

INTEREST GROUPS IN THE POLICY PROCESS SPRING, 2007

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POSC 306/406	216-514-8337 (home)	M/W: 1:00 -2:30
Wednesdays, 3:15 – 5:50	jxw87@po.cwru.edu	and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course covers the field of interest groups with particular reference to how groups attempt to influence, and are influenced by, the public policy process. It differs from traditional policy process courses in putting more emphasis on the process as an opportunity and constraint upon particular interests. It differs from traditional interest group courses in putting less emphasis on evaluation of interest groups as a “good” or “bad” part of politics, and more on the variety of ways that groups can try to influence events. What can groups do to influence policy choices? Different groups with different kinds of resources may follow different strategies and tactics. These different group resources then may be a basis for the students’ own evaluations.

This course is mostly taught with, but not formally co-listed with, MAND 406, “Nonprofit Social Policy and Advocacy,” a course for students in the Mandel Center for Nonprofit Organizations’ Masters degree program. Therefore its material will include some special emphasis, but hardly sole emphasis, on the concerns and resources of nonprofit organizations, to the extent those can be distinguished from the concerns of other organizations. Worries about tax deductibility, in particular, cause some managers of nonprofit organizations to worry that they cannot advocate as explicitly as can corporations, unions, and other well-known interests. Yet in the United States there are so many forms of nonprofit organizations, with so many different interests, that much of the standard literature applies equally well to them.

The course schedule is also affected by the participation of the Mandel Center students. Operating under Weatherhead School of Management rules, their normal class period is two hours. Therefore this class will meet in two segments. The first segment, from 3:15 until 3:45 p.m., will be a separate discussion section for Arts and Sciences students, both graduate and undergraduate. Then, **at 3:50 p.m., we will be joined by the Mandel Center students.** POSC 306/406 students are encouraged to participate fully throughout the full class session. This arrangement may sound strange, but we’ve done it twice before, and it can be managed.

COURSE MATERIAL:

All students will need to read most or all of four required texts. They include a short, web-available text on lobbying for the nonprofit sector; an overview text about lobbying state governments; a collection of articles about interest groups and the national

government; and a case study of policymaking in one area, improving treatments for breast cancer. The three printed texts should be available for purchase from the university bookstore, and if you can find them more cheaply in other ways, that's fine too:

Alan Rosenthal, *The Third House: Lobbyists and Lobbying in the States* 2nd edition. 2001 CQ Press

Paul S. Herrnson, Ronald G. Shaiko, and Clyde Wilcox eds., *The Interest Group Connection: Electioneering, Lobbying, and Policymaking in Washington* 2nd edition. 2004. CQ Press

Maureen H. Casamayou, *The Politics of Breast Cancer*. 2001 University of Pittsburgh Press

The Nonprofit Lobbying Guide, 2nd ed., by Bob Smucker (Independent Sector, 1999) can be found by going to the following website:

<http://www.clpi.org/BOOK/nonprofitlobbyingguide.pdf>

A few further required readings will be available on hardcopy reserve at the university library. **They will be reserved under the MAND 406 course number.** I will also submit them for the electronic reserves. In addition, I have drafted some summaries of perspectives on both interest groups and policymaking, and those summaries will be posted on the course website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In accord with university regulations, requirements for undergraduate (POSC 306) and graduate (POSC 406) students will be somewhat different.

1) **Quizzes.** We will have four half-hour in-class quizzes on readings. Each quiz will be given during the period from 3:15 to 3:45 p.m. Each quiz will include the readings scheduled for that day, plus any other readings since the previous quiz. The quiz on January 31, for example, will cover readings assigned for January 17, 24, and 31.

2) **Outside Reading Reports:** Each undergraduate student will read one book from a list of books that are not assigned to the full class, but address the role of groups in the policy process. Each graduate student will read two of these books.

Each undergraduate will write a report that explains the basic issues raised and conclusions of the book s/he read, and comment on how this material fits (e.g. confirms or seems to rebut) arguments made in the shared class material. These reports should be at least 2,000 words long. Each graduate student will write a report that discusses the two books s/he read. That report should be no less than 3,000 words long.

