

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**POSC 105
CONGRESS**

- I. THIS MORNING:
 - A. Strengths and weaknesses of the presidency
 - B. Congressional decision making

- II. PRESIDENTIAL POWER:
 - A. Reprinted from the last class notes
 - B. Major proposition: every “power” is a source of weakness.
 - C. Chief executive versus “controlling” the bureaucracy:
 - 1. Bureaucratic permanence and inertia
 - a. The growth of the White House office and the Office of the President.
 - 2. Bureaucratic politics: decisions result from bureaucratic infighting and compromise.
 - a. Example: don’t ask what the president wants; ask what the State and Defense departments will give him.
 - 3. "Sub-governments" or "iron triangles"
 - D. Commander-in-chief versus "group think," advisors, and information
 - a. Example: LBJ and Vietnam?
 - E. Media attention versus "fish bowl" phenomenon: intense media scrutiny
 - F. Although we have discussed these during the semester, make sure you understand.
 - 1. The context: the contradictions of general-welfare liberalism
 - 2. Liberalism versus the “positive state”
 - 3. The bottom line is that the political system and popular culture places enormous burdens on presidents but does not give them the "tools" (e.g., strong party leadership) to carry them.
 - 4. Presidency versus separation and fragmentation of power
 - 5. As already discussed, Congress, the Federal Reserve (FED), the Supreme Court, state governments, interest groups, and so forth fragment power.
 - 6. Executive-legislative battles define American politics
 - 7. Party leader versus weakness of the party system

- III. CONGRESS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE:
 - A. From the last set of notes.
 - B. Generalizations:
 - 1. Congress’ capacity to deal with national problems and our ability to hold its members accountable are limited by the factors already considered.

2. Expectations and demands on Congress exacerbate the situation further.
 3. So, too, does its structure, as seen below.
- C. What do we want Congress to do? Functions:
1. Legislative: law making
 2. Representation of geographical and other interests
 - a. Case work: service, and the permanent campaign
 - b. Satisfying constituents is a major factor in reelection
 3. Instructed delegates
 4. Administrative oversight (Example: Senate oversight committee on intelligence.)
 5. Advise and consent (Examples: Supreme Court nominees, approval of cabinet officers)
 6. Investigative (e.g., Burton, Thompson committees)
 7. Judicial (e.g., impeachment)
- D. Summary: legislators have so many responsibilities and are pulled in some many directions that they have relatively little time for deliberation.
- E. Deliberation: a surprisingly obvious duty but one that is seldom performed is overall policy "deliberation."
1. Consider the parliamentary system described before: in such a system the primary role of the legislature is discussion and debate.
 2. Administration and law making are left to the executive, who is a member of the legislature.
 3. The goals are accountability and choice.
- IV. ORGANIZATION:
- A. Members
1. Independently elected entrepreneurs with "non-overlapping" terms of office.
 2. Constituency services: the key to reelection.
 3. Lack of strong parties
 4. Dependence on interest groups
 5. The "permanent campaign"
 6. Upper class, professional class.
 - a. How representative are they? Can they empathize with the common person
- V. STRUCTURE AND DECISION MAKING:
- A. Bicameral: House and Senate differences:
1. Size, rules, committees, constituencies, ideological orientation, leadership, etc.
- B. Committees, reforms, subcommittees
1. Committee chairs
- C. Congressional staff
1. Committee and member staffs.

- D. Leadership and power:
 - 1. Favors (carrots) (e.g., committee assignments, special bills)
 - 2. Prestige and skill
 - 3. Knowledge
 - 4. Leaders do not have the power to deny a member a party's nomination
 - 5. Leadership under Newt Gingrich

VI. NEXT TIME:

- A. The budget and public finances
- B. Reading:
 - 1. Finish *Debt and Deficit*. I will try to highlight major ideas on Thursday.

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