Congress

• How is Congress organized?
• What are the key influences on Congressional elections?
• What are the roles of Congress?
• How is Congressional policymaking influenced by interest groups, political parties, elections, and the system of federalism?
• What is the relationship between Congress and the other branches?
Who are the members?

Descriptive Representation?

Substantive Representation?
Party Organization in Congress

- Leadership Roles and Power
- Party Caucus
- Party Con. Campaign Committees
- Policy and Steering Committees
Roles of Congress

- Making laws
- Oversight
- Budget
Committee Structure

Standing Committees
   Membership
   Roles
Select Committees
Joint Committees
Conference Committees
How is committee membership determined?

- Proportionality
- Party Leaders make appointments with suggestions from the Policy Committee
- Decision is based on
  - Expertise
  - Geography
  - Help in reelection
  - Seniority
Committee Leadership

Determined by
Majority Party
Seniority
Recommendation by the committee
Party leadership influence
Influence of the Committee Chair

Chooses when to bring up a bill
Can pigeon hole a bill
Negotiates to get bill passed or amended – coalition building
Works with other chairs on bills
Chooses subcommittee chairs & staff
Manages bill on floor
Differences in Organization between the House and the Senate

More committees in House of Rep.– Each Rep. serves on 2 committees and up to 4 subcommittees
Each Sen. serves on 3 committees and up to 7 subcommittees
• Specialists v. Generalists
• Leadership Power
• House Rules Committee
Congressional Elections

• The Incumbency Factor
Congressional Elections

Open Seats
• Term length
• Campaign Funds
• Difference between presidential election years and congressional election years
• Effect of reapportionment and redistricting
Incumbency House v. Senate

**Figure 12.1** The Incumbency Factor in Congressional Elections


How are voters swayed in making their election choices other than the incumbency factor?

What effect does the fraction of the Senate up for reelection have on the election and its results?
Representation in Congress

- Reapportionment
- Accurate Representation?
  - Malapportionment
    - Wesberry v. Sanders, Baker v. Carr
  - Gerrymandering
  - Majority-minority districts – Shaw v. Reno
Political Implications of Reapportionment

Power Shift

Policy Decisions

Electoral College
How a Bill Becomes A Law

- Introduced in either the House or the Senate and given a number
- If a bill starts in the House of Representatives,
  - Speaker sends to a committee
  - Chair sends to a subcommittee
  - Subcommittee reports back to committee
  - If passed the bill is sent to the Rules Committee
  - Sent to floor of House for debate and vote.
• If passed in House, it is sent to the Senate
• Introduced in the Senate
• Majority Leader sends it to the appropriate committee
• Chair sends bill to subcommittee
• If passed by committee, Majority Leader sets a date for debate
• Amendments may be added, filibusters may occur
• Vote is taken
• If the bill that passes is identical to the bill from the House, it is sent to the President.
• If different versions have been passed, the bill goes to a conference committee
• Compromise bill is then voted on by the entire House and the Senate. If it passes both, it is sent to the President.
Terminology on Passing a Law

- Riders
- Christmas Tree Bills
- Filibuster
- Logrolling
- Discharge Petition
- Mark Up Session
- Floor Manager
How does the President influence Congressional policymaking?

- Proposals
- Persuasion
- Congressional Liaison Office
- Popularity
- Threat of Veto
- Pocket Veto
• How are members of Congress influenced in voting for a bill?
Influences on Voting in Congress

Constituents
Party
Expertise and Personal Beliefs
Ideology
Election
Caucus
Interest Groups/Lobbyists
Congressional Liaison Office
The President
The Bureaucracy – The Iron Triangle
Role of Oversight

Congressional actions

- Budget for agencies
- Approving Appointments
  - senatorial courtesy
  - holds
- Ratifying Treaties
- Impeachment
- Investigation
- G.A.O. – Government Accountability Office
- C.R.S.- Congressional Research Service
The Iron Triangle

- Bureaucratic Agencies
- Congressional committees Interest groups
Oversight of the Bureaucratic Agencies

Appropriation of funds
Legislative veto – I.N.S. v. Chadha
Congressional Review
Creation of Bureaucratic Agencies and Reducing the agencies’ authority
Senate approval of agency heads appointed by the President
• How has power in Congress become fragmented and decentralized?
Fiscal Policy v. Monetary Policy

• Fiscal Policy – tax policy and spending decisions made by the national government
• Monetary Policy – made primarily by the Federal Reserve Board
  ▫ Sets requirements of cash on hand for banks
  ▫ Sets interest rates which banks must pay if they need to borrow money from the FED
  ▫ Result – FED policy determines the interest rates a bank charges its customers for loans
The Budget Battle

• Key Players:
  ▫ Standing Committees
  ▫ The President and the O.M.B.
  ▫ Bureaucratic Agencies
  ▫ Interest Groups
  ▫ House Ways and Means Committee
  ▫ Senate Finance Committee
  ▫ Appropriations Committee
  ▫ C.B.O.
  ▫ GAO
Where the money comes from

- Individual income taxes
- Social Insurance receipts
- Corporate income taxes
- Customs and excise taxes
The Budget Process

By Feb. President proposes the budget with the help of the OMB.
CBO – reports to Congress comparing this budget proposal to past budgets with cost projections
April – the Budget Comm. passes the budget resolution
Summer – Budget Authorization bills passes and Appropriation bills passed. Reconciliation bill may be necessary.
Congress sends the budget bills to the President for his signature or veto. Congress may send them as an omnibus bill. Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year. Oct. 1 a new fiscal year begins. Continuing resolutions may be required to prevent gov. shutdown.
Budget Terminology

- Budget Resolution
- Authorization Bill
- Appropriation Bill
- Reconciliation Bill
- Omnibus Bill
- Continuing Resolution
- Fiscal Year
- Mandatory v. Discretionary Spending
- Tax Expenditures
Problems Controlling the Budget

- No line item veto
- Entitlements and variables
- Uncontrollable Spending – pensions, interest on the national debt, emergencies
- The Goal of Reelection and earmarks
- Balanced Budget Amendment – discussed but never proposed by 2/3 of Congress
- Deficit v. Debt