

INTEREST GROUPS

This course is designed to examine the role of interest groups in American politics. The course is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on theories of how interest groups fit into the political system. Lectures and readings concentrate on the composition of the interest group system, the factors that influence the development and maintenance of groups, and the power of different types of groups. The second part of the course examines the tactics that groups use to influence decision-makers and the impact these tactics have on public policy.

Learning Objectives

These are the primary learning objectives for the course: (1) to provide students with an understanding of the political science literature on interest groups in American politics; (2) to familiarize students with some of the key strategies and tactics used by interest groups to influence politics and policy; (3) to teach students about the nature of political power; (4) to help students become better able to analyze politics and to think critically.

Class Format and Grading

Class sessions will rely on a combination of lectures and discussions, with heavy emphasis placed on student participation. Course grades will be determined by a midterm, final, and research project. The research project is described on the back page of this handout.

Required Texts

Three books are required for this class. They are available at the PSU bookstore.

Frank Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech, *Basic Interests*
Jeffrey Berry and Clyde Wilcox, *The Interest Group Society*, 5th ed.
Alan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, *Interest Group Politics*, 7th ed.

Course Outline and Readings

Week I. Types of Interests/Types of Groups (Oct. 1)

Read: Berry, chapters 2 and 4
Baumgartner, chapters 1-2

Week II. Early Literature and Group Theory (Oct. 8)

Read: Berry, chapters 1 and 3
Baumgartner, chapter 3
Cigler, chapter 1

Week III. Changing Ideas on Group Formation (Oct. 15)

Read: Baumgartner, chapter 4
Cigler, chapters 2, 5, 6, and 16

Week IV. The Pluralists' Heaven? Who Groups Represent (Oct. 22)

Read: Berry, chapter 10
Baumgartner, chapter 5
Cigler, chapters 4 and 10

Week V. The Power of Interest Groups (Oct. 29)

Read: Berry, chapter 9
Baumgartner, chapter 6

***** MIDTERM EXAM, NOVEMBER 5 *****
(Need at least one bluebook)

Week VI. Lobbying Legislatures through Outside Strategies (Nov. 5)

I will lecture after the midterm
Read: Baumgartner, chapter 7
Berry, chapters 5-7
Cigler, chapters 7-9

Week VII and VIII. Lobbying Legislatures through Inside Strategies (Nov. 12-19)

Read: Berry, chapter 8
Baumgartner, chapter 8
Cigler, chapters 11-13 and 18

Week IX. Lobbying the Executive Branch and the Courts (Nov. 26)

Read: Cigler, chapters 15 and 17

Week X. Lobbying Strategies in Perspective (Dec. 3)

Read: Baumgartner, chapter 9
Cigler, chapter 19
Re-read: Baumgartner, chapter 1

***** FINAL EXAM, DECEMBER 10, 12:30 p.m. *****
(Don't forget your bluebook!)

RESEARCH PROJECT

Everyone in the class is expected to write a research paper focusing on interest group politics. I have included a list of paper ideas below. If you decide to go with any of these, you would be wise to narrow your focus. If you feel strongly about an alternative topic, talk to me. I am willing to consider other topics as well, as long as they are relevant to the course.

HOW TO GET A GOOD GRADE ON YOUR PAPER: When you write your paper, I don't just want a listing of facts or a compilation of anecdotes. You need to write an essay. Have a thesis or a theme. Tell me what this thesis is in the first few paragraphs, and then use the body of your text to argue your point. Finish with a conclusion. I do not require a set number of references, but I do expect you to rely on scholarly work and to do a reasonable amount of research from sources other than your textbooks. By scholarly works, I mean academic books and journal articles. Relying solely on magazines, newspapers, and on-line sources is unacceptable. Absolutely do not use *Wikipedia* or any other non-academic on-line resource as a cited reference! You can use these sources for initial ideas and to get leads, but not as a substitute for scholarly research. Unless I give you a specific exception, the only on-line resources I accept are electronic versions of academic journals, including such publications as *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *State Politics and Policy*, *Political Research Quarterly*, and *the American Political Science Review*.

PAPER SPECIFICATIONS: The paper should be 8 to 10 pages long (excluding citations) with reasonable margins and point size. In writing the paper, you should try to follow elementary rules of style. At minimum, this means that the paper must be double-spaced and it must include proper citations. If you borrow words or ideas from others, you must cite your sources. If you get permission to use an online source, you need to provide the exact URL so that I can check the source. For help on style rules and citations, see Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* or similar works. I am picky about proper citations, so make sure you know what you are doing.

PAPER DUE DATE: Dec. 3 during class. I do not accept electronic versions.

POSSIBLE PAPER TOPICS:

1. Write a research paper on a specific interest group. Some possibilities include Common Cause, Nation of Islam, Queer Nation, Christian Coalition of America, AFL-CIO, or National Association of Manufacturers. **I don't just want a history of a group, however.** Instead, use the group as a case study to test some aspect of the theoretical literature we have studied this quarter. So, for instance, you might consider how well the theories of group mobilization explain the historical development of the group you select. Alternatively, you might look at the tactics that the group uses to influence politics, and explain how these tactics coincide with or diverge from the tactics described in the course. If they do differ, you could explain why.
2. Write a paper that elaborates on some aspect of lobbying in more detail than covered in class, such as campaign contributions or litigation strategies.

3. Focus on one particular policy area, and discuss how interest groups influence the government's decisions in that area. One variation on this would be to examine the influences of interest groups on the passage of one particular bill.
4. Write a paper on the role and power of interest groups in Oregon politics, or the impact of one particular group.

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