

Bio

Roger D. Congleton

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Professor Congleton is the BB&T Professor of economics at West Virginia University. He joined the Department of Economics at West Virginia University in 2011, after a long association with the Department of Economics and Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University. He is the co-editor of *Constitutional Political Economy*, and has lectured and published widely on the political economy of rent seeking, institutions, and constitutional theory.

During the past decade, he has served in a number of visiting positions at universities in Europe. He has served as visiting Professor at: the University of Muenster, Bar Ilan University, Syddansk Universitet (Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Political Science and American Studies), University of Bayreuth (Adam Smith Chair, Philosophy and Economics), University of Rome (Law), University of Leiden (Public Policy), Autonomous University of Barcelona (Economics), and the Stockholm School of Economics (Economics). He has also been a visiting research fellow at the Max Planck Institute in Jena, Germany (Evolutionary Economics), University of Amsterdam (Law and Economics), Oxford University (Politics, Nuffield College), Studieförbundet Näringsliv och Samhälle (SNS, in Stockholm), and the Australian National University (Research School for Social Science).

His most recent books focus on the political economy of political institutions. *Perfecting Parliament: Liberalism, Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Western Democracy* (Cambridge University Press 2011) provides a rational choice based explanation for the emergence of Western democracy. It argues that the rise of liberalism, new economies of scale in economic production, and new technologies of information and organization disrupted the medieval constitutional bargaining equilibrium. The constitutional and public policy reforms adopted favored civic equality and productive forms of economic and political competition. *40 Years of Research on Rent Seeking* (two edited volumes, Springer 2008, edited with A. Hillman and K. Konrad) surveys the theoretical and applied literature on rent seeking. *Democratic Constitutional Design and Public Policy* (MIT, 2006, edited with B. Swedenborg) surveys the empirical literature on the effects of democratic constitutional design on public policies and economic growth. *Improving Democracy through Constitutional Reform* (Springer, 2003) analyzes the effects of constitutional reform on policies and economic developments within Sweden during the past two centuries. *Politics by Principle Not Interest* (Cambridge, 1998, written with Nobel prize winner James Buchanan) analyzes how a generality rule can improve the performance of democratic governments.

In addition to his books, Prof. Congleton has published more than 100 papers in academic journals and volumes on such topics as the politics of constitutional reform, the importance of information in democratic decision making, the emergence and significance of norms, and on policy making within national governments and international organizations.

He has given more than 100 academic seminars in nearly as many universities around the world. Professor Congleton was educated in New Jersey public schools and at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia, where he earned his Ph.D. in economics in 1978, writing under James Buchanan.

Overview of Research

Professor Congleton's research has focused on the effects and origins of institutions and norms. His work demonstrates that institutions, norms, and narrow economic interests, all “matter.” For example: his recent books demonstrates that constitution designs--the rules of the game--have significant effects on public policies (*Perfecting Parliament, 40 Years of Research on Rent-Seeking, Democratic Constitutional Design, Improving Democracy* 2003, *Politics by Principle not Interest*). His journal articles also suggests that that wasteful conflict tends to be larger in autocratic regimes than in democracies (*Journal of Public Economics* 1984) and that bicameral regimes tend to have more stable public policies and may better represent median voter preferences (*European Governance*, 2003). Other research demonstrates that democracies tend to have more stringent environmental regulations than dictatorships (*Review of Economics and Statistics*, 1992) and thus generally less pollution, although they generally have more economic development.

To a large extent, institutional designs reflect the effects of information problems and norms. Both information problems and mistakes are evident in public policy choices (*Public Choice*, 1986, *Journal of Public Economics* 1991, *Public Choice*, 2001, *Public Choice* 2006, *Public Choice*, 2009). Information problems also affect evolution of political and economic institutions and account for many of the efficiency increasing effects of widely held norms (*Eastern Economic Journal* 2001, *Public Choice*, 2007, *Perfecting Parliament*, 2011).

Norms and other rules of thumb are partly rational and partly evolutionary responses to settings in which information costs are high and so one's ability to choose the best course of action is limited. Only a subset of norms tend to improve economic and political performance. These, however, tend to gradually replace those which reduce efficiency. For example, a work ethic, status games, and democratic ideology may contribute to economic development and political stability (*Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 1989, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 1991, *Rationality and Democratic Politics*, 2003, *Perfecting Parliament*, 2011). It seems clear that both consumers and voters in contemporary societies are affected by norms as well as economic interests (*Public Choice*, 2010, *Journal of Public Choice and Public Finance*, 2007, *Public Choice*, 2010).

Institutions also affect the evolution of norms. For example, the possibility of exit plays a role in the form and effectiveness of norms for participating in team production (*American Political Science Review*, 1992, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 2002,

Perfecting Parliament, 2011), and also on the efficiency of modern federal systems and international treaty organizations (*Constitutional Political Economy*, 2003, *Review of International Organizations*, 2006). Changes in norms and opportunities for exit may also induce organizational and constitutional reforms (*Homo Economicus* 2004, *Perfecting Parliament*, 2011).

Professor Congleton's recent efforts to link theoretical and historical work has shown that modern markets and democracies emerged simultaneously in 19th century Northern Europe, North America, and Japan (*Constitutional Political Economy*, 2001, *Public Choice Studies*, 2006, *European Journal of Political Economy*, 2007, *Perfecting Parliament*, 2011).

(A complete list of publications and prepublication copies of articles published after 2000 can be found at Professor Congleton's website: rdc1.net.)

Miscellaneous Personal Details

Professor Congleton served as General Director of the Center for Study of Public Choice from April 1999 through September 2002 and is on the editorial boards of several economic journals.

Dr. Congleton was educated in New Jersey public schools and “worked his way through college” at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia where he earned his Ph. D. in economics in 1978, writing under James Buchanan.

His hobbies include raising his three children, bicycling, architecture, travel, hiking, public policy analysis, social dancing, and photography. He has built several houses and once bicycled most of the way from Seattle to Montreal.