

INTEREST GROUP POLITICS
University of Pittsburgh
Political Science 1230 (35676)
Tuesday/Thursday 2:30pm – 3:45pm
David Lawrence Hall 106
Spring 2009

Professor: Jennifer Nicoll Victor, Ph.D.
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Office: 4613 Posvar Hall, Department of Political Science
Office Hours: Mondays 10:00am – 12:00pm
Course Website: <http://courseweb.pitt.edu> (on Blackboard, use your Pitt e-mail login)

Teaching Asst.: Kristen Coopie (krc37@pitt.edu)
Office: 4600 Posvar Hall, Dept. of Political Science (ask receptionist for directions)
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00pm – 2:00pm or by appointment.

I. Course Description

This course is intended to survey the role of interest groups in American politics. In this course we will learn how groups form, why people join them, and how groups maintain their member-base. We will examine the various types of interest groups and the advocacy tactics they use. Our look at group activities will lead us through topics such as lobbying, political action committees (PACs), campaign contributions, protest, and the like. We will also discuss the role that groups play in various American institutions (*i.e.*, congress, courts, bureaucracy, judiciary). Finally, we will examine how groups interact in the process of policy formation. Students are expected to have basic knowledge of American politics before taking this course.

II. Course Goals

The primary goal for this course is to help students think critically about the role of interest groups in various aspects of political life. Students will gain theoretical knowledge of how and why interest groups operate and the effect they have on some types of government processes. Further, each student will gain empirical knowledge of group activities and take an in-depth look at a single specific group of the student's choice. The course will emphasize critical thinking, deductive reasoning, and empirically founded claims. Students should leave the course with a two main accomplishments: a greater understanding of the role of interest groups in American politics *and* better research, writing, and reasoning skills.

III. Course Requirements and Graded Evaluation

There are six graded requirements for this course, described below. Grades will be calculated on a non-curved typical A-F scale where,

97-100	A+	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	< 60	F
93-96	A	83-86	B	73-76	C	63-66	D		
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-		

Application Papers (3) (30%) Students will find a news article and apply the theories talked about in class and in readings to the news item. Papers should be 600-900 words with complete bibliographies in APSA style (see handout and resources on Blackboard). Students may write up to three papers, but only the papers with the two highest scores will be included in the calculation for students' final grades (each paper will therefore make-up 15% of the final grade). The papers are due on the following dates: **Thursday, February 5, Thursday, March 5, Tuesday April 7.**

Class Presentation (15%) Each student will give one 5-10 minute presentation to the class in which the student will present the content from one of their application papers. Students will sign up for a date on which to make their presentation. The presentation will be graded by the instructor and peers in attendance in the following way: 50% (instructor's score), 50%(average of the peer scores after dropping the 3 highest and 3 lowest scores).

Midterm Exam (25%). This will be an in-class exam covering material from the first half of the course. The exam will include identifications and essay questions (closed book, closed-note) based on material presented in class and in the readings. The exam will be in-class on **Thursday, February 12.**

Final Exam (30%). This will be an in-class exam covering material from the entire course (comprehensive), though concentrating on material from the last half of the course. The exam will include identifications, short answers, and essay questions (closed book, closed-note) based on material presented in class and in the readings. The exam will be in-class on **Tuesday, April 21, 2:00pm-3:50pm.**

IV. Missing and Late Work

If you are aware that you will miss an exam or assignment due date you must notify the instructor *at least two days* prior to the due date or exam date. Make-up exams are conducted at the instructor's discretion and are granted only in extraordinary circumstances. Make-up exams will be closed-book essay exams. Late assignments will have scores reduced by 5 percent for each day the assignment is late. I will waive the score reduction for a verified illness (bring a doctor's note) or a verified family emergency (you must provide documentation).

V. Following Political Developments in the Media

Students are encouraged to follow current political events. A familiarity with current happenings around you will facilitate your ability to understand the material. Along with any local papers you may read, I recommend that you read *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Washington Post* with frequency. You can sign up to receive daily e-mail news updates from the *New York Times* or *The Washington Post* on their websites. Additionally, you may want to examine news-magazines for more in-depth coverage of particular issues and events. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* and *National Journal* are two particularly informative periodicals. Other options include *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *The Economist*. You can also subscribe to podcasts where you can listen to headlines from these news sources. Finally, I strongly

encourage students to listen to NPR at 90.5 (WDUQ), where “Morning Edition” (5am-9am) and “All Things Considered” (4pm-6pm) provide excellent current events information.

