

Political Science 218W/518 and History 377W/477  
Fall 2024  
Tuesdays, 12:30–3:15

### **Emergence of the Modern Congress**

Gerald Gamm  
Harkness Hall 319  
585–275–8573  
Email: [gerald.gamm@rochester.edu](mailto:gerald.gamm@rochester.edu)  
Office hours: Mondays, 2:00–3:00; Fridays, 9:15–10:00

Through reading and research, this course analyzes the major institutional features of Congress, with an emphasis on historical development. We will examine the basic institutions of the House and Senate—committees, parties, leaders, and rules. In doing this, we will consider the rise of careerism, the seniority system, agenda-setting, electoral concerns, divided government, efforts at institutional reform, party polarization, gridlock, and the Senate filibuster. Writing a research paper is a central feature of this course, and we will work together, as a class, on the process of identifying sound research ideas, finding literature and gathering data, synthesizing findings, and drafting finished papers.

**Books.** Five books are available for purchase in the campus bookstore and at various places online, including [AbeBooks](#) and [Amazon](#). A sixth book, Gamm and Smith’s *Steering the Senate*, will be distributed free of charge as a PDF, on condition that the file is not shared with anyone outside this class without prior written permission. All of these books are available on two-hour reserve and at least one is also available as an electronic edition through [Rush Rhees Library](#):

Sean M. Theriault and Mickey Edwards, *Congress: The First Branch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).  
Sarah A. Binder, *Minority Rights, Majority Rule: Partisanship and the Development of Congress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Frances E. Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Gerald Gamm and Steven S. Smith, *Steering the Senate: The Emergence of Party Organization and Leadership, 1789–2024* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

**Course website.** Blackboard contains lots of information essential to the course—including links to all required readings (except those in the books listed above) and folders for uploading your papers each week. To access readings off-campus, you will need to download and run VPN (so that your computer can be viewed as part of the University’s network). You can install VPN [here](#). *If any link on the website does not work, please let Professor Gamm know immediately by email.*

**Credit hours.** This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets for three hours per week. For the fourth credit hour, students do substantial reading and write papers, including a research paper.

**Excused absences from class.** *Please do NOT attend class if you are sick!* I recognize a number of reasons for legitimate absences from class: illness; severe injuries or other medical conditions; religious or cultural holidays; athletic or debate competitions; or weddings, funerals, or other major life-cycle events. *If you need to miss a class for an excused reason, be sure to notify Professor Gamm in advance.* As long as you notify me in advance, you will not be penalized for the occasional excused absence. Absences without prior notification will be treated as unexcused, except in cases of unexpected emergencies.

**Library research help.** If you need research assistance, River Campus Librarians may be able to help. Your librarian for this course is Justina Elmore. You can contact Justina by [email](#) or through an in-person or video chat [consultation](#).

## ***Requirements***

**Informed participation in weekly discussions (35%).** Students are required to attend all scheduled class meetings, having read all assigned material; students who do not attend regularly will not receive credit for the course. Students are encouraged to listen attentively to others, to draw others into class discussions, and to take risks by asking questions and throwing out new ideas. As part of their grade, students are expected to meet all deadlines for the different components of their research paper and act as responsible peer reviewers for other students.

**Three short papers (20% total).** In 3-4 pages, students should address a central question in the week's readings, critically evaluate the readings, or analyze underlying issues in the readings. These papers must be analytical: they should scrutinize the logic and evidence marshaled on behalf of an argument and, where appropriate, analyze the relationship between various arguments. These papers must be short—no paper shorter than 800 words or longer than 1,300 words will be accepted—so get to the main point fast. Double-space the papers, use 12-point font, and no funny stuff with the margins; an inch on each side is about right. *Students must submit at least one paper by the fourth class meeting, along with dates when they plan to submit the other two papers.* Students may write as many as five papers; in calculating the course grade, only the three highest paper grades will be included. **All papers are due in that week's Blackboard assignment folder no later than 10:00 am on Tuesdays.** No late papers will be accepted without prior permission, and under no circumstance will a paper be accepted after the start of that day's class.

