

GOVERNMENT 30; 99X
Interest Group Politics

Professor Linda Fowler

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Office Hours: W 2:00-4:00pm
By Appointment

Objectives:

In the United States, citizens are more likely to join interest groups than in other Western democracies, and they are more inclined to prefer groups to parties as a means of resolving political conflict. At the same time, Americans view interest groups as a potential source of bias, corruption and divisiveness in the making of public policy. This ambivalent attitude raises many questions: What is the most effective way to organize political competition in the American system? When does group activity enhance democratic politics and when does it jeopardize the public good? How do we prevent politically advantaged groups from dominating the policy process? This course draws on a mix of theoretical and historical materials, as well as case studies, to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the prominent role interest groups play in contemporary American politics.

We begin our analysis with the dilemma inherent in interest group politics—the tension between individual liberty to pursue self-interest and the collective welfare. We then turn to the problems of bias and inequality that result from interest group competition. Then, we look at a variety of strategies for group influence, from mobilizing at the grassroots to gaining access to the federal and state legislatures.

The course is intended primarily for political science majors or those with a reasonably good grounding in the field. It assumes that students have had Government 3, but does not require other upper-division work in the department. For majors, it satisfies the department's distribution requirement for courses in American politics.

Readings:

Required Texts:

- Drew, Whatever It Takes, 1997
- Hansen, Gaining Access, 1991
- Herrnson, Shaiko and Wilcox, The Interest Group Connection, 1998
- Kollman — Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies, 1998
- Rozell and Wilcox, Interest Groups in American Campaigns, 1999

Assigned articles are on reserve in Baker Library.

Requirements:

Written assignments include two analytic essays and a group project. The essays will be 6-8 pages that cover the reading and lectures. Students are invited to choose their own topic, although I will be happy to provide some alternatives. For the project, students will work in groups of five to design a lobbying campaign to promote a position on a contemporary political issue. Students are responsible for reading the weekly assignments prior to class and for participating in class discussion.

Students will receive grades based on the schedule below. I keep a running tally of the quality of student participation and use it to round grades up or down.

Analytic essays – 35% each

Group project — 30% (In figuring the grade I will count the proposal 20%, the oral presentation 30% and the final report 50%. After I get a total grade, I will use rankings established by each group, plus my own observations to arrive at an individual grade for each student.)

I expect you to work independently in writing your essays and to footnote the research for your project according to accepted academic practice. **Cheating or plagiarism of any sort will automatically trigger an F for the assignment** and quite probably a referral to the Dean for disciplinary action. All assignments are due on the scheduled date, unless students get an extension **in advance** from me. Late assignments will be penalized one grade for each day.

If you need some help with a problem or cannot make my office hours, please feel free to get in touch with me at home or via BlitzMail. If, for some reason, you need special accommodations to assist you in completing the course in a timely fashion, please let me know at the beginning of the term.

Weekly Topics:

I. Introduction

June 24 — The Dilemma of Interest Group Politics
Film at 6:30 in Rocky 1, "The Distinguished Gentleman"

II. The Context of Interest Group Politics

June 29 — Theoretical Perspectives on Interest Groups
Read: Madison, Federalist 10, reserve
Dahl, Preface to Democratic Theory, ch. 5, reserve
Dahl, Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy, ch. 3, reserve

July 1 — Interest Groups in Historical Perspective
Read: Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ch. 5, reserve
Odegard, The Anti-Saloon League, ch. 1, reserve
Thompson, The Spider Web, ch.1, reserve
Skocpol et al, "Women's Associations and the Enactment of Mother's Pensions," Amer. Pol. Science Review, 1993, pp. 686-701, reserve

July 6 The Evolution of Interest Group Influence
Read: Hansen, Gaining Access, ch. 1-3

Project Proposals due

July 8 Read: Hansen, ch.4-6

III. Group Mobilization and Over-Representation of Interests

July 13 — The Logic of the Free Rider
Review: Olson, The Logic of Collective Action, see excerpt in
Nivola and Rosenbloom, eds. Classic Readings in American Politics, reserve
Read: Rosenstone and Hansen, Mobilization, Participation and Democracy, ch.2, reserve
Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA, chs. 2, 10, reserve.
Walsh and Warland, "Social Movement Involvement in the Wake of A Nuclear Accident: Activists and Free Riders in the TMI Area," Amer. Soc. Rev., 1983, pp:764-780, reserve

July 15 — Social and Economic Bias in Group Politics
Read: Walker, Mobilizing Interest Groups in America, chs. 4, 5, reserve
Rosenstone and Hansen, Mobilization, Participation....., ch. 4

July 20 — **Essay Due**
Guest Lecturer on Lobbying

IV. Elections and Group Politics

July 22 — The Changing Role of Groups in Elections
Read: Rosell and Wilcox, Interest Groups in American Campaigns, entire

July 27 — Groups and the Struggle for Political Power

Read: Drew, Whatever It Takes, entire

July 29 — Groups and Campaign Finance

Read: Herrnson, Shaiko and Wilcox, The Interest Group Connection,
Chs. 3,4,5

Rozenkranz, Buckley Stops Here, chs. 1,2,3, reserve

V. Influencing the Policy making Process

August 3 — Grassroots Mobilization

Read: Kollman, Outside Lobbying, ch.1-4

August 5 — Read: Kollman, ch 5-end

Herrnson et al, ch. 7

August 10 — Lobbying Congress

Read: Herrnson et al, chs. 6, 8-11

August 12 — Lobbying the Executive

Read: Herrnson et al, chs. 12-15

August 17 — Lobbying the Courts

Read: Herrnson et al, chs. 16-18

Mather, "Theorizing About Trial Courts: Lawyers, Policymaking
And Tobacco Litigation, Law and Social Inquiry, Fall 1998,
pp. 897-940, reserve

August 19 — **Papers due—no class**

August 24 — **Presentation of Projects**

August 25 --- **Presentation of Projects**