COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the role and influence of interest groups in American politics. Topics include the reasons that interest groups form and the ways they maintain themselves; the reasons that people join interest groups; the importance of leaders and leadership strategies in attracting members and in building and maintaining the stature of the group; interest group activities in political campaigns and elections; inside-the-system efforts to influence government policy through lobbyists and lobbying activities; outside-the-system efforts to influence government policy through protests and civil disobedience; and bias in interest-group representation and its effects on government policy. The course also draws on case studies of interest groups to apply and reinforce the core concepts covered in class lectures and the required readings. Throughout the semester, I encourage you to think critically about several important questions: Are interest groups the healthy byproduct of a free society that allows citizens to organize, assemble, and petition the government, or are they a pernicious outgrowth of citizens pursuing their own selfishly motivated interests at the expense of the common good? What role, if any, should the government play in regulating interest group campaign and lobbying activities? Do societal inequalities affect which interests are able to organize and voice their concerns effectively in the political arena or does group competition balance conflicting interests? Are interest groups, as a whole, more beneficial or harmful to American democracy?

COURSE STRUCTURE

Classes begin with a lecture on the topic listed in the course outline. Everyone should come to class prepared to ask questions and to contribute to class discussions. Keeping up with the assigned weekly readings and attending class regularly throughout the semester will allow for more informed classroom discussions and for more interesting debates, as well as improve your ability to contribute to and learn from the class interactions. To help generate additional thought and discussion on the subjects covered in the course, I will occasionally show video material in class. This will include televised news footage of various historical events, documentaries, and political films. Please feel free to ask questions during class or to raise any subjects for discussion from the lectures, readings, or videos. A classroom with open discussion creates a learning environment that should challenge and engage you to think critically about the topics presented and the questions raised in this course.

REQUIRED READINGS

REQUIRED READINGS (cont.)


EVALUATION

Your final grade in the course is based on your class attendance, class participation, and performance on three exams. There is also an optional writing assignment (see the final page of the syllabus for details). Your grade on the optional writing assignment will replace your lowest exam grade. The weights assigned to your class participation and exam grades are as follows:

1. Exam 1 on February 14 is worth 25% of your overall grade.
2. Exam 2 on March 26 is worth 30% of your overall grade.
3. A final exam on May 7 is worth 35% of your overall grade.
4. Class attendance and participation is worth the remaining 10% of your overall grade.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Class attendance is mandatory. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each lecture. It is your responsibility to make sure that you sign the attendance sheet if you are present in class. If you arrive excessively late to class or if you leave class early, you will receive only partial credit for attendance. Your class attendance grade will be based on the percentage of classes that you attend (e.g., a student who attends every class will earn a 100; a student who attends half of the classes will earn a 50, etc.). Students who are active participants during class discussions will receive up to two bonus points added to their overall course grade.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Due to the national outbreak of influenza, I will excuse absences, including on exam dates, for anyone suffering from flu-like symptoms. Following the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control, I will not require a doctor’s note for anyone who believes he or she may be sick with influenza. Please stay home to help prevent exposing others. When you are healthy, simply notify me within one week after returning to class that you suffered from the flu or had flu-like symptoms that caused you to miss class. For reasons other than the flu, I will excuse absences for: (1) participation in an authorized activity as an official representative of the university (i.e., athletic events, delegate to regional or national meetings or conferences, or participation in university-sponsored performances); (2) participation in other activities deemed by the Dean of Students to warrant an excused absence; (3) an extreme personal emergency; (4) the death of an immediate family member (such as parent, sibling, spouse, or child); and (5) participation in religious holidays. To have your absence excused for any of these reasons, you must present some form of verification no later than one week after the absence if you wish to have it excused.
EXAM RULES