**Research paper (45%).** Each student must turn in a research paper of roughly 12–15 pages. The paper needs to incorporate original data collection, which could be quantitative (such as roll call votes or committee assignments) or qualitative (such as accounts of the passage or failure of a piece of legislation, caucus proceedings, a leadership battle, interaction with elections or another outside event, or a particular congressional rule or institution).

There are eight parts of the paper to be completed through the semester. Students will then edit and combine these various sections at the end of the semester into their final paper. (In developing these guidelines, I am drawing heavily, often verbatim and with permission and gratitude, on the syllabus developed in Spring 2024 by Professor Druckman for his course on American elections.) The grade will be assigned to the final research paper; other contributions to the paper will be included as part of the participation grade. The final paper will be composed of these different parts, with rewriting, transitions, and a bibliography.

All eight components are due by 5:00 pm on Fridays, four days prior to the class meeting. They should be sent, by email, both to the professor and to the assigned peer reviewer. (These should be email attachments; do *not* send links to Google Docs.) In class, we will reserve time for each student to present their work, for the peer reviewer to offer feedback, and for others in the class to offer additional input. Thus peer reviewers should plan time to read their assigned partner's work in advance of class. The eight parts are as follows—

1. *Choose and motivate a topic.* Each student can choose any topic covered on the syllabus, broadly speaking. The first assignment entails posing a question and explaining why it is interesting. This will be roughly half a page. This is due Sept. 6, with class discussion the following Tuesday.

2. *Find literature on the topic.* Identify at least seven academic sources, drawing on Google Scholar, JSTOR, and the bibliographies and reference lists in readings assigned for class. No more than three of these seven sources should be from class readings. For this assignment, simply identify the sources and type out a bibliography, using full citations. This is due Sept. 20, with class discussion the following Tuesday.

3. *Identify primary sources* that you can draw on to study your question. These could include historical newspapers, historical records of debates in Congress, biographies and autobiographies, data on committee assignments, roll call votes, demographics of members of Congress, or other material drawn from congressional institutions. Summarize these sources in a page and provide one or two examples from these sources. This is due Sept. 27, with class discussion the following Tuesday.

4. *Hone or change your topic.* Now that you have found literature, identified primary sources, and done a few weeks of class reading, you have enough new information to know if you want to stay with your original topic or modify it in some fashion. Take advantage of this opportunity if you want—or stick with your original idea. This will be roughly half a page. This is due Oct. 4, with class discussion the following Tuesday.

5. *Write a 3–5 page literature review*, synthesizing your academic sources so they connect and build on one another. While most or all of these sources can overlap with those in Assignment #2, you may also discover by now that you have found new, and better, sources. Explain how your question relates to the literature you review and present some expectations, hypotheses, or unanswered questions. This is due Oct. 18, with class discussion the following Tuesday.

6. *Lay out your research design.* Identify the main dependent and independent variables in your study. What do you seek to explain, and what are the factors that you think might be important in accounting for this outcome? Describe how you plan to analyze your data to test your expectations. This will be anywhere from half a page to two pages. This is due Nov. 1, with class discussion the following Tuesday.

7. *Report on data collection.* Delve deeply into your primary sources, and perhaps secondary sources as well. Report on your experience collecting data, share an early finding, and explain how you plan to organize it for analysis. This is due Nov. 15, with class discussion the following Tuesday.

8. *Present final report to the class.* Remind us of your initial question and of your research design, then lay out your major findings. Provide some background on your independent and dependent variables, summarize your data, and present your main argument. Ideally, your presentation will include slides and figures. This will be your final paper and will be submitted only to Professor Gamm—and through the Blackboard portal, not through email. (While the whole class will discuss your paper, there is no peer reviewer at this stage.) The class presentation will be on Dec. 3, and the paper is due in the Blackboard portal by 5:00 pm on Monday, Dec. 9.

**Paper guidelines and academic honesty.** Students must conduct themselves in accordance with the University's [Academic Honesty Policy](#). In this class, students are encouraged to discuss readings and course material with anyone they choose—including the professor and other students. They are also encouraged to discuss their individual research papers with other students, as they work on their papers. For short, weekly papers, however, they may not share, exchange, or discuss their written work, including outlines, plans, and notes.