No more than seven students in the entire class (MAND plus POSC students) will be allowed to read the same book. All students should make their selections by the third class session (**January 31**). Students' selections will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Students who select a book that has already been chosen by the maximum number of classmates will be required to choose some other reading, unless they can convince me that special circumstances apply. The reports will be due in class on **April 11**. Class sessions on April 11, 18, and 25 will include discussions of two of the books. The students who read each book will lead the discussions.

Students will choose from the following list of books:

Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 0521673941 **Discussion on April 11**

Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988. ISBN 0870495704 **Discussion on April 11**

Jeffrey M. Berry, *The New Liberalism: The Rising Power of Citizen Groups*. Washington, DC: Brookings, 2000. ISBN 0815709072 **Discussion on April 18**

Douglas R. Imig, *Poverty and Power: The Political Representation of Poor Americans*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996. ISBN 0803225008 **Discussion on April 18**

Michael D. Pertschuk, *Smoke in Their Eyes: Lessons in Movement Leadership from the Tobacco Wars*. 2001. University of Tennessee Press. **Discussion on April 25**

Robert J. Spitzer, *The Politics of Gun Control* 3rd ed. 2004. CQ Press **Discussion on April 25**

3) Strategy and Tactics Memoranda: In lieu of a final examination, each student will also prepare a memorandum to the leader of an organization. In this memorandum, the student should summarize the organization's public policy environment and concerns, the resources the organization has with which to affect policies, and, on that basis, suggest strategies and tactics for the organization. **POSC students are required to choose the organization that they will study by February 7.** Therefore they should consult with the instructor about their choice beforehand. They should prepare a **preliminary memorandum by February 28**. This first memo should briefly describe the organization's public policy interests, resources, and activities, and some sources that you expect to consult. It should be brief and to the point: about 4-5 pages, or 1,200 words. **The final memorandum is due to the instructor by either e-mail or hardcopy no later than 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 2.** *It should be no less than 3,000 words long.*

All assignments will be penalized a full grade for each day they are late. Students who have a reason for delay that could be anticipated in advance must inform

me in advance, if they wish to seek an exception. Students who face unanticipated emergencies must document the emergency and inform me as soon as possible, if they wish to seek an exception. I will judge each case on its merits.

GRADING

Grades will be calculated as follows.

For POSC 306 students:

- * Quizzes, 30%
- * First short memorandum: 10%
- * Final memorandum: 25%
- * Outside reading report: 25%

For POSC 406 students:

- * Quizzes, 25%
- * First short memorandum: 5%
- * Final memorandum: 25%
- * Outside reading report: 35%

You will note these figures only add to 90%. The remaining 10% is for class participation. It will be used to determine the overall grade in those cases where the performance is close to the margin (e.g., between A and B). Students who have made noticeable contributions to class discussion could have their grade raised over the result from the rest of their work. Students who attend regularly but are not active in discussion will not be penalized, but also will not be rewarded. If a student misses three or more class sessions, and their grade could go either way, the class participation grade will tip the grade downwards.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You must document all sources you use in writing your papers according to an accepted style guide. A good standard approach is in the Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), but any standard format will be fine for this class. Plagiarism of any form will be punished by referral to the appropriate university judicial proceedings, as well as by a failing grade in the assignment on which the plagiarism occurs. Plagiarism includes, according to the MLA Handbook (New York: MLA, 1988), two related activities: repeating “as your own someone else’s sentences, more or less verbatim,” and “paraphrasing another person’s argument as your own, and presenting another’s line of thinking as though it were your own.” Proper citation of sources will allow you to incorporate others’ analyses without committing plagiarism.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND CLASS ACTIVITIES:

January 17: Introduction to class and each other. Students will be asked to speak about organizations for which they've worked or with which they've been involved, and the relevance of public policy to those organizations as they see it. I will lecture about interest groups in general.

Reading: A longer version of my lecture will be made available on the course website, and should be read by all students by the following class session. It is titled "Mand406Interests"

January 24: *Perspectives on Lobbying and Interest Groups.* On the one hand, some people see groups as evil; on the other, some believe group organization to influence government is a fundamental aspect of representative government. On the one hand, some perspectives emphasize how groups try to influence government, on the other hand, some analysts emphasize what government does to groups.

Reading: Smucker Chapters 1 & 2 and Part Three.
Herrnson et al. Chapter 1.
Rosenthal, Preface and Chapters 1-4.

