Syllabus for Interest Groups

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Government 217: Interest Groups

Interest groups are one of the fundamental means of political participation in the United States. They are also a major way that political leaders mobilize citizens for action. Yet Americans often express their dissatisfaction with “special interests.” They see interest groups as being unrepresentative, corrupt and divisive. Political scientists often fret that interest groups tend to speak more for the well-heeled and well-connected than for the masses of ordinary citizens. They also worry that interest groups tend to divide the public into narrow, self-interested categories; political parties, by contrast, assemble broad-based coalitions that encompass a wide variety of supporters.

Throughout this class, we will be wrestling with issues of equality, liberty, participation and power. Who is better represented? Who is not represented at all? Given the First Amendment’s guarantees of freedom of speech and the right to petition, how much can be done to curb the influence of “special interests?” How much should be done? Why do some people participate more than others? What accounts for the power wielded by corporations, labor unions and trade associations? How much power do they really have?

Your most important responsibility in this course will be the careful and reflective reading of the assignments listed in the outline that follows. Throughout the term we will also want to pay close attention to the political process as it unfolds in front of us. You should, therefore, stay abreast of such matters by reading a good national newspaper or magazine.

DISCUSSION:
This class will require your intensive participation. While everyone has his or her own style of participation, I expect all of you to join fully in discussion.

REQUIREMENTS:
Midterm: 30%
Final: 30%
Attendance and Class Participation: 10%
Team Project: 30%
  ■ Bibliography 5%
  ■ Rough Draft 10%
  ■ Final Version 15%

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is mandatory. Each unexcused absence beyond the third will lower your final grade by one-third of a letter. Please notify me in advance of any unavoidable absences.
LATE PAPERS: After the first 24 hours after a deadline, late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter per day. No late papers will be accepted after the class following a deadline.

TEAM PROJECTS: The class will be divided into seven groups of approximately equal size. Each team will compose a 30-to-40-page report on its issue area. The report should discuss the major issues facing the groups in your area of concern (including significant bills that have been considered by Congress in recent years). The report should also include 5-to-7-page examinations of each of the groups listed here: its membership, its major officers, its financial and political resources, its lobbying and other political activities, the major issues that have concerned it. Each member of your team should pick a group to profile. While most of these groups are trade associations, professional associations, labor unions and other membership organizations, a few are corporations.

While your research may include a variety of sources, I do advise that you investigate how much your groups spend on lobbying, whether they sponsor PACs (and if so, how much their PACs spend), and how much individuals connected with those groups (e.g., employees of a corporation) contribute to campaigns. A good source for this information is the website of the Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org. I also strongly encourage you to contact your subjects to obtain whatever material that they have to offer. If possible, try to set up phone interviews with personnel at these organizations. **If you intend to conduct interviews, it is imperative that you make your contacts as early as possible.** If you are researching a corporation, contact its Washington office, rather than its world headquarters.

Schedule:

You will select your team during the first week of class.

A one-page outline will be due **February 9**
An annotated bibliography will be due **March 2**
A rough draft will be due **April 6**
A final draft will be due **May 2**

Team A: Health Care
- American Medical Association
- American Hospital Association
- Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Research Association (PhRMA)
- American Society of Anesthesiologists
- American Association of Health Plans
Team B: Environment / Energy
- Sierra Club
- League of Conservation Voters
- Shell Oil
- Dow Chemical
- Edison Electric Institute

Team C: Labor
- AFL-CIO
- National Education Association
- Carpenters & Joiners Union
- Communications Workers of America
- SEIU

Team D: Business
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- National Auto Dealers Association
- FedEx
- National Association of Manufacturers
- General Electric

Team E: Telecommunications / Electronics / Entertainment
- Microsoft
- AT&T
- Walt Disney
- National Cable Television Association
- National Association of Broadcasters

Team F: Transportation
- Boeing
- General Motors
- American International Auto Dealers Association
- Association of American Railroads
- American Public Transit Association

Team G: FIRE (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate)
- American Bankers Association
- American Council of Life Insurance
- Fannie Mae
- National Association of Realtors
- Securities Industry Association
REQUIRED READINGS:


ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: The dates listed below are for your convenience only. The instructor reserves the right to change the class schedule as needed.

1. Organized Interests in the United States (January 24 – February 7)
   Berry, ch. 1
   Cigler & Loomis, ch. 1.
   Wilson, ch. 1

There will be a Library Orientation on January 31

CHOOSE TEAM PROJECT: January 26

2. The Formation and Maintenance of Interest Groups (February 9-16)
   Berry, chs. 2 & 4
   Cigler & Loomis, chs. 2-4.
   Wilson, chs. 2-5, 10-12

SUBMIT OUTLINE: February 9

MIDTERM: February 23

3. Lobbying in Washington (February 21 – March 9)
   Berry, chs. 5, 6, 8 and 9
   Wolpe and Levine (entire)
   Cigler & Loomis, chs. 10-11, 14, 17.
   Wilson, chs. 13, 15-16.

SUBMIT BIBLIOGRAPHY: March 2

4. Lobbying in the States (March 28 – 30)
   Rosenthal (entire)
5. Interest Groups and Campaigns (April 4 –27)
   Berry, chs. 3 & 7
   Cigler & Loomis, chs. 6-8.
   Rozell and Wilcox (entire).
   Robert E. Boatright, Michael J. Malbin, Mark J. Rozell, Richard M. Skinner
   and Clyde Wilcox. 2003. “BCRA’s Impact on Interest Groups and Advocacy
   Organizations.”
   Richard M. Skinner, “Do 527s Add Up to a Party? Thinking About the
   ‘Shadows’ of American Politics.
   Robert G. Boatright, Michael J. Malbin, Mark Rozell and Clyde Wilcox.
   “Interest Groups and Advocacy Organizations After BCRA.”
   David B. Magleby, J. Quin Monson and Kelly D. Patterson. “Rally ‘Round
   the Flag: When Interest Groups Invite Themselves to the Party.”
   Joe Hadfield, “Shifting Gears; Where Will America Votes Go After the

6. Interest Groups and Government (May 2-9)
   Berry, ch. 10.
   Cigler & Loomis, ch. 16 & 18
   Henry E. Brady, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Laurel Elms.
   Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Understanding Public Opinion.
   Kay Lehman Schlozman, Traci Burch, and Samuel Lampert, “Still an Upper-
   Class Accent? Organized Interest Politics and Pluralist Orthodoxy.”

FINAL DRAFT DUE: April 6

FINAL EXAM: May 15, 2:00 pm