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**From the Selected Works of David Mayhew**

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# Tribute to R. Douglas Arnold

David R Mayhew



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R. Douglas Arnold Festschrift  Accountability and Public Policy  
 May 16-17, 2019  Princeton University

**Thursday, May 16 127 Corwin Hall**

12:00-1:00pm Lunch

1:00-1:15pm Welcome and Introductory Remarks

1:15-3:00pm	Panel 1		discussant
	Lee Drutman, New America	<i>The Logic of Congressional Action in 2019</i>	Justin Crowe, Williams College
	Charles Cameron, Princeton University and Sanford Gordon, New York University	<i>Incumbents, Opposition, and Fire-alarm Accountability</i>	Andrew Roberts, Northwestern University
	Frances Lee, University of Maryland	<i>Coalition Leadership in a Polarized Congress</i>	Keith Whittington, Princeton University

3:00-3:15pm break

3:15-4:30pm	Panel 2		
	Daniel Carpenter, Harvard University	<i>High-Traceability Administrative Politics: Strategic Commenting upon Federal Reserve Debit Card Regulations</i> (with Brian Libgober)	Philip Wallach, R Street
	Eleanor Neff Powell, University of Wisconsin	<i>Campaign Contributions and Bureaucratic Oversight: A Case Study of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission</i>	Rachel Potter, CSDP/Princeton and University of Virginia

4:30-5:00pm David Mayhew, Yale University Formal remarks: A tribute to the scholarship of R. Douglas Arnold

6:00-7:00 Reception *Palmer House Solarium*  
*Invited faculty guests*

7:00-9:00 Dinner *Palmer House Parlor*

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**Friday, May 17 127 Corwin Hall**

<b>8:00-9:00am Breakfast</b>			
9:00-10:15am	<b>Panel 3</b>		discussant
	John Patty, Emory University	<i>Organizing Institutions to Simultaneously Make Good Policy, Maximize Credit, and Minimize Blame</i>	Adam Meiowitz, University of Utah
	Alan Gerber, Yale University; Eric Patashnik, Brown University; and Patrick Tucker, Yale University	<i>Public Responsiveness to Contextual Information about Legislative Action: Policy Attributes, Credit Claiming, and Democratic Accountability</i>	Asya Magazinnik, Princeton University
<b>10:15-10:30am Break</b>			
10:30am-12:15pm	<b>Panel 4</b>		
	John Zaller, UCLA	<i>Divergent Coordination in U.S. House Primary Elections</i>	Danielle Thomsen, CSDP/Princeton and UC Irvine
	Gregory Huber, Yale University	<i>Congressional Accountability in the Contemporary Media Environment: Arguments, data, and methods (with Patrick Tucker)</i>	Andrew Guess, Princeton University
	Jonathan Ladd, Georgetown University	<i>Consensus Versus Partisan Institutions: Why Congress and the Press Have Become Less Popular Since the 1970s, But Other Institutions Have Not</i>	Larry Bartels, Vanderbilt University
<b>12:15-1:15pm Lunch</b>			
1:15-2:30pm	<b>Panel 5</b>		
	Joshua Clinton, Vanderbilt University	<i>The Importance of Issue Representation in a Polarized Congress</i>	Sebastian Thieme, CSDP/Princeton University
	Brandice Canes-Wrone, Princeton University	<i>Developments in House Members' Accountability (with Michael Kistner)</i>	Jason Casellas, University of Houston
<b>2:30-2:45pm Break</b>			
2:45-4:00pm	<b>Panel 6</b>		
	Nicholas Carnes, Duke University	<i>Inequality, or Invisibility and Inaccuracy? How Local Newspapers Cover the Occupational Backgrounds of Members of Congress</i>	Patricia Kirkland, Princeton University
	Patrick Egan, NYU and Markus Prior, Princeton University	<i>Logic with Polarized Parties, Changing Media, and Motivated Reasoners</i>	Kevin Munger, CSDP/Princeton and Penn State University
4:00-4:10pm	Concluding remarks		

Tribute to Doug Arnold at his retirement celebration: Accountability and Public Policy Conference: Festschrift in honor R. Douglas Arnold - Princeton University, May 16-17, 2019

Thanks for inviting me! Doug and I go way back. That was in the 1970s at Yale where he studied with Jerry Kramer and me and others. I think he got a lot out of Kramer.

I was Doug's dissertation adviser. A couple of hours ago at this conference somebody noted that Doug is now an intellectual grandfather, being the adviser of Chuck Cameron and Greg Huber and others who now have advisees of their own. Here is an intellectual lineage, in officiality terms anyway. It occurs to me that that lineage goes way back. My own adviser was V.O. Key, whose adviser was Harold Gosnell or Charles Merriam (?). There is a great chain of being.

So Doug wrote his dissertation. He did a lot of that in France. I remember that he holed up there for a year in some spot in the Loire valley. I had an image of him pecking away at a typewriter in a small dank room of an old castle like in one of those old French novels. He wrote me letters. Progress reports, from Bourges. I ransacked my files and found one. Here it is. I hold in my hand a document, as Joe McCarthy used to say.

Then he went off to Brookings for a year. Then, presto, a degree. I hold in my hand another document proving that, yes, he earned the degree! This dissertation on bureaucracy was Doug's elaborate theoretical invention. It was a remarkable achievement.

Then off to Princeton.

