

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government
Laboratory Three: Congressional Representation
Due electronically in Folio by 11:59 p.m., Friday, April 15, 2016

The Senate Judiciary Committee is responsible for policy decisions regarding the U.S. Court system. As such it is responsible for making a recommendation to the full Senate regarding Presidential appointments to fill vacancies on the federal courts, including the Supreme Court. The balance of power between the Legislative and Executive branches shifts frequently, and is tested in various policy arenas. The current fight hinges on the replacement to Justice Scalia who died unexpectedly in mid-February. This lab exercise will allow you to examine issues of representation, possibly providing insight into the current standoff between the President and the Senate Majority Leader.

This lab exercise is designed to have you begin to examine what happens in the black box of Representation.

Analyze the Senate Judiciary Committee through the choice of one of its six subcommittees: 1) Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights (ACPCR); 2) Crime and Terrorism (C&T); 3) Oversight, Agency Action, Federal Rights and Federal Courts (OAAFRFC); 4) Immigration and the National Interest (INI); 5) Privacy, Technology and the Law (PTL); or 6) The Constitution.

Background:

Over time as the country changes, the legislature itself also changes. New members frequently lead to new norms of behavior and new rules of procedure which will in turn speed up or slow down the consideration of policy innovations. It is reasonable to ask how these demographic changes in membership influence the public policy process. In this exercise you examine a congressional subcommittee, and the important aspects of representation that are at work in your subset of the legislature.

The Report:

Your analysis will be reported in written format, and submitted in a specific format. You will produce an Excel Spreadsheet with two tabs, and a Word document.

- 1) An electronic data file in Microsoft Excel format called "114th Senate Judiciary"
 - a. Tab A, labelled "The Roster"
 - i. A file describing the subcommittee members with these five variables:
Member Name, Political Party, State, Leadership Position, and Year of First Service

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government
Laboratory Three: Congressional Representation
Due electronically in Folio by 11:59 p.m., Friday, April 15, 2016

- b. Tab B, labelled "Seniority Pyramid"
 - i. A seniority pyramid for the subcommittee. This will be on a separate tab in the Excel file created for point a) above.
- 2) An electronic data file in PDF format entitled "Letter to Senator x" where you replace x with the name of the senator to whom you are writing.
 - a. A report on your subcommittee in the form of a letter addressed to a member of the Judiciary Committee encouraging a particular policy position on a vote.

Your written report should contain at least four paragraphs, and include both description and analysis. A comparison is one of the most straightforward types of analyses. An historical overview is a more complex type of analysis. If you know how to do a statistical analysis you may do so. Your report should be no more than 1000 words, exclusive of bibliography and figures. Include a cover page (in lieu of an envelope), a properly formatted letter, a bibliography and use the APSA Style Manual to guide your format.

Reminders: Your explanation must be grounded in the data you collected and analyzed, so be sure to mention these data in the appropriate paragraphs of your report. Be sure to use textual references. Tables and figures are very helpful for this assignment.

Advance Reading:

Be sure to have completed the reading assigned for this month prior to beginning the lab. Complete the following reading (or review it) before beginning the exercise: Barbour and Wright Chapter 6. We will be examining a subcommittee from a particular congress in the U.S. Senate, so pay close attention to what the textbook has to say about Senate procedures.

Resources:

The Senate Judiciary Committee webpage is found at:

<https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/>

Should you need information about any other committee in the U.S. Congress, they can be found at one of these two links:

Committee membership and background for the 20 Standing and Select Committees of the Senate

http://www.senate.gov/committees/committees_home.htm

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government
Laboratory Three: Congressional Representation
Due electronically in Folio by 11:59 p.m., Friday, April 15, 2016

Should for any reason you need to consult information concerning the House of Representatives, you may find the Committee membership and background for the 22 Standing Committees in the House of Representatives at

http://clerk.house.gov/committee_info/index.aspx

The Judiciary Committee is responsible among other things for holding hearings on the President's nominees to the federal court, including nominees to the Supreme Court. We will examine the subcommittees of Senate Judiciary Committee this term. The jurisdiction for each subcommittee is listed at

<https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/about/subcommittees>

You should select one of the six subcommittees for analysis. Do not hesitate to ask me for help with this assignment.

Data Collection Sources and Demonstration Files:

To collect data for the Senate Judiciary Committee, you will need to consult two, and possibly three sources. The subcommittee website lists the Members' names, state and party. There is a hotlink provided to each of their biographies.

To find the first year of congressional service, you will need to look each member up on the Biographical Directory of Congress. Occasionally you will find someone who has interrupted service. Use each member's year of initial election (typically election to the House) as their first year of service:

(<http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>)

How to Create Rosters and Seniority Pyramids:

Three Demonstration PowerPoint presentations are available on Folio.

They provide step-by-step instructions for entering data and graphing the seniority pyramids.

The Analysis:

Describe important characteristics of leadership and membership on the Senate Judiciary subcommittee. Examine the Committee website as well as the website for the Senate for useful facts.

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government
Laboratory Three: Congressional Representation
Due electronically in Folio by 11:59 p.m., Friday, April 15, 2016

Next, examine the Seniority Pyramid that you graphed using the data from your Roster file, and describe the important qualities about the Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee that are apparent from this presentation of the data.

Compare the members of your selected subcommittee to the 114th Senate Seniority Pyramids provided by me on Folio. Relate this information back to the subcommittee. Consider how the context in the chamber influences the ability of the leadership to influence the policy process. Consider also the tension between the Legislative and Executive branches that are playing out over this Supreme Court nomination and the confirmation process.

Be sure to define the policy problem, to explain how you understand the pressing political pressures that the Senate may feel, and why it is important for the country that the Senators find a compromise in this standoff. Think of yourself as a senior staff member who is producing a draft of a formal letter from an influential constituent (this may be the CEO of the major employer in the state, a member of the state legislature, a major financial donor to the political party of the Senator). You should have data to back up your position, and a fairly lengthy justification for the policy position that you are asking the Senator to take.

Remember to do all this is less than 1000 words, and to save your work in a PDF. Do not put your name on every page, just the title page and your signature.