Congress:

Lecture 1

Constitution and History

A Bad Reputation is Hard to Shake...

Who’s to Blame?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ilo6walCjs&feature=youtu.be>

Why Should I Care About Congress?

(Note: The list will change each semester. Here’s some space for the current list.)

Where I normally start:

What Does the Constitution Say?

The Congress of these United States:

Our Legislative Branch

Congressional Powers

Article I of the Constitution:

All legislative Powers vested in a Congress…Consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives

Varied Roles of Congress

**Makes legislation**

**Appropriates funds to carry out laws**

**May declare war**

**Proposes amendments to Constitution**

**Impeaches the President**

**Regulates conduct of legislators**

**Approves appointments**

**Ratifies treaties**

Article I of the US Constitution

1 - Legislative Powers

2 - House: Terms, qualifications, apportionment (3/5ths…), vacancies, leadership

3 – Senate: Terms, (1/3 elected every two years), qualifications, leadership (Vice President), impeachment,

4 – States responsible for elections, assemble at least once a year

5 - Internal procedures, rules, journal

6 – Compensation, no other civil service

7 – Revenue bills originate in the House, veto procedure, veto override

8 – Powers: to lay and collect taxes, duties, impost and excises, pay debts, provide for the common defense and general welfare, specific list of powers AND the ability to make all laws “necessary and proper”

9 - Limits: no slavery prohibition until 1808, Limits on authority: no bill of attainder, no ex-post facto, no royalty etc., no monies drawn from treasury without an appropriation

10 – Federalism: States can’t coin money, enter treaties, also, no bill of attainder, no ex-post facto, no royalty etc. for them either

Big Word for the Day: Collegial

characterized by or having authority vested equally among colleagues

Amendments:

XIV – (Due Process and Equal Protection) Repeals 3/5ths clause - 1868

XVI – Income Tax - 1913

XVII – Direct Election of Senators – 1913

XX – (Lame Duck) Session starts 3rd of January - 1933

XXVII – Congressional Pay Raises – 1992

Because, Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely!

“Though ‘all legislative powers’ were to be vested in Congress, these powers were to be shared with the President (who could veto acts of Congress), limited to powers explicitly conferred on the federal government, and, as it turned out, subject to the power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional.” Wilson and DiIulio

Who *ARE* These People?

House

Representative or Congressman or Congresswoman

25 years old

Citizen for 7 years

Resident of their state

2 year terms

Senate

Senator

30 years old

Citizen for 9 years

“Resident” of their state

6 year terms

**Partisan Composition of the House and Senate** Updated for the 113th Congress, First Session

**House** **Membership** 435 Members   
(plus 5 Delegates, 1 Resident Commissioner)

**Party Divisions**   
\_\_\_\_ Democrats   
\_\_\_\_ Republicans

Vacancies will adjust each semster

**Senate** **Membership** 100 Senators  
(Vice President votes in case of a tie)

**Party Divisions**  
\_\_\_\_ Democrats  
\_\_\_\_ Republicans   
\_\_ Independents

And Why Are They There?

To Represent?

An instructed delegate of the citizens?

A really complex version of the telephone game…

Downside:

The tyranny of the majority

Polling driven policy

Mob rule

To be a Statesman?

A trusted trustee, entrusted with our trust?

The best and the brightest…

Downside:

Removed from reality

Paternalistic snobs

Elitism

Bicameralism: Separating the legislative body into two houses

I Am Somebody! I’m a Constituent!

National *and* Local Representative

National Government

Local Service Issues

Casework

Personal Staff

At least 18 per member

I Heart My Congressman

Specific approval

Institutional disapproval

And Why Do They Act That Way?

**Representational view**: members vote to please their constituents, in order to secure re-election

**Organizational view**: where constituency interests are not vitally at stake, members primarily respond to cues from colleagues

**Attitudinal view**: the member’s ideology determines her/his vote

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Congress

Separated at Birth

**House**

**Larger (435)**

**Shorter term of office (2 yrs)**

**More procedural restraints on members**

**Narrower constituency (they represent a smaller region) average district size: 710,767**

**Policy Specialists**

**Diffused media coverage**

**More powerful leader**

**Powerful Rules Committee; Majority Party Controls Scheduling and Rules**

**Less Prestigious**

**Briefer floor debates (often 1 hour)**

**Less reliant on staff**

**More Partisan**

**Special Role: Taxing and Spending**

**Impeachment Charges**

**Senate**

**Smaller (100)**

**Longer term of office (6 yrs)**

**Fewer procedural restraints on members**

**Broader, more varied constituency two per state**

**Policy generalists**

**More media coverage**

**Less powerful leaders**

**Weak Rules Committee; Possible to bypass Committee consideration**

**More Prestigious**

**Longer floor debates (filibuster)**

**More reliant on staff**

**Less Partisan**

**Special Role: Treaties and Appointments**

**Impeachment Trial**

And Why Do They Act THIS Way?

**Things to NOT say to your Constituents - "This Is MY town hall meeting" and "You're not going to tell me how to run my Congressional Office..."**

<http://viewpure.com/63dEQ9NhqWM&feature=related>

I’m Just a Bill: <http://www.schooltube.com/video/89a42a6866404f4baab7/Im-Just-a-Bill>