Professor Victor’s Top 6 News Websites

Name	URL	Description
<i>New York Times</i>	http://www.nytimes.com	General national news and current events.
<i>Washington Post</i>	http://www.washingtonpost.com	General national news, with a concentration on events in Washington, D.C.
CNN	http://www.cnn.com	General national news
Congressional Quarterly Politics	http://www.cqpolitics.com	News about Congress, events on Capitol Hill, and government.
National Journal	http://www.nationaljournal.com	News about Congress, elections, and important people in government.
<i>The Hill</i>	http://www.thehill.com	News about Congress and pending legislation.

VI. Student Responsibilities

A. *Class Attendance and Participation.* Learning is an *active*, rather than *passive*, exercise. Accordingly, every student is expected to attend class as well as be prepared to ask questions about and comment on the readings. You need to complete the daily reading assignment *prior* to the class meeting. You will be much more successful in this class if you attend regularly, take notes, pay attention, and participate.

B. *Readings.* As is the case with attendance, keeping pace with the reading is essential to succeeding in this class. It is *your* responsibility to obtain copies of the readings prior to the date we will discuss them in class. I will do everything I can to make this task easier for you. You will be much more successful in this course if you complete the assigned readings and take notes on them.

C. *Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity.* Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh’s Policy on Academic Integrity (available at: <http://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ai1.html>). Any student engaged in any academic misconduct *will receive an F on the offending exam or assignment*. Egregious violations will result in an F grade for the course and will be reported to the appropriate Dean’s office. These violations include cheating on an exam, using someone else’s work as your own, and plagiarizing the written word. Plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without providing credit or citation) is a serious

offense. *If you have any questions at all about what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, or academic misconduct, please ask the instructor.*

D. *Students with Disabilities.* If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please let me (the instructor) know and contact the Office of Disability Resources and Service, 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. All discussions with me regarding disabilities are confidential.

VII. Teaching Strategy

While lectures are important because they help to distribute necessary information and facts, they are not usually the most effective way to learn information. For this reason, we will do a variety of activities in the classroom. Students will be expected to participate in class discussions and work together in critical thinking groups. We may watch a film and engage in interactive activities in the classroom. I hope that the variety of educational stimuli will help students to absorb more information. However, a certain amount of lecturing is necessary.

VIII. Reading Assignments

The reading assignments are chosen to buttress and expand on the analytic foundation laid in class. **Please notify the instructor about problems obtaining the readings as soon as possible.** The following materials are required and can be found at the bookstore (or on-line where indicated):

Ainsworth, Scott H. 2002. *Analyzing Interest Groups: Group Influence on People and Policies.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co, Inc.

Berry, Jeffrey M. and Clyde Wilcox. 2007. *The Interest Group Society*, 4th ed. New York: Pearson Longman.

Cigler, Allan J. and Burdett A. Loomis, eds. 2007. *Interest Group Politics*, 7th ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Madison, James. 1787 (1787). "The Federalist No. 10," in *The Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. New York: Bantam Books, pp 42-49.
AVAILABLE ON-LINE: <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fedindex.htm>

Rozell, Mark J., Clyde Wilcox and David Madland. 2006. *Interest Groups in American Campaigns: The New Face of Electioneering*, 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Schattschneider, E.E. 1975 (1960). *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, Chs. 2 and 3 (pp. 20-59). AVAILABLE ON-LINE VIA COURSEWEB.

Wright, John R. 1996. *Interest Groups & Congress: Lobbying, Contributions, and Influence*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

IX. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

(The syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Check the course website for updated course syllabi.)

Tu, Jan. 6 Introduction to the Course (1)

PART I: INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

Th, Jan. 8 Pluralism and the Study of Groups (2)

Readings: Madison, *Federalist No. 10* (AVAILABLE: <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fedindex.htm>)
Ainsworth, pp. 3-17
Berry and Wilcox, Ch. 1

Concentration Questions: *What problem does Madison define and how does he say we should solve it?*
Be able to define pluralism. Who were the pluralists?
What argument did the anti-pluralists make?

