remaining course readings are either book chapters or articles from academic journals. Check the course site on Blackboard for links to pdf copies of these readings. Alternatively, all journal articles can be accessed using the library's electronic resources.

## Perusall

In addition to the textbook, students have been assigned book chapters and/or articles from academic journals. The syllabus outlines when and which non-textbook readings students are responsible for. All of these readings will be available through a web platform called Perusall. The platform allows interactive annotations of the assigned readings, so students will be able to enjoy social, rather than solitary, reading experiences. Each annotation assignment has a small number of points attached. Dr. Platt will provide more information in class and on Blackboard.

## Quizzes

There will be semi-weekly short quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes allow students to constantly gauge how well they comprehend the course material; and help students to become familiar with the types of questions that will appear on the final exam.

## Final Exam

To ensure that students leave the course with a comprehensive understanding of Congress, there is a final examination. The exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions.

- Final Exam will follow the college's exam schedule.

## Research

Each student will complete an original research project using existing congressional data. The project is broken down into smaller components that will be completed throughout the semester:

1. **Research Question:** Students will submit no more than one paragraph stating the question to be investigated in their project. Due by 11pm on Friday, September 13, 2019.
2. **Annotated Bibliography:** Students will submit an annotated bibliography that contains five academic sources. Due by 11pm on Friday, October 18, 2019.
3. **Data Analysis:** Students will submit the analysis of the data for their research project. Due by 11pm on Friday, November 8, 2019.
4. **Final Paper:** Students will submit a final research paper of 6-10 pages. Due by 11pm on Monday, November 25, 2019.

More detailed sets of expectations, descriptions, and instructions for each of these projects will be distributed during class and available on the course site.

## Course Assessment

Requirement	Due Date	Points	Percent of Grade
Total Perusal Grade	see website	50	25%
Total Quiz Grade	TBD	50	25%
Final Exam	exam schedule	30	15%
Research Question	September 13	5	2.5%
Annotated Bibliography	October 18	15	7.5%
Data Analysis	November 8	10	5%
Final Paper	November 25	40	20%

Points	Letter Grade
200 - 190	A
189 - 180	A-
179 - 174	B+
173 - 166	B
165 - 160	B-
159 - 154	C+
153 - 140	C
139 - 138	C-
137 - 134	D+
133 - 126	D
125 - 120	D-
119 - 0	E

## Course Policies

### Attendance

Below is the official attendance policy from the College:

Students are expected to attend each class meeting. Students with more than 3 unexcused absences will be referred to the Office of Student Success and may be administratively withdrawn from the course. Failure to meet minimum attendance requirements may result in the loss of the students financial aid in accordance with federal financial aid requirements.

Transportation and/or sleeping problems are not included as excusable absences. Of course, sometimes life happens. Medical emergencies, deaths in the family, family emergencies, official school business, military commitments, and court appearances have been deemed as excusable absences by Morehouse College. Upon request students are responsible for providing Professor Platt with verified absence documentation from the Vice President of Student Services within five days of the absence.

In the event of inclement weather, the College will announce any closures via the emergency notification system and/or through local news outlets. Absent an official closure, students are not

excused from attending class due to weather and any absences will be considered unexcused.

## **Tardiness**

In compliance with the college's attendance policy, Professor Platt will take roll at the start of each class. Lateness is disrespectful to the professor and to other students. As such, it will not be tolerated. The door will be closed five minutes after the scheduled start time for class to begin. **Students will not be permitted to enter the classroom after the door has been closed, and they will be marked absent for the day.**

## **Late Work**

Students are expected to submit the assignments on their respective due dates. If there is some reasonable time conflict that a student can anticipate, then some accommodations may be made for earlier submission of assignments. Barring some personal emergency that incapacitates a student for an entire assignment window, extensions for assignments will not be offered. In the unlikely event that an assignment is submitted after the specified due date, it will be penalized by 3 points (1.2% of the final overall grade) for each day the assignment is late.

Students are expected to take in-class exams/quizzes on the dates that they are held. Missing an exam/quiz without verified documentation of an excusable absence will result in a score of 0 for that exam/quiz. If students know of an excusable time conflict with the final exam, then Professor Platt will try to provide an earlier examination date in specific cases. There are no makeup exams offered for the Final Exam.

