

CURRICULUM VITAE

Major Blair S. Williams
Department of Social Sciences
United States Military Academy

Personal Information

Current Position: Assistant Professor of Economics
Department of Social Sciences
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Membership in Professional Academic Societies

Western Economics Association
Midwest Political Science Association
American Political Science Association
Phi Kappa Phi, West Point Chapter

Academic Background

Doctor of Philosophy, Public Policy, Harvard University, 2006
Master of Science, Engineering Management, University of Missouri, 2000
Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering, United States Military Academy, 1996

Teaching Experience

2006-current: Department of Social Sciences, U.S. Military Academy;
Current Course Director for Principles of Economics (SS201 / SS251)
Course Director for Econometrics 2 (SS469) - 2007
Course Director for Econometrics 1 (SS368) – 2007, 2008
Course Director for Game Theory (SS364) - 2008
Instructor for Principles of Economics (SS201) – 2006, 2007

Areas of Academic Interest

Econometrics
Game Theory
Decision Analysis
Contract Theory
Microeconomic Theory
U.S. Congress

Scholarly Publications / Conferences

“Representation at the Subcommittee Level of Congress”

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the differential nature of legislator involvement at the subcommittee-level of Congress. I examine four subcommittee issue domains from the same parent committee to predict the direction and strength of various factors impacting representative behavior. These four issue domains vary with complexity and partisan cleavage. I find that constituency interests influence member activity when issues are simple. I also observe the effects of member ideology on legislator behavior when issues are cleaved along party lines.

- Published in the UMI abstract of Dissertations from Harvard University.
- Submitted to the Journal of Politics for publication.
- Presented at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government Doctoral Student Research Seminar.

“Social Networks in Congress”

ABSTRACT: This paper investigates how the social network structure of House institutional arrangements affects legislative behavior. Traditional studies have focused on how exogenous characteristics affect member behavior. This study incorporates these measures with legislator social network data to see if and to what degree social interaction influences member action. I test the decision to cosponsor another Representative’s legislation. The results show that increasing social network contact between two members heightens the probability of cosponsorship. When both social network connections and mutual exogenous characteristics are considered together, we observe a substantial increase in the probability of cosponsorship. I use parametric and non-parametric models to arrive at this conclusion.

- Published in the UMI abstract of Dissertations from Harvard University
- Presented at Harvard University’s U.S. Congress and Lawmaking Seminar.

“A Property Rights Approach to Legislative Organization”

ABSTRACT: This paper explores existing theories of legislative organization. After highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each framework, I propose integrating key elements of these perspectives into a single property rights approach as a means of explaining the principal-agent dilemmas and organizational phenomena present in the U.S. House of Representatives. An empirical illustration of Congress from 1890-1910 provides suggestive evidence supporting the model’s predictions.

- Published in the UMI abstract of Dissertations from Harvard University
- Presented at the Midwest Political Science Association’s National Convention in Chicago, IL in April 2007.

- Future Presentation at the American Political Science Association's National Convention in Boston, MA in August 2008

“The Impact of Congress on National Security Policy”

ABSTRACT: This is a chapter contained in American National Security, Forthcoming, 6th Edition. The chapter examines 1) the origins of Congressional activism / passivity in setting national security policy, 2) the internal institutions within Congress that are responsible for the formulation of policy, and 3) Congressional behavior with respect to the three policy components of national security: structural, strategy, and crisis policy.

“What’s the Cavalry to do with Economics?” Congress & the Economic Implications of Military Base Closures

ABSTRACT: This paper investigates how members of Congress behaved in the context of the 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. We examine the House of Representatives as a whole and then disaggregate the legislators by whether or not their district's economically gain, lose, or are unaffected by the BRAC. We test three primary hypotheses to explain member behavior: the re-election incentive, the aspiration to run for higher office, and the desire for good public policy. Ultimately, we find across all legislators that public policy concerns have a statistically and economically significant effect on voting against the BRAC. Furthermore, we find that BRAC winners vote to approve the BRAC based on the forecasted size of their district's economic growth. And unsurprisingly, BRAC losers vote against the BRAC for economic and other constituency-based concerns. Finally, members not directly affected by the BRAC vote against it when their state faces a large economic loss. We arrive at these conclusions via econometric analysis.

- Presented at the Western Economics Association National Convention in Seattle, WA in July 2007.

Military Experience

2006–Present **Assistant Professor, U.S. Military Academy**

- Responsible for the professional development of cadets into commissioned officers
- Teach Econometrics, Game Theory, and Economic Principles
- Mentor Rhodes, Marshall, and other Scholarship Cadet Candidates
- Thesis Advisor
- Oversee the Summer Internship program for Economics Majors
- Serve as a member on the USMA Strategic Planning Committee for Middle States Accreditation

- 2003-2006 **Graduate Student at Harvard University**
- Completed Ph.D. program in less than three years - amongst the fastest completions in Harvard history
 - Responsible for completing all course work and a dissertation
- 2002-2003 **Company Commander, 92nd Engineer Battalion.** Commanded 235 soldiers in a military construction organization
- Led 200 soldiers in combat operations during invasion of Iraq
 - Oversaw the successful 30-day construction of a six million gallon tactical refueling point at An Nasiriyah, Iraq.
 - Successfully managed efforts to clear unexplored ordinance and landmines from Tallil Air Base, Iraq
 - Successfully led unit through Iraq deployment with no combat-related injuries
 - Awarded the Bronze Star medal for meritorious service during Operation Iraqi Freedom
- 2000-2002 **Logistics Officer, 92nd Engineer Battalion.** Oversaw logistical support for \$45 million of military construction assets and management of \$6 million annual operating budget
- Participated in operations with U.S. Army Special Operations Command in Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia in late 2001 during Operation Enduring Freedom
 - Managed the \$4 million initial construction budget for two of the three major base camps for U.S. forces operating in Central Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.
 - Oversaw the logistical requirements for the construction of temporary detainment facilities for Taliban and Al Qaeda prisoners at Kandahar, Afghanistan.
 - Awarded the Bronze Star medal for achievement during Operation Enduring Freedom
- 1999-2000 **Military Student, 554 Engineer Battalion.** Attended U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Captain's Career Course.
- Graduated 1st of 69 other officers
 - Received the Combined Arms Tactics Award for best grades in tactical combat training
 - Awarded the U.S. Army Achievement Medal for performance during course

- 1998-1999 **Company Executive Officer, 70th Engineer Battalion.** 2nd in command of a 145-soldier combat engineer unit
- Managed the maintenance and logistical support for 150 military vehicles
 - Awarded the U.S. Army Commendation Medal for achieving the best maintenance rating in the organization
 - Awarded the Inspector General award for logistical excellence in all areas of supply management
- 1996-1998 **Platoon Leader, 70th Engineer Battalion.** Leader of 35 combat engineer soldiers
- Successfully deployed, trained, and redeployed from two rotations to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA
 - Graduated 1st at the U.S. Army Scout Platoon Leader's course (reconnaissance and surveillance)
 - Awarded two Army Achievement Medals for leadership and training proficiency.

Professional Schools

ILE (Phase 2) - Operations Research Systems Analyst (CFD49) Qualification Course
Combined Arms Services Staff School, 2000
Engineer Captain's Career Course, 2000, Top Graduate
Engineer Officer Basic Course, 1996, graduated in top 5%