

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
THE CONGRESS: INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

Terms and concepts to know:

Party affiliation / discipline	Seniority / procedure
Gerrymandering	Nonpartisan biases
Congressional "attitudes"	Majority leadership
Minority leadership	Committees
Standing committees	Joint / Select committees
Party committees	GAO / CRS / CBO
Sources of legislation	Legislative procedure
Filibuster	Legislative "oversight"
Congressional ethics	Term limits
PAC's	Hyperpluralism

Study and discussion questions:

1. In the introduction to Part II, "Politics and Institutions," Grover and Peschek suggest that "...your capacity to see the system clearly depends on your willingness to focus *first* on the structure, and *second* on the institutions" (111) What do you think they mean by this? What do conventional textbooks focus on, and in your opinion, why?
2. Discuss Berg's use of the term *hegemony* and hegemonic interests. Do you agree that such forces are at work in the Congress, and if so, what theory of American government best accounts for this?
3. What situations constitute a "crisis" to the U.S. Congress? According to whose interests are crisis situations determined?
4. What evidence does Berg provide that corporations use our political system to exercise their hegemony?
5. In making their courageous stands, did Senator Jeffords and Representative Lee face identical political risks? Explain the similarities and any potential differences.
6. Identify the reasons behind the actions taken by the Senator and the Representative. How do these reasons stand up to the claims of some of their opponents, who blast them for being "traitors" to their party (Jeffords) and their country (Lee)?

Readings:

Heineman. *American Government*, chapter 8.
Grover/Peschek. *Voices of Dissent*, chapters 6.21, 6.23, 6.24.

Video: *Can Mr. Smith Get to Washington Anymore?*