January 31: *The Structures of Policy-Making.* We will consider the variety of arenas in which government decisions are made, and so the various situations in which advocates might try to influence decisions. Each of these (for example, legislatures, bureaucracies, and courts) may call for different tactics and benefit groups with different resources.

First Quiz

Reading: Second essay by instructor, on course website as "Mand406PolicyModels";
Selections on Reserve from Paul A. Sabatier ed., *Theories of the Policy Process*: Chapter 2, "The Stages Approach to the Policy Process"; Chapter 6, "The Advocacy Coalition Framework."

Assignment: Students Should Have Selected Their Supplementary Readings By This Date

February 7: *Lobbying Methods.* Or, advocacy from the lobbyist's perspective. This includes resources, tactics, and norms.

Reading: Smucker Chapters 3-8, pp. 16-48; Rosenthal Chapters 5-9
Students should have the instructor's approval for their choice of an organization to study for the policy memorandum by today.

February 14: *Information in the policy process.* One whole type of nonprofit organization, sometimes known as a "think tank," seeks to provide information that will influence the policy process. Examples include the Brookings Institution in Washington and the Federation for Community Planning in Cleveland. All organizations seek to influence policy choices by presenting information that supports their preferences. But how well does that work, and why?

Reading: R. Kent Weaver, Chapter 6, "The Role of Policy Research," and Chapter 8, "Interest Groups and Welfare Reform," from Weaver, *Ending*

Welfare as We Know It (Brookings, 2000). These readings can be found on the course website

February 21: Influencing Legislation. Interest groups do make their case, but there are lots of other ways that they try to cause legislators to support them.

Second Quiz

Readings: Herrnson et al., Chapters 7-8, 10-12

February 28: A first case study. We will look at the subjects of processes of influence and group organization by looking at one case in depth. Please remember that this case may be a bit “biased” in the sense that most of the class will be disposed to see this particular set of interests as on the side of the angels.

Reading: Casamayou, *The Politics of Breast Cancer*

Preliminary Memorandum Due Today

March 7: Influencing Elections (or, Don't You Wish...). Most nonprofit organizations have little ability to influence elections. But that ability – or politicians' perception of that ability – remains one of the fundamental forms of power in American politics. Optimists of a sort may think the size of a group's membership matters most; pessimists of a sort may think financial resources matter far more. What, in fact, can groups do to influence elections?

Third Quiz

Readings: Herrnson et al., Chapters 2-6.

March 14: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

March 21: Budgets. One of the most important parts of the policy process, and one of the prime objects of advocacy, is a government's budget. This week's reading focuses on budgeting, with a special guest speaker who will discuss the state of Ohio budget that Governor Strickland will have proposed shortly beforehand.

Readings: Herrnson et al. Chapter 9; Roy T. Meyers, “Strategies for Spending Advocates,” from Roy T. Meyers ed., *Handbook of Government Budgeting* (Jossey-Bass, 1999); Richard G. Sheridan, “Chapter 8: The Politics of Budgeting,” from Sheridan, *Follow the Money: Ohio State Budgeting* (Cleveland: Federation for Community Planning, 2000)

Special Guest: David Ellis Ph.D., Center for Community Solutions

March 28: Influencing the Executive. In many cases, what matters is not what the law says but what the agencies of government do. So groups will lobby the executive branch both to get it as an ally in legislative battles, and to attempt to shape the executive's use of its own discretion.

Readings: Herrnson et al., Chapters 13-16

April 4: Influencing the Courts. Someone (I think it was Alexis de Tocqueville) once wrote that in America, all political questions ultimately become judicial ones.

Certainly lots of policies end up in the courts, and a whole branch of advocacy, called public interest litigation, had evolved as a result.

Fourth Quiz

Readings: Herrnson et al. Chapters 17-19.

April 11: Discussion of Rich and Hertzke books

Assignment: All reading reports due at the beginning of class.

April 18: Discussion of Berry and Imig books

April 25: Discussion of Pertschuk and Spitzer books and conclusion of class

Reading: Rosenthal, Chapter 10; Herrnson et al., Chapter 20.

May 2: Memorandum Project due to Professor White by 3:00 p.m. today.