

Directed Readings Course: Will Pennington
Congressional Politics and Divided Government

Spring 2020 | Time: TBD | Haley 8024

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Overview, Objectives, and Outcomes

This is a undergraduate-level directed readings and research course. We will be reviewing some literature together that you have considered individually before, and we will exploring some new literature together. The goal of this course is for you to have a broader understanding of the Congressional process, read the relevant literature, write a short synthesis of that literature, and collect data for a research paper.

Learning outcomes: by the end of the course, you should have read a variety of original research on Congressional politics, collected original data for a research project on divided government and budgeting, and responded to weekly readings.

Expectations

We'll meet once a week through the semester at a mutually agreed-on time. Earlier meetings will focus primarily on readings; later meetings will focus primarily on data collection and analysis. Each week, I expect you to have the readings completed. I'd also recommend making summaries of the readings. I expect you to come prepared to talk about the theory, data, and findings of each assigned reading. Lastly, I'd appreciate if you'd prepare a two-page summary that synthesizes that week's readings together. As you're writing this, try to answer the questions (a) what ties these readings together, (b) what is the most compelling contribution they make collectively (or individually), and (c) where do they suggest research should go?

Required Materials

There will be a variety of readings which I will communicate to you by email.

Assignments

The course is divided into the following components:

Weekly summary of readings	30%
Participation (actually talk about the readings)	10%
Original data collection	30%
Overall synthesis of course materials (readings and data)	30%
Total	100%

Weekly summary of readings: I expect you to submit an electronic summary of your reaction to that week’s reading by the night before our in-person meeting. This summary must be submitted by 11:59 PM the night before we meet. It must be a maximum of two pages. It is allowed to be informal (i.e. you can react in the first person, like “I think” or “I feel”), but I expect it to be critical. Rather than simply summarizing the readings, I’d like you to synthesize them (tie them together) and react to what you were compelled by and what you found lacking.

Participation: each week, we’ll meet for 60-90 minutes to discuss the readings for that week together. We’ll also use this as an opportunity to tie the readings to our broader research project.

Original data collection: we’ll be working with Dr. Carla Flink on a collaborative research project investigating the effect of polarization on budgeting. We’ll be applying a theory called Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, which states budgets are mostly incremental (they follow extended equilibria without changing much) followed by “punctuations” of dramatic change. Our reading will be directed towards this project, understanding budgeting, polarization, lawmaking, and the effects of divided government.

Specifically, you’ll be directed to gather some of the required data to test this theory. You’ll see in the syllabus that there are no readings assigned for the final month of class to give you the time and space to collect these data. You’ll receive more specific instructions as the semester progresses.

Overall synthesis: the data collection will hopefully culminate in a research paper. But in the first few weeks, we’ll talk about your professional ambitions and try to design some products that will help you market yourself and that ambition. Don’t worry about this yet.

Boilerplate syllabus information follows. The reading schedule is at the end.

Makeups and Grades

Writing assignments and homework assignments must be turned in, electronically, on the day assigned. Makeup examinations will only be offered to those with a University excused absence, which can be found at tinyurl.com/au-st-pol. It is your responsibility to ensure that your absence is covered by the University, and it is your responsibility to comply with all policies. These policies require that you notify me of your absence prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible, but within one week from the missed class. Your makeup examination must be scheduled within two weeks of this notification (though I recommend much, much earlier). If I need additional information on your absence (doctor’s notes, for instance), you must provide this additional documentation within one week of the last date of the absence. Note that this policy also allows for makeup examinations for reasons deemed appropriate by the instructor. If you do

not have a University excused absence, and you are going to miss an examination, it is much easier for me to work with you if you notify me promptly, especially if you can provide some sort of documentation.

Student Academic Honesty

Auburn University is a institution committed to integrity and honor. It is your job as a University citizen to uphold those values. I will not tolerate any cheating or plagiarism, broadly defined as using unauthorized aids during examinations or attempting to represent someone else's work as your own. You are not as sly as you think you are. With hundreds of heads facing forward, it is extremely easy to tell who is working alone and who is not. Be aware that academic dishonesty can lead directly to failing the course and being referred to the Academic Honesty Committee. Penalties include expulsion from Auburn, as per Chapter 1202 of Title XII. For additional information visit tinyurl.com/au-st-pol.

