Congress and the Bureaucracy

In this seminar, we will focus on subgovernments in the United States—that is, the administrative agencies, congressional committees, and interest groups associated with a particular policy area. In particular, we will examine the nature of the relationship between congress and regulatory agencies, what congress intended various agencies to do, and whether these agencies generally meet or fail to meet the expectations of congress. We will examine how a bill becomes a law, and then what happens to that law afterwards.

Required Texts

There are three required texts for this course:


Course Learning Objectives

This course is intended to give students deep insight into the relationship between Congress and the bureaucracy. Substantial reading and writing is required, as well as informed class discussions. Students are expected not only to learn the substantive material, but also to apply the theories they learn across multiple areas. By the end of the semester students should have an understanding of critical historical and contemporary perspectives on bureaucracy and how it is controlled (or not controlled) by Congress. Students are also expected to write a paper that demonstrates both their grasp of the material and their ability to generate informed opinions based on empirical research.

Course Requirements

1) Complete all readings on schedule. If you miss a class, email me for the next reading assignment, as the schedule may change. Bring the assigned readings with you to class.

2) Attend on time and actively participate in class discussions. In a graduate seminar full participation by all students is central to creating productive discussions, so this makes up a large
percentage of your grade. The base participation grade is a B which can rise or fall based on
your contributions in class. Those who arrive more than 5 minutes late, or who leave in the
middle of class, will be marked for half of an absence. During week 6 of the semester I will
update you as to your current participation grade, so that you will have an opportunity for
improvement. Use of electronic devices such as phones or music players during class is
prohibited. Laptops/tablets are permitted for note-taking only.

3) Keep up with the news. We will frequently discuss current events as they relate to the
concepts we are discussing in class. This way, we will be able to connect what can be abstract
ideas to real-world outcomes. Read a newspaper, visit cnn.com, or do anything that helps makes
you an informed citizen.

4) Take the final exam. It will be in take-home form.

5) Complete all required writing assignments. Late papers will be penalized one-third of a
letter grade for each day they are late (barring serious emergencies, which must be
documented). For the purposes of this course, “late” is defined as submitted through D2L after
the class starting time on the due date of the assignment. I will not accept submissions via email
or in hard copy. Do not wait to the last moment to submit assignments.

All written assignments must be typed in a 12 point font, double spaced, with one-inch margins,
and have page numbers. Papers not meeting these criteria will be penalized.

Writing Assignment #1: You will write 5 essays in response to the assigned class readings.
Papers are due on the day of the assigned readings. You may not write more than one per class
and you may not submit more than 5 in total. (Cite all your sources appropriately.) Each essay
will proceed in the following order: First, briefly summarize the readings assigned for that day’s
class. Then answer the response questions listed below the readings on the syllabus.

Once you have received a grade on your paper, I will give you the option of revising it, if you
wish. All revisions are due within one week of when you receive your grade.

Writing Assignment #2: You will write a research paper and make an in-class presentation of
your findings. No later than February 20th you will submit a topic proposal for my approval.
This proposal must include your research question, suggested sources for research (not
necessarily ones you have already read), as well as potential findings. This assignment is graded
Approved/Not Approved. Once your proposal is approved you may proceed with your paper.
You may not submit a completed research paper until your proposal has been approved. I am
open-minded as to potential topics but will be happy to make suggestions, if you wish.

Your paper must be at least 15 pages and include appropriate references (either footnotes or
parenthetical style is acceptable) as well as a bibliography. Your paper must be submitted no
later than April 17th. You will also have the opportunity, if you wish, to revise your paper after
it is returned to you. If you choose to submit a revision you must do so no later than May 1st.
Presentations will be scheduled for April 24th and May 1st.
Grading

Work conducted towards the end of the semester will be more heavily weighted in my mind when dispensing final grades; in other words, improvement counts.

Attendance/Participation: 20%
Short essays: 20%
Research paper: 25%
Presentation: 10%
Final: 25%

Incompletes will only be given for valid, documented emergencies.

NOTE ON PLAGIARISM: Any student found plagiarizing work will receive a grade of zero for that assignment and an F for the course. You will also be reported to the University for violating the academic integrity policy. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: direct copying of material that is not your own, copying the material even while providing a citation, or copying ideas without proper attribution. It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism; if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!

Accessibility

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at (773) 442-4595, room D-104.

Schedule of Classes and Exams

January 9th: Introduction

January 16th – No classes, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January 23rd: Rational Choice Theories of the Bureaucracy
Response questions:
1. Explain how the theories proposed by these authors differ from each other.
2. To what extent does this approach help us understand the complicated relationship between Congress and the bureaucracy?

January 30th: State Building as Patchwork
Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State, chapters 1, 2, and 5

Response questions:
1. What was the “state of courts and parties,” according to Skowronek, and how did it limit the building of the national government’s capacities? Provide a specific example.

February 6th: State Building as Reconstitution
Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State, pp. 165-176, chapter 8, and Epilogue

Response questions:
1. How did the reconstitution of the national state occur? What factors were behind the shift in governing authority?

February 13th – No classes, Lincoln’s Birthday

February 20th: Bureaucratic Autonomy, part I
Daniel P. Carpenter, The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy, Introduction and chapters 1 & 2

Response questions:
1. In what ways is Carpenter’s study of the bureaucracy different from that of Skowronek and other scholars?
2. Explain how Carpenter defines “bureaucratic autonomy” and describe the conditions under which he argues it can occur.

February 27th: Bureaucratic Autonomy, part II
Daniel P. Carpenter, The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy, chapters 3, 4, and 5

Response questions:
1. Discuss the evolution of the Post Office from the late 19th century into the early 20th century. To what extent does its development differ from the pattern of state building described by Skowronek in his work?
March 6th: Bureaucratic Autonomy, part III
Daniel P. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, chapters 6, 8, 9, and Conclusion

Response questions:
1. How did the Department of Agriculture create and cement its bureaucratic autonomy?
2. To what extent does Carpenter’s view of bureaucratic development differ from the accounts that are based on a rational choice perspective? Where do they agree, and where do they differ?

March 13th: Responses to Carpenter

Response questions:
1. According to these authors, is Carpenter’s analysis of bureaucratic development correct or not?
2. Compare the accounts of Adler and Kelly. In what ways do these arguments differ?

March 20th - 26th – Spring Break

March 27th: National Security Bureaucracies, part I
Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, Introduction and chapters 1, 2, and 3

Response questions:
1. According to Zegart, in what ways do national security agencies differ from other bureaucracies, and how does that affect the course of their development?

April 3rd: National Security Bureaucracies, part II
Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, chapters 6, 7, and 8

Response questions:
1. How does the development of the CIA differ from that of the National Security Council?
2. Explain how Zegart’s argument differs from rational choice perspectives.

April 10th and 17th – No class
April 24th and May 1st: Student presentations

Final exam due: May 4th