

Bio

Roger D. Congleton

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Professor Congleton joined the Department of Economics and the Center for Study of Public Choice at George Mason University in 1988, after being a visiting fellow at the Center in 1986. His research focuses on the political economy of institutions and public policy. Since arriving in Fairfax, he has been invited to a number of visiting positions at other universities. He has served as visiting Professor at the Stockholm School of Economics (Economics), Autonomous University of Barcelona (Economics), University of Leiden (Public Policy), University of Rome (Law), University of Bayreuth (Adam Smith Chair, Philosophy and Economics), and Syddansk Universitet (Fulbright Chair in Political Science and American Studies). He has also been a visiting research fellow at the 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 institutions. *Perfecting Parliament: Liberalism, Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Western Democracy* provides a rational choice based explanation for the emergence of Western democracy. It notes that the rise of liberalism and new economies of scale in economic and political organizations disrupted the constitutional bargaining equilibrium that characterized Europe's medieval constitution in a manner that favored civic equality. As a consequence, a liberal trend in constitutional negotiations emerged, and economic and political systems were opened up in a manner that better aligned their interests with those of average citizens. *40 Years of Research on Rent Seeking* (two edited volumes, Springer 2008) surveys the theoretical and applied literatures on rent seeking. *Democratic Constitutional Design and Public Policy* (MIT, 2006) 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. A new book is well under way that provides a rational choice and evolutionary explanation for the emergence of Western democracy in the nineteenth century.

Professor Congleton has taught a wide range of courses at GMU, including graduate courses in public finance, public choice, mathematical economics, and econometrics; and undergraduate courses in environmental economics, public finance, and public choice.

Dr. 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. His hobbies include raising his three children, public policy analysis, photography, architecture, travel, bicycling, and dancing. Before moving to GMU, He held academic positions at Clarkson University, New York University, and Albion College.

Overview of Research

Prof. Congleton's research has demonstrated that institutions and norms, as well as economic interests, “matter.” For example: his recent books demonstrates that constitution designs--the rules of the game--have significant effects on public policies and that those rules may be revised as norms and/or economic interests change through time (*Perfecting Parliament 2010, 40 Years of Research on Rent-Seeking 2008, Democratic Constitutional Design 2006, Improving Democracy 2003, Politics by Principle Not Interest 1998*). His journal articles suggests that that wasteful conflict tends to be larger in autocratic regimes than in democracies (*JPubE 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 (*RE Stat 1992*) and thus generally less pollution, although they generally have more economic development. He has also analyzed the emergence and efficiency of modern federal systems and international treaty organizations (*CPE 2003, RdPE 2004, RIO 2006*).

Other related work focuses on the effects of information costs, ideology, and norms on economic and political behavior. Both information problems and mistakes can have effects on public policy (*PubC 1986, JPubE 1991, PubC 2001, PubC 2006*), and may affect the evolution of political and economic institutions (*EEJ 2001, PubC 2007*). Indeed, norms and other rules of thumb can be said to be partly consequences of rational decisionmaking in settings of high information costs. Professor Congleton's demonstrates that a work ethic, efficient status games, and democratic ideology may contribute to economic development and political stability (*JEBO 1989, JEBO 1991, Rat. Dem. Pol. 2003*). His research with Viktor Vanberg suggests that the

possibility of exit also plays a significant role in the form and effectiveness of norms for participating in team production (*APSR 1992, JEBO 2002*). Changes in norms and opportunities for exit may also induce constitutional reforms (*HEc 2004*). His recent theoretical and historical work has shown that modern markets and democracies emerged simultaneously in 19th century Northern Europe and Japan. There was no conflict between economic and political liberalization in that century as changes in technology and ideology induced changes in economic and political institutions (*CPE 2001, PCS 2006, EJPE 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*. Working papers can be found at SSRN.)