

**INTEREST GROUP POLITICS**  
**University of Pittsburgh**  
**Political Science 1230 (45759)**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 8:00am – 9:15am**  
**WW Posvar Hall 1M56**  
**Spring 2004**

Professor: Jennifer Nicoll Victor, Ph.D.  
Email: [jnvictor@pitt.edu](mailto:jnvictor@pitt.edu)  
Office: 4R13 Wesley W. Posvar Hall, Department of Political Science  
Office Hours: T/Th 2:00pm – 3:30pm  
Course Website: <http://courseweb.pitt.edu> (on Blackboard5, use your Pitt e-mail login)

### **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 four graded requirements for this course, described below. Grades will be calculated on a non-curved typical A-F scale where,

100-97 A+	79-77 C+
96-94 A	76-74 C
93-90 A-	73-70 C-
87-89 B+	69-67 D+
86-84 B	66-64 D
83-80 B-	63-60 D-
	<60 F

Make-up exams are conducted at the instructor's discretion and are RARELY granted. Make-up exams will be closed-book essay exams that test material more in-depth than the scheduled exams.

*Short Writing Assignments (15%)* Each student will be responsible for writing three 1-2 page *application* papers during the semester. Students will find a news article and apply the theories talked about in class and in readings to the news item. Students will, at least once, present this material to the class.

*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 19**. This is the **ONLY** day to take the exam. If you do not come to class on this day or you arrive late, you will not be allowed to take the exam.

*Research Paper (25%).* Follow the research paper assignment handed out with this syllabus on the first day of class (available on the course website). You will write a 7-10 page research paper in which you apply a theoretical course concept(s) to a specific interest group. On **Thursday, March 4** you will hand in an introduction (first paragraph or two of your paper) and bibliography. See the handout describing the assignment for more details. This assignment is due **Tuesday, March 30**, in class. **Late assignments will NOT be accepted.**

*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 and essay questions (closed book, closed-note) based on material presented in class and in the readings. The exam will be in-class on **Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup> from 8:00am to 9:50am**. This is the **ONLY** day to take the exam. If you do not come to class on this day or you arrive late, you will not be allowed to take the exam.

*Five percent (5%) of your grade is reserved for class participation, attendance, unannounced quizzes, and non-tangible, non-foreseeable forms of progress, improvement, or demonstrations of understanding course concepts.*

#### **IV. 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* on their website. 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*.

If you prefer using an electronic form of news, the following websites are particularly good:

<http://www.nytimes.com>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com>  
<http://www.allpolitics.com>  
<http://www.nationaljournal.com>

## V. 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.* 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.

## VI. 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.

## VII. 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:

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

Berry, Jeffrey M. 1999. *The New Liberalism: The Rising Power of Citizen Groups*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Rozell, Mark J. and Clyde Wilcox. 1999. *Interest Groups in American Campaigns: The New Face of Electioneering*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

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

Custom Course Reader assembled by the University of Pittsburgh Book Center for PS1230, Interest Group Politics (CRN 45759). It includes:

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.

Olson, Mancur. 1965 (1971). *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Chs. 1 and 2 (pp.5-65).

Schattschneider, E.E. 1960 (1975). *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).

### **VIII. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments**

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

T, Jan. 6	<u>INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE</u>
	<b>PART I: INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS</b>
Th, Jan. 8 READINGS:	<u>WHY STUDY GROUPS?</u> Madison, <i>Federalist No. 10</i> Ainsworth, Ch. 1 Rozell and Wilcox, Ch. 1
T, Jan. 13/ Th, Jan. 15 READINGS:	<u>THE COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEM</u> Ainsworth, Ch. 2 Schattschneider, Chs 2 & 3 Olson, Chs. 1 & 2
T, Jan. 20/ Th, Jan 22 READINGS:	<u>FORMATION AND MAINTENANCE OF GROUPS</u> Ainsworth, Chs. 3 & 4

T, Jan. 27/ Th, Jan. 29 READINGS:	<u>HISTORY OF GROUPS</u> Wright, Chs. 1 & 2 Ainsworth, Ch. 5
T, Feb. 3/ Th, Feb. 5 READINGS:	<u>PROLIFERATION OF GROUPS/AGENDA SETTING</u> Berry, Chs. 1-4
T, Feb. 10/ Th, Feb. 12 READINGS:	<u>GROUP RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES</u> Berry, Ch. 5-6 Wright, pp. 37-49
T, Feb. 17	Writing Workshop/Exam Review
Th, Feb. 19	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
	<b>PART II: GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS</b>
T, Feb. 24/ Th, Feb. 26 READINGS:	<u>INTEREST GROUPS AND CONGRESS</u> Ainsworth, Ch. 6 Wright, pp. 65-113
T, Mar. 2/ Th, Mar 4 READINGS:	<u>INTEREST GROUPS AND THE COURTS AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH</u> Wright, 49-65 Ainsworth, Ch. 7 <b><u>Paper Introduction/Bibliography Due Thursday, March 4</u></b>
Mar. 9-11	<b>NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK</b>
T, Mar. 16/ Th, Mar. 18 READINGS:	<u>INTEREST GROUPS AND POLITICAL PARTIES</u> Rozell and Wilcox, Ch. 2
T, Mar. 23/ Th, Mar. 25 READINGS:	<u>PACs</u> Ainsworth, Ch. 9 Wright, Ch. 5 Rozell and Wilcox, Ch. 3
T, Mar. 30/ Th, Apr. 1 READINGS:	<u>INTEREST GROUPS AND VOTERS</u> Rozell and Wilcox, Ch. 4 Ainsworth, Ch. 8 <b><u>Paper Due Tuesday, March 30</u></b>
T, Apr. 6 READINGS:	<u>CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM</u> TBA
Th, Apr. 8/ T, Apr. 13 READINGS:	<u>IMPLICATIONS AND EVALUATIONS</u> Rozell and Wilcox, Ch. 5

Ainsworth Ch. 10  
Wright, Chs. 6 & 7

Th, Apr. 15

Exam Review

**Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Final Exam 8:00am-9:50am**