

17.251/252
Spring 2015
Midterm Exam

Part I: Univariate Spatial Model (20%)

Directions: Do the following problem.

Pretend that Congress consists of a single chamber with 11 members. It has the same veto rule as is contained in the U.S. Constitution.

The president is negotiating with the Islamic Republic of Schmiran to reduce the stringency of economic sanctions that have been imposed against Schmiran. The president has the right, under existing laws, to take actions that would have the effect of reducing the severity of the existing sanctions. The only real constraint is that Congress could pass a law, subject to a possible veto, to undo the deal that the president makes with Schmiran.

The accompanying figure shows the ideal points of the 11 members of the legislature (these are the locations along the bottom of the dimension), with respect to their preferred levels of sanctions against Schmiran. It also shows the ideal point of the president (P) and the current level of sanctions (ϕ).

What is the optimal level of sanctions against Schmiran that the president could propose, such that the sanctions could not be overturned by Congress?



Part II: Short Answers (24%)

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

1. What is a Condorcet winner?
2. What is the presentation clause of the Constitution?
3. What were the Reed Rules?
4. What is the incumbency advantage?
5. What constitutional principle was decided in the court case *Baker v. Carr*?

Part III. Essay (56%)

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

Based on what you have read and the material we have covered, you can already make predictions about likely outcomes in the 2016, and even 2018, congressional elections.

Let's take the 2016 election as the topic of this essay. The course syllabus emphasizes two sides of the electoral equation, the choices that candidates make and the choices that voters make.

Candidate choices

First, speaking generally (i.e., thinking about the nation as a whole), what factors go into the decisionmaking about whether a candidate will run for office? Second, thinking specifically about your home congressional district, how are these factors likely to affect the decisions that candidates (or potential candidates) make about whether to run for Congress in 2016 from that district? (If you think the essay would be more interesting if you consider the Senate seat up for election in 2016 — if in fact, one of your home state's Senate seats is up for election in 2016, you may write about the Senate.)