

Interest Group Politics

PLSC 220
Spring Semester 2005

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Class meets Wednesdays, 1:30pm-3:20pm, in William L. Harkness Hall 011.

Course Description

This course explores the ways citizens, firms, and institutions are represented through organized interest groups in the United States. We attempt to negotiate an understanding of groups that neither quixotically champions their representative functions nor cynically decries their supposed omnipotence. Instead, we situate groups within a larger context of multiple actors and institutions struggling for political influence. In the first part of the course, we examine the place of interest groups within the constitutional and political order of the United States. Second, we utilize theoretical perspectives on political conflict, collective action, and organizational maintenance to investigate interest group strategies. Third, we explore the profession of lobbying in Washington, DC and how interest groups attempt to influence Congressional policymaking directly. Finally, we consider how interest groups seek to mold public opinion, elections, bureaucratic rulemaking, and court decisions. Students are required to take a final exam and write a research paper on an interest group of their own choosing.

Requirements

1. The seminar requires regular attendance at and constructive participation in class meetings. Students are expected to read the assigned material *before* each class and should be prepared to comment on it in class.
2. A take-home, midterm essay of 1000 words on a theoretical question addressed in the first part of the course.
3. A closed-book, comprehensive final exam will be given during finals week.
4. Students are required to write a final original research paper of 4000-5000 words. Three interim steps are required, as discussed below. Hard copies of final papers are due on Monday, May 2 at 4pm.

Research Paper Specifics

1. Students are expected to conduct a case study of an interest group of their own choosing, though the choice is subject to the approval of the instructor. The assignment is to analyze the selected group using one or more of the theoretical perspectives discussed in the course. Are the theories adequate to understand the politics of this interest group, or is some new perspective required? Is there anything the leaders of this particular group might learn from political scientists who study interest groups? An excellent paper is one that uses this case study to offer new theoretical insights into interest group theory and proposes concrete, practical recommendations to the leadership of the group.
2. Research papers must be based on original research conducted by the student. Evidence may be drawn from content analysis of newspapers or on-line media, statistical analysis of data available through on-line databases, interviews with interest group members or leaders, personal observation of events, or other sources.
3. In order to demonstrate progress toward the completion of this project, students are expected to submit preliminary material according to the following deadlines:
 - A. January 26. FACT SHEET. Students should submit a one-page fact sheet on the interest group of their choice. Facts might include the founding date, names of key leaders, requirements for membership, items on the group's agenda, or other things that the student judges to be important.
 - B. February 16. PAPER PROPOSAL. Students should submit a two-page paper proposal. The proposal should identify a specific interest group as the subject of the paper and identify questions or puzzles about the behavior of the group. Students should specify what kind of empirical evidence they expect to have available to during the project.
 - C. March 30. PROGRESS REPORT. Students should prepare a two-page memo on the work they have (or have not) completed since the paper proposal was submitted. If any problems or roadblocks have been encountered, this is a good time to mention them. A student may suggest revisions to the initial proposal or may submit a new proposal at this time.
4. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor as needed throughout the semester regarding the research paper.

Evaluation

Final grades will be based on:

1. Attendance and Participation – 20%
2. Midterm Essay – 15%
3. Final Exam – 25%
4. Research Paper Interim Steps – 20%
5. Final Research Paper – 20%

Required Reading

The following books are available for purchase at the Yale Bookstore, 77 Broadway, 203-777-8440, <http://yale.bkstore.com/>:

1. Robert A. Dahl. 1956. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2. E. E. Schattschneider. 1975. [1960]. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
3. Jane J. Mansbridge. 1986. *Why We Lost the ERA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
4. Mancur Olson. 1971. [1965]. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
5. Dennis Chong. 1991. *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
6. Jeffrey Birnbaum and Alan Murray. 1987. *Showdown at Gucci Gulch: Lawmakers, Lobbyists, and the Unlikely Triumph of Tax Reform*. New York: Vintage Books.
7. Kevin W. Hula. 1999. *Lobbying Together: Interest Group Coalitions in Legislative Politics*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
8. Ken Kollman. 1998. *Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

A course packet containing supplemental readings can be purchased at Docuprint & Imaging, 27 Whitney Avenue, 203-776-3981.

All required readings are on reserve at the Social Science Library, 140 Prospect Street, 203-432-3300, <http://www.library.yale.edu/socsci/ssl/>.

Course Outline

PART I. THE PLACE OF INTERESTS IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Week 1 – January 12. What are Interest Groups?

- James Yoho. 1998. “The Evolution of a Better Definition of ‘Interest Group’ and its Synonyms.” *Social Science Journal* 35 (2): 231-243.
- Elisabeth S. Clemens. 1997. “Partisan Politics: The Evil and the Remedy.” Chapter 1 in *The People’s Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 2 – January 19. Interests and the U.S. Constitutional System

- James Madison. 1787. *The Federalist*. Numbers 10 and 51.
- Robert A. Dahl. 1956. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 3 – January 26. Case Study: Interest Groups and the ERA

- Jane J. Mansbridge. 1986. *Why We Lost the ERA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- FACT SHEET DUE at the beginning of class.