*Students are strongly discouraged from using AI-powered tools, like ChatGPT, to summarize readings or to write drafts of papers.* Not only will the use of these tools undermine the learning objectives of this course—to develop the ability to read with precision, to think clearly, and to write clearly argued papers grounded in evidence—but the use of these tools will, ironically, also make it *much harder* for students to complete required assignments and could trigger an academic honesty violation. **Every submitted paper must meet these two conditions:**

1. For short papers, include 8-10 citations, in parentheses, giving exact page numbers (or paragraph number, for a reading lacking page numbers) for ideas that come from the readings. About 3-5 of these citations should be for brief exact quotes, with the others being paraphrases of ideas. For the research paper, there should be an average of 2-4 citations on every page following these rules.

2. Include no material that does not appear in the cited readings.

***As long as you do the reading, outlining, and writing on your own—writing down page numbers as you take notes—there is no risk of you violating either of these rules.*** Papers that follow these rules will be graded normally. Should a short paper violate one or both of these rules, it will be returned ungraded and with no credit for the assignment, the presumption being that AI-powered tools were used exclusively or primarily to develop the paper. Should the research paper or a second (or any other subsequent) short paper violate these rules, all relevant papers will be turned over to the Academic Honesty Board, and the absence of accurate citations and/or inclusion of non-assigned material will be regarded as [evidence of academic dishonesty](#).

Should you choose to use AI-powered tools for your papers, therefore, it is essential that you know the assigned material incredibly well—better, in fact, than almost anyone else in the class—since you will be responsible for identifying the specific page numbers where 8-10 of the ideas in the paper originated, and you will be responsible for removing any statements, facts, or ideas that did not appear anywhere in the assigned material. This will be much more time-consuming, and much riskier, than simply doing the work on your own and without any aid. Note that AI-powered tools struggle to provide accurate citations, and they often “hallucinate”—i.e., include material that does not appear in the original source.

## THE TEXTBOOK CONGRESS

### **Aug. 27 Introductions**

*Background: Overview of the semester.*

### **Sept. 3 Representation**

*Background: Where to find historical sources of data.*

Sean M. Theriault and Mickey Edwards, *Congress: The First Branch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), chap. 2.

Richard F. Fenno, Jr., "[U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration](#)," *American Political Science Review* 71 (1977), 883–917.

Jane Mansbridge, "[Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes.'](#)" *Journal of Politics* 61 (1999), 628–57.

### **Sept. 10 Member Goals**

*Research paper: Choose and motivate a topic (due by email Sept. 6).*

Theriault and Edwards, *Congress: The First Branch*, chap. 4.

David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), introduction and chap. 1.

### **Sept. 17 The Textbook Congress**

*First short paper due in Blackboard by today, along with dates for two other papers.*

Theriault and Edwards, *Congress: The First Branch*, chap. 5, also pp. 211–18.

"[I'm Just a Bill](#)," *Schoolhouse Rock*.

Donald R. Matthews, "[The Folkways of the United States Senate: Conformity to Group Norms and Legislative Effectiveness](#)," *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959), 1064–89.

Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, chap 2.

Nelson W. Polsby, "[The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives](#)," *American Political Science Review* 62 (1968), 144–68.

## CONGRESSIONAL ORIGINS

### **Sept. 24 Parties and Leaders in the Early House**

*Research paper: Find literature on the topic (due by email Sept. 20).*

Sarah A. Binder, *Minority Rights, Majority Rule: Partisanship and the Development of Congress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chaps. 1 and 3.

Gerald Gamm and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "[Emergence of Legislative Institutions: Standing Committees in the House and Senate, 1810–1825](#)," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14 (1989), 39–66.

Randall Strahan, Matthew Gunning, and Richard L. Vining, Jr., "[From Moderator to Leader: Floor Participation by U.S. House Speakers, 1789–1841](#)," *Social Science History* 30 (2006), 51–74.

