

TO: GOVT 491-01 Students
FR: Larry Evans
DT: January 21, 2004
RE: Course description and assignments

Focus. The purpose of this seminar is to expose students to scholarly research about the U.S. Congress. Our focus will be on a number of leading academic treatments of important aspects of congressional politics. This semester, the seminar will consider the kinds of questions scholars often ask about congressional reform, representation, committees, party leaders, floor decision making, and interbranch relations.

Logistics. All students who signed up for the course should already be enrolled on the Blackboard course site for GOVT 491. Please check your Blackboard homepage and make sure that you indeed are registered as a user on the site. If you are not registered, you should do so immediately via the enroll feature. I will regularly communicate with students through the email listserv on the course site and you are responsible for ensuring that you will receive these messages. My office location is 137-B Morton Hall, and my office telephone extension is 1-3030. My offices hours for spring 2004 are Wednesday from 10-12. I am in my office most days, however, so you should feel free to drop by any time. You also can arrange an appointment with me via email (clevan@wm.edu). On most days, I follow email closely between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m., and typically respond to messages within an hour or two.

Requirements. Since this is a seminar, we will not be successful unless students have carefully read the assignments for a given meeting prior to that meeting. In addition to participation during regularly scheduled class periods, I will expect you to complete an in-class exam and write and present a research proposal (about twenty-five pages, double-spaced). The proposal and exam will each count for 35 percent of the final grade and class participation will count for 30 percent. The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore.

E. Scott Adler. *Why Congressional Reforms Fail*
Sarah Binder and Steven Smith. *Politics or Principle*
Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins. *Legislative Leviathan*
C. Lawrence Evans. *Leadership in Committee*
John Kingdon. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, 3rd ed.
Eric Schickler. *Disjointed Pluralism*

This seminar carries four units of academic credit. The College requires that credit hours for a course be approximately equal to the number of contact hours per week. As a result, we will need to make arrangements for additional meetings outside of the Wednesday 7:00-9:30 p.m. slot. Alternatives will be discussed during the first class session.

Schedule

January 21	No assignment
January 28	Cox and McCubbins (Chapters 1-6)
February 4	Cox and McCubbins (Chapter 7-Conclusion)
February 11	Schickler (Chapters 1-3)

February 18 Schickler (Chapter 4-Epilogue)
February 25 Adler (Chapters 1-4)
March 3 Adler (Chapters 5-8)
March 17 Evans (entire book)
March 24 Kingdon (Chapters 1-5)
March 31 Kingdon (Chapter 6-Appendixes)
April 7 Binder and Smith (entire book)
April 14 **Exam**
April 21 Individual consultations about research proposal
April 28 **Research Proposals Due**