

POLI71: The Politics of Organized Interests / Fall 2001
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I. The Topic

This course will examine the role of interest organizations in all of their varied forms – social movements, institutions, associations, and membership groups – in American politics at all levels. In doing so, we will examine theories and empirical research on how organized interest organizations in the first place, are governed internally, enter and then interact with each other within populations or interest communities, and seek to influence government policy through electoral activity and lobbying legislatures, executives, and courts. Throughout, we will seek to determine if organized interests ultimately undermine or facilitate the play of democratic politics. Finally, we will consider a number of reform proposals to either control or enhance the influence of organized interests in American politics.

In examining these topics, we will also examine two secondary themes throughout the course. First, we will examine how social scientists do their work. That is, we will discuss the logic and methods underling the research we examine. In practical terms, this means that we will have a number of “mini-class” sessions intermixed in the regular course material devoted to such issues as measurement, research design, and statistical analysis. The goal of this endeavor is to provide students with a menu of questions/issues they can apply in all of their social science courses. Second, we will overemphasize, but hardly exclusively so, one approach to the study of interest organizations – the population ecology approach. That is, we will see how the population ecology approach influences not only population analyses of interest communities, but how findings in that domain influence all other topics in the study of the politics of organized interests. Also, we will see how theoretical developments in one field, in this case biology, influence theoretical thinking in others as population ecology thinking has migrated from biology to the sociology of organizations to political science analyses of organized interests.

II. Class Procedures

The course will be conducted through a mix of lecture and discussion, with an emphasis on the former. Students, however, are expected to contribute significantly to discussion based on regular attendance and prior reading of class assignments. Student grades will be determined on the basis of four criteria. First, students will complete three short paper exercises – to be combined into a single paper at the end of the term – researching a single interest organization. These exercises will entail research, often web-based, characterizing the interest organization’s governance structure, members, lobbying and PAC activities, political positions, and other attributes. The final paper will be count for 25 percent of the final grade. Second, two midterm essay exams will

count for 25 percent of the final grade each. Third, a final essay exam will also count for 25 percent of the final grade. And fourth, I reserve the option of adding up to an additional 5 percent to the final grade in reward for exceptional class participation.

III. Textbooks

The required texts – listed below – are available at the University Bookstore.

- Anthony J. Nownes. 2001. Pressure and Power: Organized Interests in American Politics. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. ISBN 0-395-95150-x.
- Virginia Gray and David Lowery 1996. The Population Ecology of Interest Representation: Lobbying Communities in the American States. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. ISBN 0-472-10683-x.
- John R. Wright. 1995. Interest Groups and Congress: Lobbying, Contributions, and Influence. New York: Addison-Wesley. ISBN 0-02-430301-1.
- Paul S. Herrnson, Ronald S. Shaiko, and Clyde Wilcox. 1998. The Interest Group Connection. Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House. ISBN 1-56643-054-2
- Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox. 1999. Interest Groups in American Campaigns. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. ISBN 1-56802-392-8.
- Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth Leech, 1998. Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science. Princeton: Princeton University Press. ISBN 0-691-05915. **RECOMMENDED ONLY**

IV. Topics and Reading Assignments

Topic 1: Organized Interests – An Introduction

- I. Introduction: Our Views of Interest Organizations
- II. Characterizing Interest Organizations
 - A. Defining Organized Interests
 - B. Measuring Organized Interests and Their Activity
 - C. Organizational Elements of Organized Interests
 - D. Political Functions of Interest Organizations
- III. Preconceptions/Issues About Organized Interests
 - A. Population Characteristics
 - B. Characteristics of Organizations
 - C. Behavior of Organizations
 - D. Power/Influence?
- IV. Political Science and the Politics of Organized Interests
 - A. Early History of the Subfield
 - B. Goals of the Modern Political Science Research on Interests
 - C. Subfield Health?
 - D. Other Literatures on Organized Interests
- V. A Schema of Interest Organization Perspectives
 - A. Influence Production Process
 - B. Characterizing the Three Approaches
 - C. Characteristics of the Neopluralist Approach
- VI. Conclusion
- VII. Readings

Nownes, Chpt. 1.
Wright, chapt. 1 and 2.
Rozell and Wilcox, chapt. 1.
Herrnson, Shaiko, and Wilcox, chapt. 1 & 2.
Baumgartner and Leech, chapt. 1, 2, and 3.
Gray and Lowery, chapt. 1 and 2.

