

Political Science 314-200 (Honors Section)
Interest Groups
Spring Term, 1998
M,W, 4:10 – 5:25 PM, Room 1015 Bush

Prof. Frank Baumgartner
Office: 2061 Bush
Phone: 845-5021
Email: frankb@polisci.tamu.edu
Office hours: M,W, 3-4 PM and by appointment

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the roles of interest groups in American politics. Topics to be covered include whether interest groups are good or bad, and in what ways; why interest groups form; what they do; how they attract members; the various ways they attempt to influence government policies; the collective action dilemma and the bias in interest-group representation that stems from it; the roles of government and private patrons in sustaining interest groups; and social movements. Students should leave the course with a broad understanding of the positive and negative elements of interest-group politics in America. We'll begin with an overview of the roles of groups in politics. Then, we'll turn our attention to lobbying with a review of the process written by two Washington lobbyists who offer practical advice about how to be a good lobbyist. We'll continue our discussions of lobbying by reviewing a number of particular cases of lobbying and lawmaking in Congress written for students at the John F. Kennedy School at Harvard. These case studies will allow for some significant class discussion about the sum total of what we know about where groups come from, the biases of who is represented in Washington, and how the policy process works. After the midterm, we'll shift our attention from lobbying per se to the mobilization of new social movements. We'll read a book on the 1964 Freedom Summer during which hundreds of students mobilized to fight for civil rights. We'll finish with a comparative study of the woman's suffrage movement in the United States and Switzerland. Turns out, the Swiss only extended the vote to women completely in 1990. That's a comparison worth explaining: why was this social movement successful so much earlier in one country rather than the other?

The format of the class will include some lectures, especially on complicated topics, but mostly we will have significant opportunities for class discussion. Each week's discussion will begin with a set of thinking points for the readings for the following week. By introducing the topics of potential discussion one week ahead, I give you fair warning of what to pay particular attention to in the readings. Depending on the topic, there may be questions, clarifications of the readings, extensions of the readings, of other types of discussion in class. Students are encouraged to bring up other topics as well. It is especially important that all the readings be accomplished before class. Class time will allow for lectures to cover topics related to the readings, to clarify complicated points in the readings, and to encourage class discussion. However, neither the lectures nor the discussions is a substitute for the readings, nor will we simply restate or summarize the readings in class. So make sure you do the readings before class so that you can come to class with questions, understand the lectures, and participate in the discussions.

The discussion points that I will distribute each week will occasionally be assigned ahead of time to particular groups of students who will then come to class especially prepared to lead the class discussion that day. For example, for each of the case studies that we read, I'll assign a group of individuals to present different elements of the case. That way, the class discussion will begin with informal presentations, followed by questions and discussion. Each student will have the opportunity to present some of the reading materials in this way.

Besides class participation, there will be a midterm exam, two short papers, and a final exam. The first short paper (7-10 pages, double spaced), should be a review of a prominent interest group of your choice. You should give the background of the group, its history, discuss who joins this group and why, and discuss the issues on which the group is active. The second paper, also 7-10 pages, should take a public policy issue (smoking, abortion, gun-control, health-care reform, right-to-die, anything that interests you) and review in detail the nature of any public controversies, the set of organized interests that are active in this issue, and the diverse points of view that they represent. For both papers, you should use a number of independent sources in addition to visiting the web sites of the groups involved. The papers should allow you to get a detailed look at a group, and at a policy dispute.

The exams will focus on the main thematic elements of the readings, with essays and short answers covering the major conceptual issues and evidence presented in the books, class discussions, and lectures.

Grades will be calculated according to the following formula:

10%	Class participation
20	Midterm Exam
20	First paper, on a group
20	Second paper, on an issue
30	Final Exam
100%	Total

Books for purchase:

Berry, Jeffrey M. 1997. *The Interest Group Society*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman.

McAdam, Doug. 1988. *Freedom Summer*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wittenberg, Ernest, and Elisabeth Wittenberg. 1994. *How to Win in Washington*. 2d ed. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Banaszak, Lee Ann. 1996. *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

A Series of Case Studies from the JFK School of Government

Prohibition (C14-83-492.0)

Auto Safety (C14-76-141, 142)

Selling the Reorganization of the Post Office (C14-84-610.0, 610.1)

Against All Odds: The Campaign in Congress for Japanese American Redress (C16-90-1006.0)

The Regulation of Mud Flaps (C16-94-940.0, C16-94-940.1)

Weekly topics and reading assignments:

Readings are listed here by week. You should complete all the readings for the week before the Monday class.

Week 1. January 21. Introduction

Introduction and overview of the course, no readings.

Week 2. January 27. The Interest Group Society (I)

Berry, Ch. 1-5

Week 3. February 2. The Interest Group Society (II)

Berry, Ch. 6-10

Week 4. February 9. How to be a Lobbyist: Practical Advice

Wittenberg and Wittenberg, entire book (it's short)

Week 5. February 16. Cases and Discussion (I)

JFK Cases: Prohibition (Monday); Japanese-American Redress (Wednesday)

Week 6. February 23. Cases and Discussion (II)

JFK Cases: Post Office (Monday); Mud Flaps (Wednesday)

Week 7. March 2. Cases and Discussion (III)

JFK Case: Auto Safety (Monday); Discussion of student papers (Wednesday)

Week 8. March 9. Review and Exam (Paper #1 Due on Monday)

Monday: Review for Midterm; Papers on groups due.

Wednesday: Midterm Exam. Bring a blue book.

Spring Break: March 16

Week 9. March 23. Freedom Summer (I)

McAdam, Prologue and Ch. 1-2

Week 10. March 30. Freedom Summer (II)

McAdam, Ch. 3-5

Week 11. April 6. Freedom Summer (III)

McAdam, Ch. 6 and Epilogue

Week 12. April 13. Women's Suffrage (I)

Banaszak, Preface and Ch. 1-4

Week 13. April 20. Women's Suffrage (II)

Banaszak, Ch. 5-6 (No class on Wednesday this week)

Week 14. April 26. Women's Suffrage (III)

Banaszak, Ch. 7-9

Week 15. May 4. Semester Review (Paper #2 Due on Monday)

Monday: Discuss readings, review for final exam; Papers on issues due

Final Exam: Monday, May 11, 3:30-5:30 PM