### **Oct. 1 Parties and Leaders in the Early Senate**

*Research paper: Identify primary sources (due by email Sept. 27).*

Gerald Gamm and Steven S. Smith, *Steering the Senate: The Emergence of Party Organization and Leadership, 1789–2024* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), chaps. 1, 2, 3, and 4.

### **Oct. 8 Thomas Reed, Joe Cannon, and the Origins of the Modern House**

*Research paper: Hone or change your topic (due by email Oct. 4).*

Theriault and Edwards, *Congress: The First Branch*, pp. 248–53.

Binder, *Minority Rights, Majority Rule*, pp. 122–40.

Joseph Cooper and David W. Brady, "[Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn](#)," *American Political Science Review* 75 (1981), 411–25.

Ruth Bloch Rubin, "[Organizing for Insurgency: Intraparty Organization and the Development of the House Insurgency, 1908-1910](#)," *Studies in American Political Development* 27 (2013), 86-110.

### **Oct. 15 No class—Fall Break**

### **Oct. 22 Arthur Pue Gorman, John Kern, and the Origins of the Modern Senate**

*Research paper: Write a 3–5 page literature review (due by email Oct. 18).*

Binder, *Minority Rights, Majority Rule*, pp. 167–78, 186–91.

Gregory J. Wawro and Eric Schickler, "[Reid's Rules: Filibusters, the Nuclear Option, and Path Dependence in the U.S. Senate](#)," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 43 (2018), 619–47.

Gamm and Smith, *Steering the Senate*, chaps. 5 and 6.

## THE CONTEMPORARY CONGRESS

### Oct. 29 House Reforms in the 1970s

David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), chaps. 1, 2, and 3.

### Nov. 5 Leaders and Parties in the Contemporary House

**Research paper:** Lay out your research design (due by email Nov. 1).

Theriault and Edwards, *Congress: The First Branch*, chap. 8.

Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*, chap. 4, also pp. 120–38.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 4. Pivotal Player: Gingrich and the Polarization of Congressional Parties](#)," *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 13 Jun. 2021.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 35. Polarization, Factions, the Demise of Speaker Kevin McCarthy, and Election of Speaker Mike Johnson](#)," *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 13 Jan. 2019, rev. Oct. 2023.

### Nov. 12 Leaders and Parties in the Contemporary Senate

Barbara Sinclair, "[Senate Styles and Senate Decision Making, 1955-1980](#)," *Journal of Politics* 48 (1986), 877-908.

Gamm and Smith, *Steering the Senate*, chaps. 8 and 9.

Sean M. Theriault and David W. Rohde, "[The Gingrich Senators and Party Polarization in the U.S. Senate](#)," *Journal of Politics* 73 (2011), 1011–24.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 9. Professional Partisan: McConnell and Partisan Gridlock in the Senate](#)," *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 8 Jun. 2021.

### Nov. 19 Rules and Procedure

**Research paper:** Report on data collection (due by email Nov. 15).

Theriault and Edwards, *Congress: The First Branch*, chap. 6.

James M. Curry and Frances E. Lee, "[What Is Regular Order Worth? Partisan Lawmaking and Congressional Processes](#)," *Journal of Politics* 82 (2020), 627–41.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 12. Adopting, Reforming, and Breaking the Rules: Has Partisanship Destroyed the Consensus about the Legislative Process?](#)" *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 5 Jun. 2021.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 14. Regular Order: What Is It? What Happened to It?](#)" *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 5 Jun. 2021.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 7. Disrupted: The Appropriations Process, Partisan Polarization, and Partisanship](#)," *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 10 Jun. 2021.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 10. Reconciliation: The Search for a Path to Majority Rule](#)," *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 7 Jun. 2021.

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 23. Unanimous Consent in the Senate, Part I](#)," *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 25 May 2021.

## **Nov. 26 Insecure Majorities**

Steven S. Smith, "[Note 1. Gridlock: Separation of Powers, Bicameralism, Partisan Polarization, Small Majorities, and Divided Party Control](#)," *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*, 20 Jun. 2021.

Frances E. Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), chaps. 1–4.

## **Dec. 3 Conclusion**

**Research paper:** *Present final report to the class (paper due in Blackboard by Dec. 9).*

No assigned readings.