

17.251
Fall 2002
Midterm exam

Part I: Formal Models of Legislatures (20%)

Directions. Do the following problem.

Congress passes a law that allows the Secretary of Labor to set the minimum wage. Under the provisions of the law, if Congress doesn't like the minimum wage that the Labor Secretary sets, the House and Senate can pass a law changing it. However, the president can veto the law which (in this country) *kills the bill*.

Ia.: The ideal minimum wage for the median senator is \$18, the ideal minimum wage for the median House member is \$15, the ideal minimum wage for the president is \$25, and the ideal minimum wage for the Secretary of Labor is \$20. Where should the Labor Secretary set the minimum wage in order to maximize his utility? Draw a picture to illustrate your answer.

Ib: The ideal minimum wage for the median senator is \$18, the ideal minimum wage for the median House member is \$15, the ideal minimum wage for the president is \$19, and the ideal minimum wage for the Secretary of Labor is \$20. Where should the Labor Secretary set the minimum wage in order to maximize his utility? Draw a picture to illustrate your answer.

Part II: Short answers (24%)

Directions. Answer *three* of the following short answer questions.

1. What is *pure majority rule*?
2. What is the *pocket veto*?
3. What is the name of the party system that was inaugurated around the election of 1894? Which parties contested for power? What were their regional bases? What issues did they distinguish themselves by?
4. What is the *incumbency advantage* and what are two explanations for why it has arisen?
5. What is the single most important factor predicting how a voter will vote in a congressional election?

Part III: Essay (56%)

Directions. Write an essay on the following topic. Please write on only one side of the blue book.

The partisan mixes of the House and the Senate are as close as they have ever been in American history. That has focused an unusual amount of attention on the upcoming November election. Write an essay in which you discuss the most important factors that will determine the outcome of this election, drawing on the readings from this class, including newspaper (and other) articles you have read to prepare for the “roundtables.” You should avoid making an argument that draws on hopeful partisan thinking. Rather, discuss what, in general, determines the outcomes of congressional elections, how the determinants of congressional election outcomes have changed in recent years, and what this all means for the outcome in 2002.