**Tu, Jan. 13/
Th, Jan. 15** The Collective Action Problem (3/4)

Readings: Ainsworth, pp. 17-35
Schattschneider (a Pitt Alum!), Chs 1 & 2 (pp. 1-45)

Concentration Questions: *Concentrate on understanding collective action theory.*
How does Olson define collective action? Can you give examples?
What are some solutions to the collective action problem?

**Tu, Jan. 20/
Th, Jan. 22** Formation and Maintenance of Groups (5/6)

Readings: Cigler and Loomis, Chs. 1, 2, 3
Ainsworth, Chs. 3 & 4

Concentration Questions: *According to Patterson and Singer, how does the NRA prevent the “unraveling” problem?*
What are some other theories of mobilization? Can you summarize them?
Pay attention to the example of Welfare Rights Organizations in Ainsworth pp 50-52. What are they? How did they succeed?
What is the paradox of majority rule?
What is the principal agent problem?
Define the Median Voter Theorem.

How can groups prevent unraveling?

**Tu, Jan 27/
Th, Jan. 29**

History of Groups (7/8)

Readings:

Wright, Chs. 1 & 2
Ainsworth, Ch. 5
Berry and Wilcox, Chs. 2 & 3

*Concentration
Questions:*

*What provisions in the US Constitution helped interest groups to establish?
Why did it take so long for organized interests to develop in the US?
Which 20th century reforms helped groups get organized?
Why was there an interest group explosion in the late 20th century?*

**Tu, Feb. 3/
Th, Feb. 5**

Group Resources and Activities (9/10)

Readings:

Cigler and Loomis, Chs. 4, 5, 6, 17
Wright, pp. 37-49

First Application Paper Due Thursday, Feb. 5

*Concentration
Questions:*

*What are groups' most important resources?
What strategies can groups use to influence the government?
How do groups decide which strategies to use when?*

Tu, Feb. 10

Exam Review

Th, Feb. 12

Midterm Exam

PART II: GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS

**Tu, Feb.17/
Th, Feb. 19**

Interest Groups and Congress (11/12)

Readings:

Cigler and Loomis, Ch. 18
Victor, Jennifer N. "The Spatial Model of Interest Group Lobbying,"
AVAILABLE ON-LINE via *Courseweb*.
Wright, pp. 65-113

*Concentration
Questions:*

*What is the spatial model of interest group lobbying?
Under what conditions will interest groups engage in preference-
changing and dimension-changing lobbying tactics?
What is the primary role groups play in Congress?*

Tu, Feb. 24/ Th, Feb. 26	<u>Lobbying</u> (13/14)
<i>Readings:</i>	Ainsworth, Ch. 6 Berry and Wilcox, Ch. 6, 7, & 8 Cigler and Loomis, Chs. 10, 11
<i>Concentration Questions:</i>	<i>Why is “context” important for lobbyists to consider when devising a strategy?</i> <i>What are the equilibria outcomes from the lobbyist-legislator signaling game?</i> <i>By what means does government regulate lobbying?</i>
Tu, Mar. 3/ Th, Mar. 5	<u>Interest Groups and the Courts and Executive Branch</u> (15/16)
<i>Readings:</i>	Wright, 49-65 Ainsworth, Ch. 7 Cigler and Loomis, Ch. 15 <u>Second Application Paper Due Thursday, Mar. 5</u>
<i>Concentration Questions:</i>	<i>What incentives do interest groups have for paying attention to what happens in bureaucratic agencies? How do they learn about such things?</i> <i>Do lobbyists lobby the President?</i> <i>How do interest groups use the Courts to their advantage?</i>
Mar. 9 – 13	NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK
Tu, Mar. 17/ Th, Mar. 19	<u>Interest Groups and Political Parties</u> (17/18)
<i>Readings:</i>	Rozell, Wilcox and Madland, Chs. 1 & 2 Berry and Wilcox, Ch. 4
<i>Concentration Questions:</i>	<i>Which word best describes the relationship between interest groups and parties: adversaries, allies, or oblivious?</i> <i>Which historical reforms have made it easier for groups to work with parties (and vice versa)?</i> <i>Which aspects of party organization are groups most interested in?</i>
Tu, Mar. 24/ Th, Mar. 26	<u>PACs</u> (19/20)
<i>Readings:</i>	Ainsworth, Ch. 9 Wright, Ch. 5 Rozell, Wilcox and Madland, Ch. 3
<i>Concentration Questions:</i>	<i>What is the primary function of a PAC?</i> <i>Why do PACs have such a negative reputation?</i>