Failure to be present for any of the scheduled exams will result in an automatic “0.” On all exam dates, please come prepared with an exam booklet and a pen. If you cannot attend the exam, you must contact me at least 30 minutes before I have administered the test. I will grant a make-up exam only for circumstances that I deem extraordinary or for circumstances that meet university guidelines. If you miss the exam because of an illness, you are still required to contact me before the exam. You must also present me with proper verification.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education shared by all at East Carolina University. Consistent with this principle, I expect all students to complete their academic work honestly. I will not tolerate any student’s involvement in cheating, plagiarism, falsifying work, submitting the same assignment for more than one course, or other acts that would be in violation of the university’s academic integrity standards. If I become aware of or suspect a potential academic integrity violation, I will meet with the student under suspicion following the procedures outlined in the university’s academic integrity policy. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has occurred, I reserve the right to assign a grade penalty up to an “F” for the assignment or course. If it also comes to my attention that the student involved in such an incident had a prior academic integrity violation, or if there are other aggravating circumstances, I will refer the case directly to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Should the Academic Integrity Board determine that the accused student committed an academic integrity violation, the penalties, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, may include a grade penalty and/or up to and including suspension from the university. The Student Handbook is available online at: http://www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/policyhub/academic_integrity.cfm.

CLASSROOM RULES

The classroom is a learning environment. I expect all students to observe some basic rules of courtesy, which include the following: (1) arrive to class on time and do not leave before class is dismissed; (2) do not pack up your things early; it is disruptive to others around you; (3) turn off cell phones; (4) no laptop use during class unless it is for the purpose of taking notes from the class lecture; (5) no eating during class; (6) do not read the newspaper or listen to music through headphones during class; (7) do not sleep during class; (8) do not carry on private conversations with others in the classroom while someone else is speaking; and (9) please be courteous to your classmates and respectful of your fellow students’ views, comments, and questions. Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints, and this can only happen if we respect each other and our differences. Failure to follow these rules will negatively affect your class attendance and participation grade. Repeated offenses could result in your expulsion from the class.

DISABILITY SERVICES

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a covered disability must go to the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 to verify the disability before any accommodations can occur. The telephone number is 252-737-1016.
INFORMATION ABOUT UNIVERSITY CLOSINGS

If you have questions about a possible school closing due to severe weather or other reasons, please call the University Emergency Telephone Number at 252-328-0062 or visit the ECU emergency alert website (http://www.ecu.edu/alert).

APPOINTMENTS

My office is located in the Brewster Building, Room A-119. My office hours are from 2 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday, and from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. every Wednesday. If you cannot meet with me during office hours, please see me after class or contact me by telephone or e-mail to schedule an appointment. If you need to reach me after 4 p.m., please use e-mail.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (Jan. 15 and Jan. 17). Overview of the Course & Madison’s Dilemma
January 15, 2013. Overview of the course and the importance of interest groups
January 17, 2013. Pluralism and the debate surrounding it
- Reading for Week 1: The Interest Group Society, Chapter 1; and James Madison, “Federalist No. 10,” at http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html.

Week 2 (Jan. 22 and Jan. 24). Why Interest Groups Form
January 22, 2013. The rise of interest groups and the reasons that groups form
January 24, 2013. The Prisoner’s Dilemma
- Reading for Week 2: The Interest Group Society, Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 34-38).

Week 3 (Jan. 29 and Jan. 31). Leadership Strategies
January 29, 2013. Entrepreneurs and the importance of leadership
- Reading for Week 3: The Interest Group Society, Chapter 3 (pp. 38-61).

Week 4 (Feb. 5 and Feb. 7). Interest Groups in the Electoral Arena
February 5, 2013. The rise of PACs in the 1970s and 1980s and issue advocacy in the 1990s
February 7, 2013. This rise of 527s, 501(c) groups, and Super PACs
- Reading for Week 4: The Interest Group Society, and Chapter 5; Interest Groups in American Campaigns, Chapters 3-4; optional: Interest Groups Unleashed, Chapter 8.

Week 5 (Feb. 12 and Feb. 14). Interest Groups and Political Parties
February 12, 2013. Interest groups and parties; review for exam
February 14, 2013. EXAM 1
- Reading for Week 5: The Interest Group Society, Chapter 4; and Interest Groups in American Campaigns, Chapter 2.
Week 6 (Feb. 19 and Feb. 21). Lobbyists
February 19, 2013. Who are lobbyists?
February 21, 2013. What makes an effective lobbyist?
• Reading for Week 6: *The Interest Group Society*, Chapter 6; and *The Art of Lobbying*, Chapters 2 and 5.

Week 7 (Feb. 26 and Feb. 28). Lobbying
February 26, 2013. Lobbying the different branches of government
February 28, 2013. Grassroots lobbying
• Reading for Week 7: *The Interest Group Society*, Chapters 7-8; and *The Art of Lobbying*, Chapter 6.

