AMERICAN GOVERNMENT / CONGRESS

Who Gets the Credit?

Instructor guide for a self-contained simulation by Yoav Duman

Assign before the Congress lectures

A washed-out bridge adds 34 minutes to a Pine Fork bus route. Students play a deputy whip with 18 possible votes and predict whether the Speaker will schedule a repair bill under two election forecasts. They investigate what voting records leave out, trace a real Senate impasse, and return to Pine Fork to advise on a new bill.

Chapter	What students do
The whip room	Commit an offer and forecast, replay under different incentives, and brief Rep. Shah about repairs and public credit.
House voting data	Classify a real vote, predict the effects of two omitted votes, and explain what the historical pattern leaves open.
Two days in the Senate	Try the +5 and +11 vote tests, select one for the response, then use the next day's vote to reconsider a first explanation.
Back to Pine Fork	Advise on a bus bill with a scheduled vote and too few yes votes. Explain which change would affect the count and what it would cost.

Set up and submit

Share **Who_Gets_the_Credit.html** in Canvas. Students download it, open it in a regular browser, and choose **For Class**. Allow 50-65 minutes for play, reading, writing, and the PDF check. **For Fun** takes roughly 25-35 minutes with optional writing. Both are planning estimates.

The four Class responses require 65, 80, 85, and 40 words. Students write inside the activity and choose **Save response for report** after each response. The default Class editor supports pasting within the same answer. Under **Writing access**, choose **Enable standard paste and undo** for an approved workflow.

> **Plan a break after the House response. Save and pause** offers a JSON progress backup for continuing later or on another device. At the end, add a name, select **Print or save as PDF**, check all four responses and the last page, then upload the PDF to Canvas.

Debrief the decisions

Three questions for a 12-minute discussion

4 minutes. What could Shah tell the town hall? Write 234 possible yes votes and 218 needed. Ask which part of Vale's decision changed across forecasts and why a local representative might prefer a result the party leader dislikes. At an image weight of 3, Vale ties 9-9 and schedules under the model's tie rule.

4 minutes. What made it into the House data? Put 5/10, 4/9, and 4/10 on the board. Which rate would an editor report if an opposite-side vote never happened? What if it were a vote where most members of both parties took the same side? Ask what records could reveal which bills went missing and what party leaders expected.

4 minutes. Which decision would you try to change? Compare the February 7 Senate debate vote with the scheduled Pine Fork bus vote. Ask which later steps would still be needed in each case. Ask what a senator's vote switch adds and what other evidence would help explain it.

Connect the cases to the research

Idea	Where it appears
Competition for control Frances E. Lee	When both parties could credibly win control, denying the other party public credit may become more valuable. Vale's arithmetic models that incentive.
Agenda control Cox and McCubbins	The House majority has institutional tools to shape floor access. Vale's power to schedule the vote is fixed in both forecasts.
Procedural thresholds	Five hypothetical switches yield 54 yes, which would clear a 50-vote rule with the same ballots. It falls short of the actual 60-vote threshold. Eleven switches yield 60 and clear the debate step.
Sorting and selection	The 1964 regional split shows a division within a party. The fictional omission tests show how a measured rate can move with preferences held fixed.

Compare like with like. The historical rate describes actual recorded votes. A dated election forecast speaks to what leaders expected. Committee records, floor schedules, and whip counts could help identify which proposals were left off.

Compare the evidence

What each record can establish

Record	What it shows
House control and unity	The two windows begin in 1955 and 1995. Students count switches inside each period. Brookings Table 8-3 uses recorded House votes, including procedural votes. Each of 20 yearly percentages has equal weight in the era average.
Civil rights, 1964	February 10 House passage of H.R. 7152. Democrats 152-96 and Republicans 138-34. Northern Democrats 141-4 and Southern Democrats 11-92. Regional categories follow Congressional Quarterly.
Infrastructure, 2021	November 5 House agreement to the Senate text, Roll Call 369. Democrats 215-6 and Republicans 13-200. The overall majority in each party took a different side, while some members of both voted yes.
Border and aid, 2024	February 7 debate vote 49-50, followed by reconsideration 58-41. On February 8, the same debate question passed 67-32 with a replacement text in view. On February 9, the Senate separately voted 64-19 to take up the measure.

Keep the Senate records distinct. The replacement in view on February 8 kept foreign aid and removed the negotiated border provisions. A roll call records the vote. The senator's remarks supply their stated account. Their private motives and changes in election pressure remain open.

Records to open in class

Lee, Insecure Majorities, chapter 1 · Curry and Lee, Non-Party Government, Figure 1

House party divisions · Brookings Table 8-3 · 1964 House vote · 2021 House vote

February 7 debate vote · February 7 reconsideration · February 8 debate vote

February 9 floor activity · Proposed replacement · Congressional Record, p. S434 · Padilla statement

The optional debt-limit cases involve distinct votes and passage thresholds. Curry and Lee's lawmaking comparison covers bills that eventually became law. Their comparison answers a different question from the all-roll-call unity series.

Read the model and resume

Bridge model assumptions

Both forecasts use the same bill, 435 voting members, vote commitments, and calendar authority. The Senate and president clear the same text if the House passes it. There are 6 repair points per party if the bill becomes law. Public image points count once in the safer forecast and four times in the close one. Vale compares the available totals and schedules on a tie.

Offer	Possible yes	Vale likely keeps the House	Either party could win
Joint announcement	234	House passes · 7, 7	No House vote · 12, 4
Quiet support	234	House passes · 10, 3	House passes · 22, -6
Hold the 18 votes	216	No House vote · 3, 1	No House vote · 12, 4

The point pairs show Vale's party first and the student's party second. The smaller party leader backs an option with its highest available payoff. In the close forecast, holding and the blocked joint offer tie at 4.

What each comparison holds fixed

House. Four of the same nine recorded votes are party-unity votes. Adding an opposite-side vote makes the share 5/10 (50.0%). Adding a same-side vote instead makes it 4/10 (40.0%). With either hypothetical vote omitted, the share is 4/9 (44.4%).

Senate. The proposal and other ballots stay fixed for the two switch tests. Students may explore both outcomes. They select the one they will cite, and the report associates their writing with that selection.

Bus bill. The floor vote is scheduled. A joint announcement leaves the tally at 217. Increasing the federal share flips four votes, yielding 221 at a federal cost.

Resume and recover

Use **Resume For Class** to return to unfinished work in the same browser. To move devices, download a JSON progress backup and restore it from the start screen. If browser saving fails, keep the draft open and download a fresh backup before closing. Earlier compatible Class backups carry their saved writing into this edition.