Emergency Contingency

If normal class is disrupted due to illness, emergency, or crisis situation, the syllabus and other course plans and assignments may be modified to allow completion of the course. If this occurs, an addendum to your syllabus and/or course assignments will replace the original materials.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please electronically submit your approved accommodations through AU Access and make an individual appointment with the me during the first week of classes (or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately). If you have not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility, but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

Any requests or arrangements made with the instructor in person must be followed up with an official email request for documentation. If you believe you may need an accommodation, it is your responsibility to secure it before the first exam.

Copyrighted Materials

The lectures, presentations (including slides), readings, and exams for this course are copyrighted, so you do not have the right to copy and distribute them. This includes recording class lectures.

Course Outline

Week 1 (January 8): Setting expectations, collaborative goals

- Virtual meeting; no reading.

Week 2 (January 15): Punctuated equilibrium theory (PET)

- Flink, Carla M. 2015. "Rethinking Punctuated Equilibrium Theory: A Public Administration Approach to Budgetary Changes." *Policy Studies Journal* 45 (1): 101-120.
DOI: 10.1111/psj.12114
- Flink, Carla M. and Scott E. Robinson. *Forthcoming*. "Corrective Policy Reactions: Positive and Negative Budgetary Punctuations." *Journal of Public Policy*.
DOI: 10.1017/S0143814X18000259

Week 3 (January 22): PET in budgeting

- Jones et al. 2009. "A General Empirical Law of Public Budgets: A Comparative Analysis." *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (4): 855-873.
DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00405.x
- Jones, Bryan D., Frank R. Baumgartner, and James L. True. 1998. "Policy Punctuations: U.S. Budget Authority, 1947-1995." *The Journal of Politics* 60 (1): 1-33.
DOI: 10.2307/2647999
- Jones, Bryan D., James L. True, and Frank R. Baumgartner. 1997. "Does Incrementalism Stem from Policy Consensus or from Institutional Gridlock?" *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (4): 1319-1339. DOI: 10.2307/2960491

Week 4 (January 29): More PET budgeting in context

- Li, Tianfeng, and Richard C. Feiock. *Forthcoming*. "Explaining State Budget Punctuations: Policy Transparency, Political Institutions, and Electoral Incentives." *Policy Studies Journal*.
DOI: 10.1111/psj.12344
- Alt, James E. and David Dreyer Lassen. 2006. "Transparency, Political Polarization, and Political Budget Cycles in OECD Countries." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3): 530-550. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00200.x

Week 5 (February 5): Polarization basics

- Fleisher, Richard and Jon R. Bond. 2004. "The Shrinking Middle in the US Congress." *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (3): 429-451. DOI: 10.1017/S0007123404000122
- Theriault, Sean M. 2006. "Party Polarization in the US Congress: Member Replacement and Member Adaptation." *Party Politics* 12 (4): 483-503. DOI: 10.1177/1354068806064730
- Abramowitz, Alan I. and Steven Webster. 2016. "The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections in the 21st Century." *Electoral Studies* 41 (March): 12-22.
DOI: 10.1016/j.electstud.2015.11.001

Week 6 (February 12): Polarization measures

- DIME scores. Bonica, Adam. 2014. "Mapping the Ideological Marketplace." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (2): 367-386. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12062
- Inflation-adjusted ADA scores. Groseclose, Tim, Steven D. Levitt, and James M. Snyder. "Comparing Interest Group Scores across Time and Chambers: Adjusted ADA Scores for the U.S. Congress." *American Political Science Review* 93 (1): 33-50. DOI: 10.2307/2585759
- NOMINATE scores.
realclearpolitics.com/articles/2012/05/11/what_has_made_congress_more_polarized.html