Topic 2: The Mobilization and Maintenance of Organized Interests

I. Introduction

- A. The Issue of Mobilization
- B. Leadership and Maintenance as Issues
- C. Plan of the Topic

II. Organization Mobilization – Three Perspectives

- A. Mobilization Pluralist Perspectives: It's Natural
- B. Transactions Perspectives: The Collective Action Problem
- C. Neopluralist Perspectives: Collective Action Problem Not Automatic

III. Organization Maintenance

- A. Members, Leaders, and Representatives
- B. Leadership Autonomy
- C. Niche Theory and Its Implications

IV. Conclusion

V. Readings

Baumgartner and Leech, chapt. 4, 5 & 6.
Nownes, Chpts. 3 & 4.
Gray and Lowery, chapt. 9.

Topic 3: Interest Organization Communities

- I. Moving to the Population Stage of Analysis
 - A. Issue: Is there a distinct population stage of analysis?
 - B. Population Issues & their Importance
 - C. The Population Ecology Approach

- II. Interest System Density
 - A. The ESA Model of Density
 - B. Two forms of the Model
 - C. A Methods Colloquy
 - D. Results for Aggregate Model
 - E. Implications

- III. Interest Community Demography
 - A. Explanations of Density Dependence
 - B. The Original Answer
 - C. The Revised Model

- IV. Interest Community Diversity & Bias
 - A. Prior Interpretations of Bias and Diversity
 - B. Describing Diversity of Interest Systems
 - C. Explaining Diversity and Bias

- V. Conclusion

- VI. Readings
 - Nownes, Chpt. 2.
 - Gray and Lowery, chapt. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8.

Topic 4: Influencing the Public & Its Choices

- I. Introduction
 - A. Alternative Strategies of Exercising Influence
 - B. Issues Associated with the Alternative Strategies
 - C. Perspectives on Influence Applicable to All Strategies
 - D. Plan of the Topic

- II. Influencing Public Opinion
 - A. Perspectives on the Importance of Public Opinion
 - B. The Public Opinion Constraint
 - C. Outside Lobbying Defined and Use Explained
 - D. A Closer Look at Three Types of Activities to Shape Opinion
 - E. Opinion, Interests, and Policy Links

- III. Influencing Parties
 - A. The Logic of Influence Parties: A Wholesale Electoral Strategy
 - B. What Interest Organizations bring to Parties?
 - C. When the Party Strategy Can Be Used
 - D. The Importance of Resources
 - E. The Costs to Parties of Relying on Interest Organizations
 - F. The Costs to Interest Organizations of Relying on Parties
 - G. Case Studies
 - H. Problems in Studying Influence of Interest Organizations on Political Parties

- IV. Influencing Election Outcomes
 - A. Position Taking Candidates and Issues
 - B. Campaign Finance: Political Action Committees (PACs)

- V. Conclusion

- VI. Readings

Nownes, Chpts. 7 & 8.
Rozell and Wilcox, chaps. 3 & 4..
Herrnson, Shaiko, and Wilcox, chaps. 3, 4, and 5.

