

Syllabus, Interest Group Politics
PSCI 3130

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Texts:

Mancur Olson, Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action*

Mark Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, *Interest Groups in American Campaigns*

Bruce Wolpe and Bertram Levine, *Lobbying Congress: How the System Works*

Packet of articles from Joe's Copy Shop

This course examines the following questions:

1. How do interest groups get started and how do they maintain themselves?
2. Who is likely to be a member of interest groups?
3. Why do people join interest groups?
4. What do interest groups want?
5. How do interests lobby?
6. When do interest groups lobby?
7. How does money affect public policy?
8. What are the effects of lobbying on public policy and American democracy?
9. How do interest groups attempt to affect elections?

For the most part, the course concentrates on lobbying at the national level and it gives the greatest attention to lobbying the legislative branch of government.

Structure of the course:

A major goal of education is to make students into independent learners and teachers. When you take an introductory course such as PSCI 1040 or PSCI 2300, the instructor spends most of the class time lecturing or with students demonstrating that they have learned the skill involved. At some point, however, classes should change from the instructor lecturing to the students explaining. The university designates the first group of classes "lower division" and the second group "upper division."

This is an upper division class. Therefore, in this class the students explain theories, models, hypotheses, and data to other students. The teacher's job is to change the topic when the time is appropriate, ask questions, or clarify a particular point that is giving most students problems. It is not the teacher's job to cram as much factual material as possible into 50 minutes.

Each class begins with one or more students explaining the readings. The students who are selected give a brief summary of the article that includes the following elements:

1. A statement of the question that the author is trying to answer.
2. The author's hypotheses.

3. The data the author used to answer the question. Sometimes there are no data, only a logical argument. In this case, simply explain the “logic” of the argument.
4. The author’s conclusions.
5. Potential problems with the author’s explanation. For example, is it likely that the relationships observed are spurious? Does the author have a measurement problem? Can the author’s conclusions be generalized to other data and situations? Do the author’s conclusions fit nicely with other research and theories?

At this point other students in the class comment on the article and on the presentation.

I call on students using a table of random numbers. You may not “pass” just because you do not know the answer. Instead, we will use the Socratic method to reach the answer. Obviously, it is easier for you and me if you have read the material.

Prior to each class I hold help sessions for students who are having difficulty with the readings and who need help in preparing to present to the class should they be called upon. In addition, I will be happy to set up appointments with any student who cannot make the meetings prior to class.

Grading:

The grading of the class reflects the above structure. Thirty percent (30%) of your grade depends on your ability to explain the assigned material to your classmates and on your ability to question and improve upon the explanations your classmates give. To ensure that students have a reasonably equal chance to show their knowledge, I will call on students using a table of random numbers. If you are absent, your grade for that contribution is a 0. The remaining portion of your grade is determined as follows:

1. First group paper and grade from your group, 10%.
2. Midterm test. 10%.
3. **Research paper.** 25%.
4. Final exam. 25%.

All research papers are due at the beginning of class on April 14. Late papers will be reduced by 1 letter grade for each day (or part thereof) the paper is late.

Attendance: **Attendance is required. Students can miss 3 classes without penalty unless their number comes up. Students who miss more than six classes, whether excused or unexcused automatically fail the class.** Students who do not miss any classes will have three points added to their final average.

Assignments

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan. 20	Introduction to the class and its procedures; formation of groups.	
Jan. 22	Topics: How to summarize an article and an introduction to table reading. Readings: Grenzke article, Readings packet bought at Joe's Copy Shop	
Section I: Theories of Group Formation & Maintenance		
Jan. 25	Topic: The interest group community: Readings: Schlozman & Tierney, readings packet.	
Jan. 27-29	Topic: The Free Rider Problem Reading: Olson, <i>The Logic of Collective Action</i> , pp. 5-22, 33-65.	
Feb. 1-5	The Traditional Theory of Groups, Readings, Olson, pp. 111-131, 132-167 Salisbury, "An Exchange Theory," Packet	
Feb. 8-12	Topic: By-product & exchange & exchange theories Readings: Godwin, "How Direct Mail Works," packet Hildreth, "The Importance of Purposes," packet	
Feb. 15 – 19	Topic: What Benefits work Readings: Godwin and Mitchell, "Rational Models," Packet King and Walker, "The Provision of Benefits," Packet	
Feb. 22-26	The first group papers will be presented this week. All groups must be ready to present on Monday, February 22nd.	

March 1 Midterm Examination

Section II: Money and Politics

Mar. 8-12 Money and politics, I Rozell and Wilcox, 68-110.
Grenzky, Packet
Hall and Wayman, "Buying Time," packet

March 10, Outline of Research Paper is due on this day

Mar 22-26 Money and politics II Grier and Roberts, "Comparing Interest . . . , packet
Evans, "Before the Roll Call," packet

Mar. 29- Apr. 2, Money and Politics III Rozell and Wilcox, 147-173

Section III: How Groups Lobby

April 5-9 The Basics of Lobbying Wolpe & Levine (WL), Chapters 1,2,3 & 5

Apr. 12-16 Lobbying the Legislature Hojnacki and Kimball, "Organized interests,,: packet
Salamon and Siegfried, "Economic Power," packet
Grier et al., "The Determinants," packet

April 14 RESEARCH PAPER IS DUE ON THIS DATE

April 19-23 Private Goods and Issue Niches
Browne, "Issue Niches," packet
Browne, "Organized interests"
Godwin & Green, "Home Cooking," packet

April 26-30 Interest Groups and the Common Person
Denzau & Munger, "Legislators and Interest Groups," packet
Rozell & Wilcox, Interest Groups, Chap. 5

Wednesday May 12, 8:00 a.m., Final Exam