PART II. ORGANIZING POLITICAL ACTION

Week 4 – February 2. A Theory of Political Conflict

- E. E. Schattschneider. 1975. [1960]. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist’s View of Democracy in America*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Week 5 – February 9. A Theory of Collective Action

- Mancur Olson. 1971. [1965]. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- MIDTERM ESSAY DISTRIBUTED

Week 6 – February 16. Case Study: The Civil Rights Movement

- Dennis Chong. 1991. *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- PAPER PROPOSAL DUE at the beginning of class.

Week 7 – February 23. Organizational Maintenance and Internal Politics

- Robert Salisbury. 1969. “An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups.” *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 13: 1-32.
- Jack Walker. 1983. “The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America.” *American Political Science Review*, 77: 390-406.
- Mark A. Smith. 2000. “Identifying Business Unity.” Chapter 3 in *American Business and Political Power: Public Opinion, Elections, and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Steven A. Holmes. 2001. “The World According to AARP: Repositioning for the Boomers.” *The New York Times*. March 21.
- MIDTERM ESSAY DUE

PART III. LOBBYING AND INFLUENCE OVER PUBLIC POLICY

Week 8 – March 2. The Business of Lobbying

- Jeffrey Birnbaum and Alan Murray. 1987. *Showdown at Gucci Gulch: Lawmakers, Lobbyists, and the Unlikely Triumph of Tax Reform*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Senate Office of Public Records. 2005. <http://sopr.senate.gov/>. Survey the contents of this web page.
- Center for Responsive Politics. 2005. <http://www.opensecrets.org/>. Survey the contents of this web page.

Week 9 – March 23. Coalitions and Networks

- Kevin W. Hula. 1999. *Lobbying Together: Interest Group Coalitions in Legislative Politics*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Guest speaker: To be announced.

Week 10 – March 30. Identity and Issue Niches

- William P. Browne. 1990. “Organized Interests and Their Issue Niches: A Search for Pluralism in a Policy Domain.” *Journal of Politics* 52: 477-509.
- Virginia Gray and David Lowery. 1996. “A Niche Theory of Interest Representation.” *Journal of Politics* 58: 91-111.
- Michael T. Heaney. 2004. “Outside the Issue Niche: The Multidimensionality of Interest Group Identity.” *American Politics Research* 32: 1-41.
- PROGRESS REPORTS DUE at the beginning of class.

PART IV. STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES TO INSIDE LOBBYING

Week 11 – April 6. Going Public and Grassroots Mobilization

- Ken Kollman. 1998. *Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 12 – April 13. Electoral Strategies

- Kelly D. Patterson. 1999. “Political Firepower: The National Rifle Association.” Chapter 5 in *After the Revolution: PACs, Lobbies, and the Republican Congress*, Robert Biersack, Paul S. Henson, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Craig A. Rimmerman. 1999. “The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund Comes of Age: Reflections on the 1996 Elections.” Chapter 11 in *After the Revolution: PACs, Lobbies, and the Republican Congress*, Robert Biersack, Paul S. Henson, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Robert G. Boatright, Michael J. Malbin, Mark J. Rozell, Richard M. Skinner, and Clyde Wilcox. 2003. “BCRA’s Impact on Interest Groups and Advocacy Organizations.” Chapter 4 in *Life After Reform: When the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act Meets Politics*, Michael Malbin, ed. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- David B. Magleby and Jonathan W. Tanner. 2004. “Interest Group Electioneering in the 2002 Congressional Elections.” Chapter 3 in *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*, David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson, eds. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Anthony Corrado and Thomas E. Mann. 2004. “In the Wake of BCRA: An Early Report on Campaign Finance in the 2004 Elections.” *The Forum*, 2: 1-14.

Week 13 – April 20. Influencing Bureaucracy and the Courts

- Steven J. Balla. 1998. “Administrative Procedures and Political Control of the Bureaucracy.” *American Political Science Review* 92: 663-673.
- John Brehm and Scott Gates. 1997. “Smoke Detectors or Fire Alarms.” Chapter 9 in *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage: Bureaucratic Responses to a Democratic Public*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gregory A. Caldeira and John R. Wright. 1990. “Amici Curiae before the Supreme Court: Who Participates, When, and How Much?” *Journal of Politics* 52: 782-806.
- Donald Songer, Ashlyn Kuersten, and Erin Kaheny. 2000. “Why the Haves Don't Always Come out Ahead: Repeat Players Meet Amici Curiae for the Disadvantaged.” *Political Research Quarterly* 53: 537-556.

PART V. CONCLUSION TO THE COURSE

Week 14 – April 27. Conclusion and Review Session

- RESEARCH PAPER DUE on May 2 at 4pm. HARD PAPER COPY SUBMISSION REQUIRED.

Week 15 – Thursday, May 5. Final Exam. 2pm.