## **Submission of Work**

All work must be submitted through Blackboard. Students are responsible for making sure that any file submitted can be opened and read. If a file cannot be opened, then the student will be invited to resubmit their work properly. However, resubmitted work will be marked as late and subject to the penalties outlined above.

## **Flex Pool**

Each student begins the semester with a pool of five extension-days. In the unlikely event that an assignment is submitted after the specified due date, a student may draw from this pool of extension-days to eliminate the late work penalty for the equivalent number of days. *For example, a student submits an assignment two days late. He uses one of his extension-days for this assignment, so the late penalty for the assignment will only be three points (for a one-day late penalty) instead of six points (for a two-day late penalty).* Students must follow the process below to use their pool of extension-days:

1. Email Prof. Platt stating the intention to use extension days. The email should state 1) the name of the assignment; 2) the original due date; 3) the date the assignment will be submitted; and 4) how many extension-days are being used.

2. Write “I am using  $X$  extension-days” in the Comment section when the assignment is submitted through Blackboard.
3. Extension-days may not be used retroactively.

At the end of the semester, students will receive 3 points for each extension-day that they have remaining. These points will be added to the total points earned for the semester with two exceptions:

- Points cannot be used to erase a zero for non-submitted work. *For example, a student did not submit the Annotated Bibliography assignment that is worth 15 points. He earned perfect scores on all other assignments throughout the semester and did not use any extension-days. Since his 15 extension-day points cannot replace non-submitted assignments, those points will be wasted, and his final point total will be 185 out of 200.*
- Points cannot be used towards a zero that was awarded as a violation of the Academic Integrity policy.

## Academic Integrity

The student handbook defines plagiarism:

The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, from the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers and other academic materials. In projects and assignments prepared independently, students must never represent the ideas or the language of others as their own.

The student handbook defines cheating:

Students must not engage in cheating in completing course work. Unless directed by the faculty member, students should neither give nor receive assistance on assignments or examinations. The term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to: 1) the use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests or examinations; 2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; 3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the College faculty or staff.

In the unlikely event that a student is found to have plagiarized, cheated, or committed any other violations of academic integrity laid out in the student handbook, Code of Conduct, and/or course catalogue, that student will automatically **receive a failing grade of ‘F’ for the course**. That penalty is the same for those who give answers/work as for those who take answers/work.

## Perusall Plagiarism

Plagiarising another student’s comments on Perusall also counts as a violation of the Academic Integrity policy for this course. On a first offense the student will receive a warning and zero

credit for that specific annotation. On a second offense the student will receive zero credit for that Perusall assignment. A third offense will result in the student receiving zero credit for ALL Perusall assignments, even those the student has already completed. In addition the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for violating the college's academic integrity policy.

## **EEO and Disability Statement**

Morehouse College is an equal opportunity employer and educational institution. Students with disabilities or those who suspect they have a disability must register with the Office of Disability Services ("ODS) in order to receive accommodations. Students currently registered with the ODS are required to present their Disability Services Accommodation Letter to faculty immediately upon receiving the accommodation. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Disability Services, 104 Sale Hall Annex, Morehouse College, 830 Westview Dr. S.W., Atlanta, GA 30314, (404) 215-2636.

## **Disclaimer**

A syllabus is not a contract between instructor and student, but rather a guide to course procedures. The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus when conflicts, emergencies or circumstances dictate. Students will be duly notified.

## **How to Succeed in this Course**

1. **Stay Connected Through Blackboard:** This course is administered entirely through Blackboard – assignments are posted on Blackboard, changes to the syllabus and course schedule are posted on Blackboard, essays and other assignments are submitted through Blackboard, etc. You will not be successful in this course if you do not regularly access the Blackboard site.
2. **Stay Connected Through Email:** Given that the course is administered through Blackboard, there are often emails that are intended to inform students of assignments, grades, schedule changes, etc. I will only send emails to your Morehouse account. Make sure that you can access your Morehouse email directly on your phone through either the native "Mail" app or the "Outlook" app from Microsoft. Dr. Platt will help you to add your Morehouse email account to your smartphone if you do not know how.
3. **Stay Connected Through Perusall:** A large portion of your final grade depends directly and indirectly on regularly accessing Perusall. Your grade is directly affected by the actual assignments that are posted on Perusall. Your grade is indirectly affected because the readings on Perusall are necessary for doing well on the essays and exams.
4. **Stay Connected Through Office Hours:** I hold office hours every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 12-1pm. Use this time to ask substantive questions about anything in the textbook, Perusall readings, or lecture that is a source of confusion. It is much more beneficial to ask a question about a concept before an assignment/exam than it is to ask "why did I get this wrong" after the assignment/exam has been graded.

