

POLS225
Political Interest Groups
Fall 2014

Instructor: April Johnson
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Phone:
Class Time: Tues/Thurs 3:30pm-4:45pm
Class Location: Behavioral Sciences Building, Room 215
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 11am-12pm and by appointment
Office Location: Behavioral Sciences Building, Room 1126A

Course Description and Objectives

Credit Hours: 3 undergraduate hours

Prerequisite(s): POLS 101 or consent of the instructor.

This course seeks to provide students with a solid background in the history, organization, and function of American interest groups. Much of the course will contrast classic, theoretical approaches of interest aggregation with actual group behavior in today's political climate. Some of the topics we will discuss include the structure and maintenance of interest groups, problems of collective action and mobilization, the relationship between interest groups and various branches of government, and the increasingly critical role of organized interests in campaign finance. At the end of this course students should be able to describe how and why interest groups form, the strategies they use in order to influence policy, the ways in which they shape and respond to public opinion, and how recent legal decisions, as well as emerging technology, might alter interest group behavior in the future. The format of this class will primarily reflect that of a seminar, as we will devote a significant amount of time to discussing and understanding current events. Critical thinking and a vibrant class discussion are essential to the structure of this course.

Required Texts

- 1) Lowery, David and Holly Brasher. 2004. *Organized Interests and American Government*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. (ISBN: 978-0072467864)

- 2) Alexander, Robert M. 2005. *The Classics of Interest Group Behavior*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. (ISBN: 978-0534643843)

- 3) Required supplemental readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Evaluation of Course Objectives

Discussion Leader: Each student will be assigned one day to serve as discussion leader. Discussion leaders are expected to thoroughly read all of the required material for that day and to find two current news articles which highlight or exemplify the topic. Discussion leaders will create a handout for every member of the class which summarizes the key terms, theoretical perspectives, and research findings (if applicable) of that day's required readings. The handout should also summarize the two news articles selected and explain why they relate to that day's topic. Students should pose several original questions within the handout that facilitate class

dialogue. Students will be graded on the professionalism and thoroughness of their handout, their ability to successfully grasp and convey the information in the required readings, and to facilitate class discussion.

Written Assignments: Each student will be required to write one 8-10 page midterm paper and one 12-15 page final paper which analyzes and evaluates various concepts discussed in this class. Instructions for these written assignments will be handed out roughly two to three weeks before the papers are due. Papers should be uploaded through SafeAssign in Blackboard by the deadline listed.

Attendance: I expect each and every student to come to class, to be attentive, and to be engaged in both lectures and discussion. Students should not be texting, tweeting, or otherwise distracted while class is in session. If I determine that a student's behavior is disruptive to the learning of others I will ask him or her to leave. Attending class means that you are on time and that you do not leave until I have formally concluded class for that day. Students who show up more than 5 minutes late and/or who leave more than 5 minutes before class ends will not be given credit for attending.

Participation: Attending class does not equate to participating in it. It is essential that every student is actively engaged in lectures and discussions each class period. Participation includes asking questions about the readings (write down questions as you read!), answering questions posed by the instructor, and responding to the arguments made by your classmates. I encourage all students to think critically and to share their insights and inquiries with the class.

Readings: Required supplemental readings will be made available electronically on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.uic.edu>). It is important to stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in class discussion.

Distribution of Grades

15% Attendance and participation
35% Discussion Leader
20% Midterm paper
30% Final paper II

Grading Scale

A	90-100	C	70-79	F	59 or below
B	80-89	D	60-69		

Midterm and Final Exams

While I recommend checking your grades in Blackboard throughout the semester, I will inform students of their official midterm grades during approximately the eighth week of class. If you are concerned about your overall grade and/or a particular assignment at any point please feel free to meet with me during my office hours.

Final examinations are administered during the sixteenth week of the semester. Any student having more than two final examinations scheduled in one day is entitled to rescheduling. For a schedule of exams and exam policies see:

http://www.uic.edu/depts/oar/current_students/calendars/final_exam_schedule.html

Policy for Missed or Late Work

Missing or late work will be accepted only under extenuating circumstances and with proper (medical) documentation. Students will generally not be allowed to make up missing coursework due to transportation, weather, family and/or personal issues, though certain exceptions may be made on a case by case basis.

Religious Holidays

Students who wish to observe their religious holidays shall notify the faculty member by the tenth day of the semester of the date when they will be absent unless the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, the student shall notify the faculty member at least five days in advance of the date when he/she will be absent. The faculty member shall make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize the student for missing the class, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, give the student an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed by those students in attendance. If the student feels aggrieved, he/she may request remedy through the campus grievance procedure.

Disability Policy

The University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course are welcome, but must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). You may contact DRC at 312-413-2183 (v) or 312-413-0123 (TTY) and consult the following: <http://www.uic.edu/depts/oa/disabilityresources/faq/accommodations.html>.

Electronic Communication

Communication for this course will be sent to your official university email address via Blackboard. ***It is your responsibility to read the email in your official university email account and to do so in a timely manner (at least twice per week).*** If you choose to forward your official university email to another off-campus account, faculty are *not responsible* for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts.

