Political Science 4032
Interest Groups in the United States
Fall 2009

Dr. Robert Hogan
TTH 9:10-10:30
2171 Patrick Taylor

Office Hours: TTH 1:30-2:30, or by appt.
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Course Description

This course is intended to introduce students to various aspects of interest group politics in the United States. We will examine several dimensions of these organizations, from conditions that affect their formation and development to activities they use to influence elections and public policy. Our goal is to understand their role in the political system and to evaluate their effects – do they promote or detract from democratic governance? What aspects of these organizations can be beneficial or harmful to the way collective decisions are made in government? How has the power of interest groups changed over time? Has the increase in the number of groups over time led to a dispersion of power in the political system or is power still concentrated in a small number of groups? How has the influence of interest groups changed relative to other entities such as political parties and government institutions? Ultimately, have interest groups become too powerful, or have they become too weak to be effective in providing citizens access to the political process?

In addition to our focus on the substantive aspects of interest group politics, we will also spend time examining the methods used by scholars in answering questions on this topic. Part of our goal is to assess the evidence obtained by scholars and to consider alternative approaches. While this is not a course on political science methodology, issues involving research design and analysis will play prominently in our class discussions.

Reading Materials

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:


In addition, other required readings listed on the syllabus can be accessed through the LSU Moodle system.

Course Requirements

The grade for the course is determined by a student’s performance in the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation, Quizzes, Short Written Assignments</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review #1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review #2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Letter grades will be determined as follows: A = 90-100 percent, B = 80-89 percent, C = 70-79 percent, D = 60-69 percent, and F = below 60 percent.

**NOTE:** A grade of 0 on any of the categories of assignments listed above will result in an F in the course.
Participation, Quizzes, and Short Written Assignments

Classes are generally conducted in a lecture-discussion format so it is important to keep up with the readings and to be prepared every day. Students are strongly encouraged to take part in class discussions. In order to do this, it is necessary to complete the readings prior to class and to spend time thinking about them in a critical manner. Also, please keep up with current developments in national, state, and local politics since these will often be used as examples in our discussions.

Quizzes will be administered periodically along with brief in-class writing assignments. In addition, I will occasionally ask you to complete a short assignment that is due at the beginning of the next class meeting. These assignments typically involve writing a brief essay on a given topic. This work will be counted as part of your participation grade. All class assignments will be posted on Moodle soon after they are provided in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to check Moodle for any missed assignment prior to the next class meeting. Also, assignments not handed in on time will receive a grade penalty.

Book Reviews

Students are required to hand in reviews of two books listed on the syllabus: (1) Environment, Inc.: From Grassroots to Betrayal, and (2) The Third House: Lobbyists and Lobbying in the States. These book reviews will consist of answering a series of questions that I will provide on a separate handout. The due dates are listed on the syllabus. Together these reviews count for 30% of the course grade.

Exams

There are two exams—a mid-term and final (dates are listed on the syllabus). These tests will consist of short-answer/essay style questions. Note that makeup exams are only administered when a student can produce a valid written excuse. If you anticipate a problem, please let me know as soon as possible. Also, for students who have special needs or require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation in advance of the exams so arrangements can be made.

General Policies

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense and is not taken lightly. Use of another's words or ideas without giving proper credit will not be tolerated. Care should be made to properly cite sources where appropriate. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult me. All violations of this policy are turned over to the Dean of Students for adjudication.

Classroom behavior

Please be considerate to those around you who are trying to listen, take notes, and participate in class discussions. Please make every effort to be on time to class. Be seated and ready to begin at 9:10 and leave early only for emergencies. Turn off cell phones and pagers. Most importantly, do not talk during class. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.

Late Assignments

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Penalties will be assessed based upon the circumstances, but will generally involve a substantial loss of points. In others words, be certain that I receive your written work at the beginning of class.

Course Schedule

August 25  Introduction to Course

August 27  Approaches to the Study of Interest Groups
  • Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 1.
  • Reading #1: Madison, Federalist #10.

September 1  What Interest Groups Do and Is It Good For Democracy?

September 3  Changing Nature of Interest Groups in the U.S.
  • Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 2.

September 8  Distribution of Interest Groups in the U.S.
September 10  

**Group Formation and Maintenance**  
- Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 3.

September 15  

**Group Formation and Maintenance Continued**  

September 17  

**Groups in a Changing Political Environment**  
- ***BOOK REVIEW DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS***

September 22  

**Interest Group Activities in Political Campaigns and Elections**  
- Berry and Wilcox, Chapters 4 and 5.  
- Rozell, Wilcox, and Madland, Chapters 1 and 2.

September 24  

**Interest Groups and Candidates**  
- Rozell, Wilcox, and Madland, Chapter 3.  

September 29  

**Interest Groups and Candidates Continued**  

October 1  

**Fall Break**

October 6  

**Interest Groups and Voters**  
- Rozell, Wilcox, and Madland, Chapters 4 and 5.

October 8  

**Interest Groups and Voters Continued**  

October 13  

**Campaign Finance Laws and Their Effects**  

October 15  

**MID-TERM EXAM**

October 20  

**Campaign Finance Laws: Problems and Possible Solutions**  

October 22  

**Evaluating the Role of Interest Groups in Elections**

October 27  

**Strategies of Lobbying**  
- Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 (part) pp. 137-141.  

October 29  

**Lobbying in the States**  
- ***BOOK REVIEW DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS***

November 3  

**Strategies and Influence in Legislatures**  
November 5  
*Determining the Influence of Campaign Donations on the Legislative Process*  

November 10  
*Interest Group Influence on the Bureaucracy and the Courts*  
- Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 8 (part) pp. 141-154.  

November 12  
*Grassroots Lobbying*  
- Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 7.

November 17  
*Influence within the Policy Process*  
- Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 9  

November 19  
*Influence on Policy Spending*  

November 24  
*Influence on Policy Outputs*  

November 26  
*Thanksgiving Holiday*

December 1  
*Evaluating Overall Interest Group Effects*  
- Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 10.

December 3  
*Implications for Democracy and Final Exam Review*

December 8  
*FINAL EXAM* in this classroom on Tuesday Dec. 8 at 7:30-9:30 a.m.