5. **Show Up:** Be physically and mentally present for each class session. Take notes during the lectures. Participate with an open mind during the activities and discussions.
6. **Read:** Complete the reading assignments before coming to class. The lectures are designed to supplement the reading; they do not replace or regurgitate the reading. Take notes for yourself while you read and ask those questions either in class or during office hours.
7. **Do Your Work:** Turn in all of your assignments on time. There are penalties for all late work. You cannot afford to throw away those points. Do your own work. Even if you do not get caught cheating (you probably will), the final exam always reveals the truth.

## Course Schedule

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Wednesday 8/21: Course Introduction

#### 1.2 Friday 8/23: The Constitutional Basics of Congress

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### 2 A Political Science Toolkit

#### 2.1 Monday 8/26: Introduction to the Spatial Model

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 1

#### 2.2 Wednesday 8/28: Applying the Spatial Model and Quantitative Political Science

- Riker, William H. 1986. *The Art of Political Manipulation*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapters Preface, 10, and 11.

#### 2.3 Friday 8/30: No Class

Professor Platt is away, so the class will not meet.

#### 2.4 Monday 9/2: Labor Day – No Class

It is Labor Day, so the class will not meet.

#### 2.5 Wednesday 9/4: How to Read Political Science Articles

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#### 2.6 Friday 9/6: More Applications and Game Theory

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### 3 Institutional Design is Political

#### 3.1 Monday 9/9: Constitutional Origins

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 2



### **3.2 Wednesday 9/11: Procedural Change over Time**

- Binder, Sarah A. 1996. "The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990." *American Political Science Review* 90: 8-20.
- Schickler, Eric. 2000. "Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models." *American Political Science Review* 94: 269-288.

### **3.3 Friday 9/13: Matching Member Incentives and Institutional Rules**

- Katz, Jonathan N. and Brian R. Sala. "Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection." *American Political Science Review* 90: 21-33.

### **3.4 Monday 9/16: Chickens, Eggs, and Institutional Design**

- Schillder, Wendy J. 2006. "Building Careers and Courting Constituents: U.S. Senate Representation 1889-1924." *Studies in American Political Development* 20: 185-197.

## **4 The Historical Development of Congress**

### **4.1 Wednesday 9/18: An Overview of Congressional Development**

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 3

### **4.2 Friday 9/20: The Origins of the Modern Congress**

- Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review* 62: 144-168.

### **4.3 Monday 9/23: The Reform Congress**

- Kravitz, Walter. 1990. "The Advent of the Modern Congress: The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15: 375-399.

### **4.4 Wednesday 9/25: The Unorthodox Contemporary Congress**

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 9

## **5 Elections and Representation**

### **5.1 Friday 9/27: Representation**

- Mansbridge, Jane. 2003. "Rethinking Representation." *American Political Science Review* 97: 515-528.

## 5.2 Monday 9/30: What is quality black representation?

- Guinier, Lani. 1994. *The Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy*. New York: The Free Press. Chapter 3 – “The Triumph of Tokenism”.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent Yes.” *Journal of Politics* 61: 628-657.

## 5.3 Wednesday 10/2: Candidates and Campaigns

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 4

## 5.4 Friday 10/4: The Incumbency Advantage

- Cox, Gary W. and Jonathan N. Katz. 1996. “Why Did the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections Grow.” *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 478-497.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2015. “Its Nothing Personal: The Decline of the Incumbency Advantage in US House Elections.” *The Journal of Politics* 77(3): 861-73.

## 5.5 Monday 10/7: The Electoral Connection

- Fenno, Richard F. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *American Political Science Review* 71: 883-917.

## 5.6 Wednesday 10/9: Vote Choice in Congressional Elections

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 5

## 5.7 Friday 10/11: Bill Sponsorship

- Cooper, Joseph and Cheryl D. Young. 1989. “Bill Introduction in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Institutional Change.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14: 67-105.

## 5.8 Monday 10/14: Fall Break

We will not have class. Enjoy your break.