Writing Assistance

The writing center, located in Grant Hall 105, offers one-on-one consultation with student writers who need help developing ideas, or need advice, guidance or additional instruction on any aspects of writing in any class. Tutors are prepared to spend fifty minutes per appointment, and there is no limit to the number of tutoring sessions you can have each semester. Make an appointment and be on time! Bring the paper on which you're working, as well as any related drafts or notes, and information about the assignment. For an appointment, call the Writing Center at (312) 413-2206, or stop by room 105 of Grant Hall. Visit the Writing Center website at www.uic.edu/depts/engl/writing for more information.

Academic Integrity

As an academic community, UIC is committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, and

administrators—share the responsibility of insuring that these standards are upheld so that such an environment exists. Instances of academic misconduct by students will be handled pursuant to the Student Disciplinary Policy:

<http://www.uic.edu/depts/cas/dosnew/conductforstudents.shtml>

Plagiarism

Academic honesty is expected at all times. Any student found to have engaged in academic misconduct such as plagiarism, collusion, or submitting non-original work is subject to disciplinary sanctions from the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. The term “collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with any other person in preparing work offered for academic credit. Students are advised that faculty routinely use SafeAssign both to prevent plagiarism and to assist in verifying when/if it has occurred.

In this course you will be required to write two papers. While I encourage you to use many resources in gathering information, you must provide a citation for the sources used in your paper. This includes supplementing your knowledge from the required readings with information from magazine/newspaper articles, websites, books, etc. In addition to rewording information from your sources, my advice is to always cite any and all sources used in your written assignments. *If I suspect that a student has committed plagiarism, even if it is his or her first time, the student will receive a zero on the assignment and an incident report will be filed with the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.* For more information about plagiarism and prevention, go to www.plagiarism.org/.

Grievance Procedures

UIC is committed to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity involving students and employees. Freedom from discrimination is a foundation for all decision making at UIC. Students are encouraged to study the University's “Nondiscrimination Statement”. Students are also urged to read the document “Public Formal Grievance Procedures”. Information on these policies and procedures is available on the University web pages of the Office of Access and Equity: www.uic.edu/depts/oea.

Disclaimer

The instructor reserves the right to amend or correct this course syllabus as necessary. If the instructor amends or corrects this syllabus students will be properly notified of any changes.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Required Readings
Tues 8/26	Introduction	---
Thurs 8/28	Organizing Interests	L & B Chapter 1 Alexander Chapter 1
Tues 9/2	Historical Perspectives	Alexander Chapters 2 & 3
Thurs 9/4	Pluralism	Alexander Chapters 5 and 6
Tues 9/9	Pluralism Critiques	Alexander Chapter 7
Thurs 9/11	Hyperpluralism	Alexander Chapters 16 and 17
Tues 9/16	Formation of Interest Groups in the U.S.	*Crowley & Skocpol (2001)
Thurs 9/18	Interest Group Landscape	L & B Chapter 3
Tues 9/23	Organizational Structure	Alexander Chapter 12
Thurs 9/25	Maintaining the Group	Alexander Chapter 11 L & B Chapter 2, pages 49-69
Tues 9/30	Lobbying Strategies	*Levine Chapter 2
Thurs 10/2	Guest Speaker(s)	---
Tues 10/7	Midterm Workshop <i>Class Optional</i>	---
Thurs 10/9	Midterm Paper Due Upload to SafeAssign by 5:00pm <i>No Class</i>	---
Tues 10/14	Lobbying and Corruption	---
Thurs 10/16	Collective Action Problems	Alexander Chapter 9 L & B Chapter 2, pages 29-48
Tues 10/21	Mobilization in the Digital Age	*Gladwell (2010) *Christensen (2011)

Date	Topic	Required Readings
Thurs 10/23	Influencing Congress	L & B Chapter 5
Tues 10/28	Influencing the Executive	L & B Chapter 6
Thurs 10/30	Influencing the Courts	L & B Chapter 7
Tues 11/4	Election Day- Go Vote! <i>No Class</i>	---
Thurs 11/6	A Comparative Approach	*Thomas (1993)
Tues 11/11	Influencing Public Opinion	L & B Chapter 4, pages 108-125
Thurs 11/13	Money and Influencing Public Opinion	L & B Chapter 4, pages 125-147
Tues 11/18	Interest Group Money in Elections	*Currinder, Green, and Conway (2006)
Thurs 11/20	<i>A Post-Citizens United World</i>	*Spencer and Wood (2014)
Tues 11/25	<i>Make Up Day- Potentially No Class</i>	---
Thurs 11/27	<i>Thanksgiving- No Class</i>	---
Tues 12/2	Future Directions	L & B Chapter 8
Thurs 12/4	Final Paper Workshop <i>Class Optional</i>	---
Final Paper Due Upload to SafeAssign by 5:00pm Friday December 12, 2014		

*On Blackboard

To view academic deadlines, including add/drop dates, please visit
<http://www.uic.edu/ucatalog/CA.shtml>