

POLITICAL SCIENCE 225
POLITICAL INTEREST GROUPS
Syllabus: Fall Semester 2012
Mr. McFarland

Requirements: There will be two lectures per week: Monday and Wednesday 2:00B3:15. in 1115 BSB. The main class requirement is a twelve-page paper, counting 40% of the grade. The topic of the paper will be the analysis of an interest group. Detailed instructions as to writing the twelve-page paper will be handed out to the student. The paper will be due the day before Thanksgiving class (November 21). In addition there will be two in-class essay examinations, covering the reading and the lectures. The midterm will be during the seventh week of class (October 8); the second examination will cover the last half of the class and will be held during the scheduled time for the final. However, both exams will count 25%, which means that the Afinal@ will have the same weight as a midterm. In addition, at the beginning of the fifth week of class (September 24), all students will be required to submit a four page discussion of their selection of an interest group for the paper. This will be part of the last 10% of grade allocation, which in some cases will include class participation.

Interest Groups may be defined as organizations which seek to influence public policy. Many organizations have a principle purpose other than to influence public policy, but may seek to influence public policy as a secondary purpose. This second category would include business corporations and nonprofit organizations, such as occupational organizations, universities, hospitals, and churches. In additions, federalist governments such as states and cities seek to influence the policies of the national government. Some interest groups are called Aassociations,@ such as groups of like-minded individuals who seek to influence government, or trade associations, groups of commercial entities seeking to advance a common economic interest.

As political organizations, interest groups are distinguished from political parties, which are organizations seeking to influence public policy through gaining the election of public officials. Interest groups, on the other hand, seek to influence public officials after they are elected, or seek to influence members of the executive branch or independent agencies who are appointed, not elected. There exists overlapping categories between political parties and interest groups, as interest groups may seek to influence elections through campaign contributions or provision of other resources to favored politicians. Political movements are a third category of political action; they seek to influence public policy by a variety of methods, but by definition use a broader variety of noninstitutional tactics (e.g. demonstrations) than parties or interest groups.

Lobbying and lobbyists refer to action to influence public policy on the behalf of interest groups, other organizations seeking to advance interests, or sometimes individual action to influence government. These terms refer to the symbolic image of waiting in the lobby to address legislators as they enter or exit an assembly chamber; such persons seek to speak to the

decision-maker or to hand over a letter or petition. The study of lobbying is thus a part of the study of political interest groups. Lobbying is now an occupation involving perhaps 100,000 full-time personnel in the United States, including state and local government, with another 200,000 support personnel such as group administrators and policy researchers. Thousands of others lobby part-time or just occasionally as part of their job, such as CEO of a business. Of course few lobbyists are actually waiting in the political lobbies or even in the legislative committee rooms; they generally visit offices of officials or communicate with the media.

Lobbying in Washington works through network systems of processing information sent to decision-makers to influence their decisions. Physically, lobbying occupies decentralized spaces, larger than the U.S. legislature and Washington federal courts, but less space than the executive branch as a whole in Washington, although more than smaller federal departments. There are about 35,000 Washington lobbyists who are registered; thousands of others do not register for technical legal reasons. Lobbying agents spend at least two billion dollars in Washington to influence federal government decisions.

Political participation: political scientists normally identify four types of institutional political participation: (1) voting, (2) election campaigning, (3) interest group petitioning of government officials, (4) direct contacting of government officials by individuals, not acting through an interest group. These four categories are normally applied to individual acts of political participation, but they can be applied to entities such as business corporations, except for the voting category. A fifth category of participation is action in political movements; it differs in that it is not institutional. I treat this type of participation in my Political Science 329 and Political Science 349 classes. A sixth category, protesting or “creative participation,” is when citizens get together on their own to create a protest or a new institution for the common good. If a protest lasts for several months, we normally call it a political movement. This type of participation is treated in my book *Boycotts and Dixie Chicks: Creative Participation at Home and Abroad*, which I assign for Political Science 329 and 349 in addition to a social movements book.

Thus, in addition to voting and working in political campaigns, citizens may engage in political participation through interest groups. Citizen political participation through interest groups is obviously important and potentially influential, even though it may not have quite as much impact as voting in elections. Interest-group participation is highly important in that it influences the behavior of governmental officials in their actions between elections.

This class emphasizes American politics and political participation. However, interest groups exist worldwide as obviously citizens and organizations seek to influence government policies, no matter in what country on earth. Furthermore, with the development of internet technology, persons are forming transnational networks to act internationally to influence governments and policies other than their own (e.g. Amnesty International).

