



Retirement Tributes
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
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☞ David R. Mayhew

Sterling Professor of Political Science

David Mayhew, B.A. Amherst College, Ph.D. Harvard University, faculty member at Yale since 1968: You are your generation's leading scholar of Congress. Your work combines the deepest knowledge of particulars and effortless abstraction. Your landmark study of our national legislature, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, organized scholarship in legislative studies for subsequent generations of researchers, explaining the key features of congressional behavior and structure from the most parsimonious of assumptions, the individual member's reelection motive. By demonstrating how much explanatory power can flow from a simple initial assumption, your work provided an analytical template for all those who would follow. The influence of your research led Douglas Arnold, the leading Congress scholar at Princeton, to write that your account of Congress was "the political science equivalent of plate tectonics theory, which had revolutionized geology."

During graduate school, you developed some of the habits that contributed to your success as a researcher and teacher. For more than five decades you have read two nonfiction books on politics or history every week, week after week. Four times a year you examine the table of contents of 100 journals from across history and the social sciences and work your way through all the articles that catch your eye. As a consequence, your work is deeply informed and unusually broad. You also always have excellent book recommendations for your colleagues; please keep those coming!

You overflow with enthusiasm about political history, and your knowledge of the fine details of your subject is legendary. One former student, who later served as dean of social sciences at the University of Chicago, has recounted a car trip to a conference during which each time the car crossed a congressional district line, you began a brilliant and thoroughly impromptu history of the district, including precise accounts of the changes in the district lines, and the politics, socioeconomics, and ethnic makeup of the relevant communities.

Your scholarly distinction has been recognized at Yale, where you are Sterling Professor, and beyond. You have been elected to the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. Along with erudition, integrity is your middle name: when you inquire, it is to get at truth; when you speak, it is in its service. Your students are among the leading scholars of American politics and have served as department chairs at Princeton, Chicago, and Berkeley. Now as you retire from active teaching, your colleagues salute you for your contribution of exemplary scholarship, teaching, and mentoring, and look forward to many more instructive conversations and even more book recommendations!