Political Science 10: Introduction to American Politics

Week 9

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March 10, 2017
Plan for the Day

- Reading Quiz
- Go over learning outcomes
- Announcements
- Answer questions from lecture this week and/or the reading
- Review Pivotal Politics, discussing Woon (2012) throughout
Reading Quiz

- Clearly write your name at the top of the quiz
- Turn your quiz over when you are finished
- Good luck!
Learning Outcomes

By the end of section today, you should be able to:

- Draw a diagram of a spatial model of voting in the House and the Senate
- Identify and label the following key players in models of voting in the House and the Senate
  - Median voter
  - Filibuster pivot
  - Status quo
  - Feasible Area
  - Gridlock Interval
- Explain how this model helps us make predictions about when policy change will occur
Announcements

- Reminder: Office Hours are Wednesdays 9am-11am in SSB 341, or by appointment (tfeenstr@ucsd.edu).
- Extra office hours in advance of the final exam:
  - Wednesday, March 15th 8am-11am
  - Monday, March 20th 8am-12pm
  - Always available over email!
- Pick up midterms, review your multiple choice responses, review section reading quizzes in office hours
- Please complete your evaluations for POLI 10! We sincerely value your feedback!
- Course review next week:
  - Big take-away points and common themes
  - Practice short answer questions
  - Possibly a review game
What questions do you have from lecture or from the reading this week?
Pivotal Politics

Why is this model useful? What does it help us understand?

What key course concepts does the model involve?

Checks and balances
Separation of powers
Agenda power
Cloture
Veto power
Filibuster
Policymaking process
Gridlock
Polarization
Representation
Median Voter Theorem
Spatial model of voting

As you study for the final, try explaining how each of the above concepts (and others you think of) connects to pivotal politics.
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- **Players/Actors:**
  - House: median voter, Speaker
  - Senate: median voter, filibuster pivot
  - President

- **Choices:** status quo or alternative policy
What range of bills could beat the status quo?
Spatial Voting in the House—Open Legislature

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Spatial Voting in the House—Open Legislature

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  4. Add that distance (Step 3) from the median voter to the other side, opposite the status quo
- Why is this the feasible area?
The distance between the median voter (C4) and the status quo (600) is 700-600=100

Take the distance between the median voter and the status quo (100) and extend it out to the other side of the median voter (Step 4).

Feasible Area
How can we tell which policy proposal in the feasible area wins?
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In an open legislature, the median voter’s policy wins
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Why?
What policies will survive if the Speaker of the House has agenda control?
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1. Identify the status quo, the median voter, and the Speaker
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2. Find the feasible area using the same process as before
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3. Knowing that the Speaker has agenda control, the policy in the feasible area that is closest to the Speaker’s preference will become the new status quo
Spatial Voting in the House—Agenda Control

- What policies will survive if the Speaker of the House has agenda control?
  1. Identify the status quo, the median voter, and the Speaker
  2. Find the feasible area using the same process as before
  3. Knowing that the Speaker has agenda control, the policy in the feasible area that is closest to the Speaker’s preference will become the new status quo

- Will the median voter’s preference win out?

- Why doesn’t the Speaker only allow bills that propose his/her exact preference onto the floor for a vote?
(If time!)

- What if the status quo changes due to external factors beyond the legislature?
  1. Identify the location of the status quo, median voter, and the Speaker
  2. Draw the feasible area using the same steps as before
Spatial Voting in the House—Huge Changes in Status Quo

(If time!)

• What if the status quo changes due to external factors beyond the legislature?
  1. Identify the location of the status quo, median voter, and the Speaker
  2. Draw the feasible area using the same steps as before

• Is the Speaker happy? Why?
Spatial Voting in the House—Huge Changes in Status Quo

550 External Factors Status Quo

600 650 700 750 Old Status Quo

C1 C2 C3 C4 Median C5 C6 Speaker C7

Feasible Area
Remind me: What rules do we need to know about how the Senate passes laws?
Spatial Voting in the Senate

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Figures from this point forward are from Professor Hill’s Pivotal Politics lecture slides. You should review them in addition to these notes.

- How can we tell if a bill will pass the senate?
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2. Move the status quo to the proposed policy location
3. Find the range of Senators who are happy and unhappy with the proposed policy (new status quo)
   1. Find the point halfway between the new status quo and the old status quo
   2. Senators between this midpoint and the old status quo are unhappy with the policy change/new status quo
   3. Senators between the midpoint and the end of the spectrum are happy with the policy change/new status quo

Carlson

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4. Is the new status quo in the "happy" range?
5. Is the filibuster pivot in the "happy" range?
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4. Is the new status quo in the “happy” range?
5. Is the filibuster pivot in the “happy” range?
(If time!)

- What about when there are no Senators in the middle of the policy space? Can the median Senator do better than the status quo?
  - Draw the feasible area around the *filibuster pivot* instead of around the median voter. Why?

[Diagram showing feasible area and status quo around filibuster pivot and median]
What about when there are no Senators in the middle of the policy space? Can the median Senator do better than the status quo?

1. Draw the feasible area around the *filibuster pivot* instead of around the median voter. Why?
2. Is the median voter in the feasible area?
   - YES → median voter can do better than the status quo
   - NO → median voter is better off with the status quo
Remind me: Generally speaking, what is the policymaking process in the US?

We can put all of our relevant actors (median voter in the House, filibuster pivot in the Senate, and the president) on the same policy space. We can use this to identify a gridlock interval.
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Spatial Voting in the Policymaking Process

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Spatial Voting in the Policymaking Process

How can we identify where the Gridlock Interval is?

1. Identify the location of the median voter in the House, filibuster pivot in the Senate, and the President
2. The space between the farthest left and farthest right pivots forms the gridlock interval
Woon (2012) applies this model to make predictions about how productive the 113th Congress would be.
Pivotal Politics in the 113th Congress

- Woon (2012) applies this model to make predictions about how productive the 113th Congress would be
- What is the key finding?
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What is the key finding?

Remind me: When can we expect the gridlock interval to change?
Woon (2012) applies this model to make predictions about how productive the 113th Congress would be.

What is the key finding?

Remind me: When can we expect the gridlock interval to change?

What do you think the gridlock interval would look like for 2016? Let’s draw it!

- Senate has 2 more Democrats (46 total), 2 fewer Republicans (52 total), and 2 Independents
- House has 6 more Democrats (193 total), 9 fewer Republicans (237 total), and 5 vacancies
- President is a Republican
Questions to Ponder

- How do institutional rules related to policymaking, such as the number of votes required to end a filibuster or override a veto, impact the government’s ability to pass laws? Which rules do you think slow the process the most? What do you think would make the process faster?

- Do you think that these rules that can slow the policymaking process help the government better serve the people? Do you think we have more or less agency loss with these rules? How do they impact a legislator’s ability to represent his/her constituents?

- What strategies do you think legislators might use to try to fight gridlock? What about informal strategies? What might the president try to do?