Week 7 (February 19): Polarization, divided government, and productivity

- Frankin, Daniel Paul and Michael P. Fix. 2016. "The Best of Times and the Worst of Times: Polarization and Presidential Success in Congress." *Congress & the Presidency* 43 (3): 377-394. DOI: 10.1080/07343469.2016.1206638
- Gordon, Sanford C. and Dimitri Landa. 2017. "Common Problems (or, What's Missing from the Conventional Wisdom on Polarization and Gridlock)." *The Journal of Politics* 79 (4): 1433-1437. DOI: 10.1086/692963
- Cahn, Zachary and Emily M. Johnston. 2018. "Clintoncare and Obamacare: Lessons for Gridlock Theory." *Congress & the Presidency* 45 (3): 225-253. DOI: 10.1080/07343469.2018.1480671

Week 8 (February 26): Polarization and lawmaking regarding spending (I)

- Reynolds, Molly E. 2019. "The Personal or the Partisan? The Politics of House Appropriations Amendments, 1985-2016." *Congress & the Presidency* 46 (1): 28-59. DOI: 10.1080/07343469.2018.1553907
- McConnell, Christopher, Yotam Margalit, Neil Malhotra, and Matthew Levendusky. 2017. "The Economic Consequences of Partisanship in a Polarized Era." *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (1): 5-18. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12330
- Duff, Jeremy F. and David W. Rohde. 2012. "Rules to Live By: Agenda Control and the Partisan Use of Special Rules in the House." *Congress & the Presidency* 39 (1): 28-50. DOI: 10.1080/07343469.2011.640382

Week 9 (March 4): Polarization and lawmaking regarding spending (II)

- Greene, Zachary D. and Amanda A. Licht. 2018. "Domestic Politics and Changes in Foreign Aid Allocation: The Role of Party Preferences." *Political Research Quarterly* 71 (2): 284-301. DOI: 10.1177/1065912917735176
- Eslava, Marcela and Oskar Nupia. 2017. "Legislative Fragmentation and Government Spending in Presidential Democracies: Bringing Ideological Polarization into the Picture." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 42 (3): 387-420. DOI: 10.1111/lsq.12152
- Kasdin, Stuart Roy. 2017. "When Will New Programs be Mandatory? Determinants of the Decision Between the Mandatory and Discretionary Budget Designs." *Congress & the Presidency* 44 (1): 120-142. DOI: 10.1080/07343469.2016.1263979

Week 9.5 (March 11): Spring Break!

- No meeting or reading.

Week 10 (March 18): Parties and their continued influence

- Lee, Francis E. 2018. "The 115th Congress and Questions of Party Unity in a Polarized Era." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (4): 1464-1473. DOI: 10.1086/699335
- Bartels, Larry M. 1991. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policymaking: The Reagan Defense Buildup." *American Political Science Review* 85 (2): 457-474. DOI: 10.2307/1963169
- Macdonald, Jason A. and Robert J. McGrath. 2019. "A Race for the Regs: Unified Government, Statutory Deadlines, and Federal Agency Rulemaking." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 44 (2): 345-381. DOI: 10.1111/lsq.12228

Week 11 (March 25): Measuring politics in the states

- Lelkes, Yphtach. 2016. "Mass Polarization: Manifestations and Measurements." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80 (S1): 392-410. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfw005
- Caughey, Devin and Christopher Warshaw. 2016. "The Dynamics of State Policy Liberalism, 1936-2014." *American Journal of Political Science* 60 (4): 899-913. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12219
- Garlick, Alex. 2017. "National Policies, Agendas, and Polarization in American State Legislatures: 2011 to 2014." *American Politics Research* 45 (6): 939-979. DOI: 10.1177/1532673X17719719
- Sances, Michael W. 2017. "Attribution Errors in Federalist Systems: When Voters Punish the President for Local Tax Increases." *The Journal of Politics* 79 (4): 1286-1301. DOI: 10.1086/692588

Weeks 12 -15 (April 1, 8, 15, and 22): Collaborative research project with Dr. Carla Flink

- Gathering data
- Estimating models
- Interpreting results
- Turn in assignments as discussed