All this was pre-Logic. Then a decade later came The Logic of Congressional Action. This was "a giant stride in the study of Congress," wrote Martha Derthick, who knew these things. I wrote in a referee report to Yale Press: "Arnold's signal contribution here is to housebreak rational-actor theorizing so as to make it useful and believable."

We have kept in touch. Doug hasn't hesitated to point out my contradictions and mistakes. Once he told me I claimed something in one book that I directly contradicted in another book, which was true. Also, I can't seem to write a book without quoting him.

For me, his Logic book keeps standing out as influential, interesting, and thought-provoking, as well as well-written.

On the thought-provoking side, here are three examples, for me, from Doug's oeuvre of various works, not just his signature writing on traceability.

There is a contribution on national budgeting. This is from Logic. He zeroes in on the question of which institution, the presidency or Congress, has been chiefly responsible for actual downstream results in the matter of fiscal balance—the relation between revenue and spending. The answer: the presidency. "The result is that Congress enacts fiscal policies that

appear remarkably similar to those which presidents propose.” Doug based this finding on a careful study of budgeting from the 1940s through the 1980s (including Reagan’s time). It is an enormously important result. It says a lot about the U.S. separation-of-powers system. In fiscal terms, presidents can be hawkish, bust-prone, or relaxed. It seems to make a big difference which.

Paul Peterson came up with the same finding in a work at about the same time as Doug’s. That was three decades ago. Here is the provoked thought. Why haven’t we heard more about this? So far as I know, nobody has followed up these Arnold and Peterson findings since. Why not?

Second, there is a particular contribution on electoral competition. It comes from the impressive study of New York City mayoral elections going back most of a century, coauthored with Nick Carnes. Is Nick out there in the audience? [Yes.] Here is part of the historical picture. The Democrats have controlled the city council there consecutively since 1915. That’s a long time. But during that time we have witnessed ten partisan turnovers of the mayoralty. That is a record of enormous flexibility. Democratic mayoral candidates have faced opposition from coalitions joining Republican with a variety of reformers, dissidents, independents, whatever. The issue dimensions have had a designer flavor, often entailing in early days Tammany Hall versus the rest.

Here is my takeaway. In a separation-of-powers system, it is a good bet that voters and interests will find a way to generate close competition for their top executive offices—city, state, or national offices in the U.S. case—regardless of any lopsided distributions in party identification that may register routinely in their domains’ legislative elections. New York City supplies an interesting extreme case. Its distribution of party identification has looked something like Romania’s of forty years ago. But how about that New York mayoralty! We can see the same sort of pattern in southern governorship elections, Democratic primaries in that case, back in the days of the Solid South. They always fought things out for the governorships. We don’t readily see this “executive elections are special” pattern at the U.S. national level, since we haven’t had a Romanian-flavored pattern of party identification at the national level. But there is food for thought. Consider the Eisenhower and Nixon presidencies in an era of pretty heavy Democratic PI advantage nationally. Also, consider that neither U.S. party has enjoyed a persisting advantage in presidential elections (although individual incumbents running again have) during the last century and a half. In this last respect, the U.S. as a whole has resembled New York City as portrayed by Arnold and Carnes.

Third, there is a particular contribution regarding individual representation by members of Congress. I am thinking about Doug’s 2006 work on Congress and the press. Nice congruence between media areas and House districts, peaking in places like Des Moines, Omaha, or Grand Rapids, makes for better-informed connections between the voters, on the one hand, and their politicians—both incumbents and challengers—on the other. In this sense, the representation amounts to more.

Here is the thought provoked. A few weeks ago I attended a conference on gerrymandering. It was dominated by the fairness folks. By that I mean the experts who, in analyzing legislative elections within a U.S. state, key on a party's percentage of votes won as opposed to its percentage of seats won. That is obviously a good arithmetic to key on, and a close match—that is, fairness—is a sensible value.

But as I listened to the discussion I reflected on Doug Arnold's work on congruence. In fairness terms as discussed above, pushing the idea to the extreme, as some do, it makes no difference at all what the legislative districts look like or whether they allow any congruence at all. It makes no difference if a state's district map is completely trashed after each Census, erasing whatever connections, possibly wired by existing patterns of congruence, exist. All that matters is the summary arithmetic. In fact, at the extreme, it doesn't seem to make any difference whether individual members of Congress exist. Why not have just the arithmetic?

I believe that some theoretical diversity is in order. In drawing systems of districts, fairness should be a value, but connectedness should be a value, too. Lawyers who write anti-gerrymandering briefs take note! That is for two reasons. The first is obvious. District-specific representation is a voter channel. It is not likely to go away even in an age of top-heavy partisanship and polarization. Geographic congruence can be one help on that front. The second reason is systemic. This country has a presidential system, not a parliamentary system. The American presidency is a powerful, independent office that needs checking. Presidents can be roguish, sectarian, incompetent, or crazy. To do the requisite checking, a legislature needs to be powerful in its own right. Beyond anything to do with partisanship or polarization, I would guess that a legislature gains cumulative power vis-à-vis its executive branch by having members who are well-connected back home. They draw strength from that. A president will think twice about monkeying with, say, Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa, who is said to visit all of his state's ninety-nine counties every year to stay in touch. At issue is an ancient role of barons keeping an eye on the king. That differs from a role as robotic caster of party-line roll-call votes.

There we are. All this dwells on Doug Arnold's work. The main motif of that work is accountability. I think of him as the king of accountability.