This class proceeds as follows. The first goal is to define and describe the activities of interest groups and lobbying. The teaching goal is simply to make the student more aware of the activities of interest groups and lobbyists that are seeking to influence the government policies affecting our lives. American public culture and the political culture of almost every nation

avoids the discussion of interest group activity, since it involves the discussion of self-interested and materialistic goals in conflict with political ideals embodied in political systems. The goal is to open up the student=s eyes to interest groups, and to realize more fully the major role interest groups and lobbying play in our politics.

The second goal is to familiarize the student with the major problem posed by interest groups for democracy. Groups perform a function of communicating citizens= and organizational interests to government officials, giving them more information. However, due to the inherent difficulties of cooperation based in human nature, some groups are easier to organize than other groups. This biases the information sent to government officials. Furthermore, organized special interests can form coalitions with government officials to gain their way, even against the interests of the majority. The problem is : the few defeat the many. If this happens too frequently in making public policy, democracy is corrupted into forms of elitism, rule by special-interest cliques, each controlling its own turf without regard to the public interest. The instructor has concluded that there are techniques to organize groups such as environmental lobbies, which have some chance to form countervailing power to the special-interest coalitions. My argument is that we need to organize such citizens lobbies, which although not always 100 percent correct, are needed to balance the power of the special-interest coalitions, known as Airon triangles@ in the political vernacular.

After the midterm, we do a rundown of the role of interest groups and lobbying through the activities and branches of American national government: elections, Congress, the executive branch and independent agencies, and the judiciary Since this is an election year, we pay special attention to the role of interest groups in financing electoral campaigns. We will discuss the election the Wednesday after the Tuesday, and probably for part of the class after that.

There are three textbooks for the class, and copies have been available at the Student Union bookstore. If they run out, they should be back in stock soon. There is also a book that is optional reading, not required (an academic classic).

Anthony J. Nownes, *Total Lobbying: What Lobbyists Want (and How They Try to Get it)*, Cambridge University Press

Christopher Bosso, *Environment, Inc.: From Grassroots to Beltway*, University Press of Kansas

Mark J. Rozell, Clyde Wilcox, and Michael M. Franz, *Interest Groups in American Campaigns*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press

Optional reading, academic classic: Mancur Olson, Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action*, Harvard University Press

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Please check with the instructor regarding exceptions for disability permissions or for religious holidays.

Extensive directions for writing the twelve-page paper will be handed out.

Class examinations will be essay examinations, with a small part for short identifications, such as fill-in-the-blank.

Class Schedule

August 27	Introduction .Definitions.
August 29	Descriptions of interest groups. <i>Total Lobbying, 1-11</i>
September 3	Labor Day holiday
September 5	Public policy lobbying. <i>Lobbying, 12-36</i>
September 10	Public policy lobbying <i>Lobbying, 37-56</i>
September 12	Public policy lobbying. <i>Lobbying 57-83</i>
September 17	Public policy lobbying <i>Lobbying, 83-102</i>
September 19	Land use lobbying <i>Lobbying, 103-147</i>
September 24	Submit statement of paper topic. Lobbying and government contracts. <i>Lobbying, 148-163.</i>
September 26	Lobbying and government contracts. <i>Lobbying, 163-196</i>
October 1	The logic of collective action Finish the lobbying book up to page 196. A few students may want to read Mancur Olson=s <i>The Logic of Collective Action</i> , but this book is not required.
October 3	The logic of collective action (continued) Subgovernments or Airon triangles.@
October 8	MIDTERM EXAMINATION.
October 10	Subgovernments versus countervailing power

Start reading *Environment, Inc.*, pp. 1-47.

- October 15 Countervailing power. Public interest groups. Environmental lobbies.
 Continue reading *Environment, Inc.*, pp. 48-83.
- October 17 Environmental lobbies.
 Continue reading *Environment, Inc.*, 84-118.
- October 22 Interest groups: pluralism, multiple elitism, neopluralism.
 Finish reading *Environment, Inc.*, 119-157.
- October 24 Interest Groups and Congress.
 Lobbying, 197-218
- October 29 Interest groups and campaign finance.
 Interest groups in American Campaigns, 1-33.
- October 31 Interest groups and campaign finance.
 American Campaigns, 59-96.
- November 5 Interest groups and the voters.
 American Campaigns, 97-135.
- November 7 Post Election Day, Wednesday after Tuesday.
- November 12 Post Election Day.
 Interest groups and the Executive Branch/Independent Agencies.
 Lecture notes handout.
 Do reading for paper.
- November 14. Interest Groups and the Judiciary.
 Lecture notes handout.
 Do reading for paper.
- November 19 Student presentations.
 Work on paper.
- November 21 **PAPER DUE DATE.**
 Class will not meet; office hours instead.
- November 22 Thanksgiving holiday.
- November 26, 28; December 3 and 5. Depends on number of student presentations.
Topics will be announced to substitute for student presentations.

The “final” exam time will be announced. This exam will cover material after the first midterm and will count 25% of the grade.