Week 8 (Mar. 5 and Mar. 7). Designing a Lobbying Campaign
March 5, 2013. Film: *Thank You for Smoking*
March 7, 2013. Film: *Thank You for Smoking* and class discussion on lobbying
• Reading for Week 8: *The Art of Lobbying*, Chapter 7.

Week 9 (Mar. 12 and Mar. 14). Spring Break

Week 10 (Mar. 19 and Mar. 21). Bias and Representation
March 19, 2013. Corporate wealth and political advocacy; begin video: *The Corporation*
March 21, 2013. Video: *The Corporation*; review for exam
• Reading for Week 10: *The Interest Group Society*, Chapter 10; and *Interest Groups Unleashed*, Chapter 5.

Week 11 (Mar. 26 and Mar. 28). Case Studies: Business Versus Labor
March 26, 2013. EXAM 2
March 28, 2013. Business and Labor
• Reading for Week 11: *Interest Groups Unleashed*, Chapters 2 and 6; and Blackboard: “Business and Organized Labor.”

Week 12 (Apr. 2 and Apr. 4). Case Studies: Organized Groups in the Culture War
April 2, 2013. The Religious Right and the Tea Party
April 4, 2013. Feminists and Women’s Organizations
• Reading for Week 12: *Interest Groups Unleashed*, Chapter 9; and Blackboard: “Religious Interest Groups” and “Women’s and Feminist Movements and Organizations”
Week 13 (Apr. 9 and Apr. 11). Case Studies: Guns and Defense
April 9, 2013. The National Rifle Association
April 11, 2013. The Defense Industry

Week 14 (Apr. 16 and Apr. 18). Case Studies: Social Movement Organizations
April 16, 2013. The Civil Rights Movement
April 18, 2013. The Environmental Movement
• Reading for Week 14: *Interest Groups Unleashed*, Chapter 7; and Blackboard: “Civil Rights” and “Energy and the Environment”

Week 15 (Apr. 23 and Apr. 25). Assessing Interest Groups/Exam Review
April 23, 2013. Assessing interest groups
April 25, 2013. Course summary and review for the final exam (OPTIONAL PAPER DUE)

FINAL EXAM
May 7, 2013. The final exam is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Brewster D-106.
Numerous scholars have defended the role of interest groups and their political activities in American politics. Others have been more critical. For this assignment, I would like you to select an interest group of your choice and discuss how this interest group attempts to use its resources to influence the political process. Your paper should address the following questions: What is the background and history of the group you selected? What are its goals? How does the interest group that you selected try to influence U.S. elections? How does it attempt to influence the legislative process? Has the interest group that you selected been mostly successful overall or has your group’s political record been more mixed? Does the experience of the interest group that you selected lend more support to the arguments advanced by pluralist theory or does it lend more support to the arguments advanced by power elite theory? Or, does neither theory seem to apply? What does the experience of the group you selected teach us about how American democracy operates? This paper is due on the last day of class, April 25.

* * *

Tips for Preparing the Paper:

- Your arguments as well as any factual claims made in the paper need to be supported by outside academic sources. The best outside sources are academic books and journal articles (e.g., *American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics*, etc.). To earn a grade higher than a D, your paper should include a minimum of five different academic sources.

- Please note that any papers without citations are guilty of plagiarism. These papers will receive an automatic “F” and may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

- ALL PAPERS MUST FOLLOW THE APSA STYLE MANUAL FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE. The APSA Style Manual for Political Science can be downloaded at: [http://citesource.trincoll.edu/apsa/apsa.html](http://citesource.trincoll.edu/apsa/apsa.html).

- All papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins in Times New Roman font (please use a 12-point font size). Headings, sub-headings, and page numbers also should be included.

- A well-written paper requires a thesis or an argument. You should state your thesis in the beginning or introduction of the paper. Readers should have a good idea of what the entire paper will show by the end of the second page or earlier.

- The introduction should tell the reader what exactly you are going to say in the paper. The introduction also should arouse the interest of the reader.

- The body of the paper should provide evidence that convinces the reader of your central argument. Citations from books, articles, and other sources are necessary to make your argument as convincing as possible.

- The conclusion should summarize your major arguments and consider any implications related to your thesis. It should also tie together your central points in a coherent manner.

- For additional information about how to write a proper research paper, please review the course handout.