Topic 5: Influencing the Passage of Laws

- I. Introduction to Legislative Lobbying
 - A. Perspectives on Legislative Lobbying
 - B. Access as the First Requisite of Lobbying
 - C. Legislative Lobbying as the Core Activity of Organized Interests
 - D. Plan of the Topic

- II. The Nature of Legislative Access
 - A. Developing Hypotheses About Access
 - B. The Evidence
 - C. Feedbacks and Linkages to Mobilization, Population Structures, and Influence

- III. Issues in Legislative Lobbying
 - A. What to Lobby For? Selecting Issues
 - B. Whom to Lobby? Friends, Undecideds, or Opponents
 - C. How to Lobby? Inside vrs. Outside Strategies
 - D. Who to Lobby With? Going Alone or in a Flock
 - E. Legislative Lobbying: Contingency, Linkages, Feedbacks

- IV. The Issue of Success in Lobbying
 - A. Understanding Lobbying Success
 - B. The Effectiveness of Inside Lobbying
 - C. The Effectiveness of Outside Lobbying
 - D. The Effectiveness of PAC Contributions
 - E. Interpreting the Results on Impact

- V. Conclusion

- VI. Readings

Nownes, pp. 87-96 and Chapt 6.

Wright, chapt. 3, 4, & 5.

Baumgartner and Leech, chapt. 7 & 8.

Herrnson, Shaiko, and Wilcox, chapt. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, & 11.

Gray and Lowery, chapt. 10.

Topic 6: Influencing the Interpretation and Implementation of Laws

- I. Introduction to Interpretation and Implementation
 - A. What Happens After Laws are Passed
 - B. Constraints on Executive and Judicial Lobbying
 - C. Plan of the Topic
- II. Lobbying the Executive
 - A. The Complex Structure of the Federal Executive
 - B. Constraints on Interest Organizations and Executive Lobbying
 - C. Factors Promoting Increasing Access by Interest Organizations
 - D. Testing Models of Executive Lobbying: How should we Proceed?
- III. Characteristics of Judicial Activity by Organized Interests
 - A. Influencing the Courts
 - B. Types of Interest Organization Activity with Courts
 - C. Who Engages in Judicial Lobbying?
 - D. How Successful is Judicial Lobbying?
- IV. Conclusion
- V. Readings

Nownes, pp. 97-107.

Herrnson, Shaiko, and Wilcox, chaps. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, & 18.

Topic 7: The Political/Policy Consequences of Organized Interests

- I. Considering Overall Consequences of Interest Organizations
 - A. Three Perspectives on Consequences
 - B. Where to Look for Consequences
 - C. How do we assess consequences? Over time and space.
 - D. Plan of the Topic

- II. Consequences for Democratic Participation
 - A. Competing Perspectives on Participation
 - B. Evidence
 - C. Caveat: Growth of Institutional Sector in Population of Interest Organizations

- III. Consequences for the Political Process
 - A. Competing Perspectives on Process
 - B. Evidence
 - C. Caveat: Impact of Gridlock: Iron Triangles vrs. Punctuated Equilibrium

- IV. Consequences for Overall Policy
 - A. Competing Perspectives
 - B. Evidence
 - C. Caveat: The Fragmentation of Peak Organizations

- V. Consequences for Political Power
 - A. Competing Perspectives
 - B. Evidence
 - C. Caveat: The Impact of Soft Money, Indirect Expenditures and Issue Adds

- VI. Conclusion

- VII. Readings

Nownes, Chpt. 9.
Gray and Lowery, chapt. 11 and 12.
Wright, chapt. 6.

Topic 8: Organized Interests: Prospects and Reforms

I. Introduction

- A. Summing-Up: Neopluralism and Democratic Politics
- B. Looking at Reform Proposals: Lobbying and PAC Activity
- C. Plan of the Topic

II. Returning to the Three Perspectives on Lobbying

- A. Importance of a Comprehensive Understanding
- B. The Case for the Neopluralist Perspective
- C. The Persistence of the Negative Perception of Interest Organizations

III. Evaluating Proposed Reforms

- A. The Perennial Issue of Reform: Some Caveats
- B. Lobby Regulation Reforms
- C. PAC Regulation Reforms
- D. Other Reforms Related to Interest Organizations

IV. Conclusion

V. Readings

Nownes, Chapt. 10.

Baumgartner and Leech, chapt. 9.

Wright, chapt. 7.

Rozell and Wilcox, chapt. 5.

Herrnson, Shaiko, and Wilcox, chapt. 19.