## 5.9 Wednesday 10/16: Legislative Style

- Bernhard, William, Tracy Sulkin, and Daniel Sewell. 2017. “A Clustering Approach to Legislative Styles.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* Forthcoming.

## 5.10 Friday 10/18: Do Black Members of Congress Matter?

- Minta, Michael D. and Valeria Sinclair-Chapman. 2012. “Diversity in Political Institutions and Congressional Responsiveness to Minority Interests” *Political Research Quarterly*
- Platt, Matthew B. 2015. “An Examination of Black Representation and the Legacy of the Voting Rights Act.” *Phylon* 52 (2): 87-107.

## 6 Political Parties in Congress

### 6.1 Monday 10/21: Parties Overview

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 7

### 6.2 Wednesday 10/23: The Partisan Organization of Congress

- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan* 2nd ed. Chap 5.

### 6.3 Friday 10/25: Party Strength

- Rohde, David W. 2013. “Reflections on the Practice of Theorizing: Conditional Party Government in the Twenty-First Century.” *Journal of Politics* 75: 849-864.
- Cooper, Joseph and David W. Brady. 1981. “Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn.” *American Political Science Review* 75: 411-425.

### 6.4 Monday 10/28: Party Competition and Polarization

- Lee, Frances E. 2015. “How Party Polarization Affects Governance.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 18 (1): 261-82.

## 7 The Committee System

### 7.1 Wednesday 10/30: Two Theories of Committees

- Stewart, Charles. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 8
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. “The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power.” *American Political Science Review* 81: 85-104.
- Krehbiel, Keith, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. “Why Are Congressional Committees Powerful?” *American Political Science Review* 81: 929-945.
- Krehbiel, Keith. “Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?” *American Political Science Review* 84: 149-163.

### 7.2 Friday 11/1: Jurisdiction and Gatekeeping

- King, David C. 1994. “The Nature of Congressional Committee Jurisdictions.” *American Political Science Review* 88: 48-62.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Chap 2.

## 8 Congressional Policymaking

### 8.1 Monday 11/4: Agenda Setting

- Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agenda, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: Longman Press. Chapter 1.
- Jones, Bryan D. and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

### 8.2 Wednesday 11/6: The Stubborn Status Quo

- Jones, Bryan D. and Frank Baumgartner. 2004. "A Model of Choice for Public Policy." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 15: 325-351.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chap 2.

### 8.3 Friday 11/8: Lobbying and Interest Groups

- Hall, Richard and Alan Deardorf. 2006. "Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy." *American Political Science Review* 100: 69-84.

### 8.4 Monday 11/11: Elections as Instruments of Policy Change

- Stimson, James A., Michael B. Mackuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89: 543-565.
- Peterson, David A. M., Lawrence J. Grossback, James A. Stimson, and Amy Gangl. 2003. "Congressional Response to Mandate Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 47: 411-426.

### 8.5 Wednesday 11/13: Protests as Instruments of Policy Change

- King, Brayden G., Keith G. Bentele, and Sarah A. Soule. 2007. "Protest and Policymaking: Explaining Fluctuation in Congressional Attention to Rights Issues, 1960-1986." *Social Forces* 86: 137-163.
- Gillion, Daniel Q. 2012. "Protest and Congressional Behavior: Assessing Racial and Ethnic Minority Protests in the District." *Journal of Politics* 74: 950-962.

### 8.6 Friday 11/15: Congress and Presidential Appeals

- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 313-329.
- Lee, Frances E. 2008. "Dividers, Not Uniters: Presidential Leadership and Senate Partisanship, 1981-2004." *Journal of Politics* 70: 914-928.

### **8.7 Monday 11/18: Congress and the Bureaucracy**

- McCubbins, Matthew D. and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms.” *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 165-179.
- Clinton, Joshua D., David E. Lewis, and Jennifer L. Selin. 2014. “Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58: 387-401.

### **8.8 Wednesday 11/20: Congress and the Courts**

- Segal, Jeffrey A., Chad Westerland, and Stefanie A. Lindquist. 2011. “Congress, the Supreme Court, and Judicial Review: Testing a Constitutional Separation of Powers Model. *American Journal of Political Science* 55(1): 89104.

### **8.9 Friday 11/22:**

### **8.10 Monday 11/25 - Friday 11/29: Thanksgiving Break**

We will not have class. Enjoy your break.

### **8.11 Monday 12/2:**

### **8.12 Wednesday 14/4: Last Day of Class**