COURSE SYLLABUS: 790-330-90

Prof. Bert Levine: Email;<RUTGERS2005@YAHOO.COM>; Phone Numbers; 908-510-2704; Virtual Office Hours: Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00p EST.

I. **OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES**:

Interest groups (IGs), sometimes known as “ Lobby Groups, Pressure Groups, or Organized Interests, are at the core of much political activity in the United States and other countries as well. In James Madison’s writings—we will read “Federalist #10”—these sorts of interests and organizations were known as “factions.” Whatever we call them, they are today a well-established part of our national policymaking landscape. In the context of this course we will consider them to be *groups of people and or organizations with common interests that seek to influence public policy in a manner they deem beneficial to those mutual interests*.

They come in all different forms and sizes. Some, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, are huge, and are composed of a broad-based membership—everything from “Mom-and-Pop” operations to Apple and Exxon; their common interest is often the nation’s business environment. Others, the Sierra Club for instance, have few-to-no business interests; they are focused on what they deem to be the “public good.” Fittingly, we know them as Public Interest Groups. Still other groups are what have come to be called “single issue groups;” they are concerned with but one issue or narrowly drawn category of issues—the National Rifle Association NRA), the Christian Coalition, and the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) are examples.

Our main focus for this course will be on “Trade Associations (TAs).” These are organizations composed mostly of businesses that are involved in a single—or narrow range—of industries. Examples are: PHARMA (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America), NADA (National Automobile Dealers Association), and the NAR (National Association of Realtors.) There are many more such organizations.

We will concentrate on these because they are generally considered to be the most influential segment of the association “universe.” Perhaps for that reason many critics allege that they have much too much influence over Congressional and Executive Branch policy decisions. They (the critics) further allege that at least part of the reason these associations and the businesses they represent gain their influence is due to the large numbers of hefty campaign contributions to political campaigns that they make. Many TAs maintain substantial Political Action Committees (PACs). We will exam the contributions issue thoroughly in last major segment of the course!

With this understood, some people argue that campaign money is not the only—perhaps not even the major—source of TA influence. These groups hire some of the most well schooled lobbyists that are available. These professionals know how policy is made and the most effective ways to attempt to influence it. Frequently they know the policymakers on a first name basis; in fact, many of these lobbyists once worked for Congress and/or federal executive branch agencies. They have moved through what has become known as the “revolving door;” that is, they have left their government posts and now represent the companies that the government currently seeks to regulate. Some see this as to be a great and unethical advantage for these companies—even as being corrupting.

All of this we call *lobbying—*a much maligned, frequently misunderstood activity/profession; but nonetheless, the core function of many IGs. Studying and understanding how lobbyists function the extent to which they succeed will form the “spine” of our course.

But, before we get into these controversial (and, I believe, fun) issues, we will have to “eat our vegetables.” That is to say, we will spend some time looking at the history and theories that provide a necessary foundation for understanding interest group behavior. That portion of our work will cover the first two or three weeks of the course.

When we get to the final major segment of the course—beginning during week #9 (or thereabouts)—we will examine the use of campaign money. If lobbying is a controversial activity it is frequently because campaign donations are alleged to be so prevalent in the process. Critics is not limited to academics, journalists, and consumer rights activists, many of whom consider campaign money to be a form of bribery; several members and former members of Congress join in this criticism. Yet, most of the carefully designed academic studies have failed to find that this influence really does exist. (A question we will look at here is: Why have the studies not found a link between money and policy outcomes)

This segment of the course will conclude with a brief, but important series of readings and commentaries on campaign finance reform. Most “authorities” on this subject believe that more and better reporting of campaign contributions is the best way to do this; I disagree and will share some of my thoughts on this as the course draws to a conclusion. (In other words, I’m going to get my two-cents in here.)

My intent for this course will not be to convince you of any single position on these issues. My job, as I see it, is to expose you to the relevant facts and arguments, and to provide some commentary and data produced by academics and public figures—yes, I do hope this will spawn some rigorous debate; that is what will make this course fun and especially informative.

I look forward to doing all of this with you.

One further point; this one regarding course administration: It is not always possible to see in advance where student interest and/or external events will take a course. For this reason, I may from time-to-time make slight modifications in assignments or in timing. You will given plenty of advance notice if and when these should occur. /bjl.

II. General Weekly Order Of Business.

1. **Readings and Lectures:** Each week, unless otherwise directed, students should complete the assigned reading and listen to the recorded “lecture” by not later than Monday evening. The readings are included in the syllabus; lectures will be posted for the appropriate week by not later than 10:00a.m. Monday mornings. (Note: Any component of the Order of Business—i.e. the reading assignment or the timing of the lecture—may be altered from time to time upon adequate notice to students.)

Monday evenings I will be available for questions re the lecture for the week. We will use regular email and “Announcements” in SAKAI for this purpose. A student may email a question to me and I will respond ASAP. The window for doing this will be between 7:00 and 9:30 pm. I will then post an “announcement”“ giving the questions and answers. I will not identify the student who posed the question. (At some point during the term I may move this process to “Chat room” on SAKAI.

1. **Discussion: NOTE: EACH STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN SIX (6) DISUCUSSIONS FOR THE TERM. “PARTICIPATION” MEANS THAT A STUDENT MUST POST TWO COMMENTS DURING THE “DISCUSSION” PEIOD IN WHICH S/HE IS PARTICIPATING.**

HERE IS HOW DISCISSION WILL WORK;

a) Basic Requirement:

* First: The student must respond to my prompt on forum; and then after all responses to my prompt have been posted;
* Second: The student must critique (either positively or negatively) another student’s observation re my prompt.

b) Timing:

Step 1: I will post the lesson for the week on SAKAI. I will also post a question or make a comment (or two) re the readings and/or the lecture subject.

Step 2: By 12:00 midnight Tuesday students who wish to participate for that week will be expected to respond on “Forum” with comments re my prompt. (NOTE: At this point each response will be visible only to the student who submits it.)

Step 3: By 10:00am on Wednesday I will make all of the initial responses available for the to the entire class to see.

Step 4: By Midnight on Wednesday each student who has responded to my prompt must post on “Forum” a critique of one (and only one) other student’s initial response to my prompt.

1. **Quizzes:** All five quizzes will be given on-line. The quizzes will be “short-answer” format; i.e., questions must be answered in five lines or less. Students will be given 40-minutes to complete each exam. The exam may be taken within any 40-minute window between 3:00pm and 7:00 p.m. on the days that they will be given.
2. **Examinations:** There will be one midterm and a final exam for this course. These exams will be given **on campus in a regular classroom setting**. (Exact time and location TBA.) The midterm will be given during the 7th week of the course—the week of October 12th. The final exam will be given during the normal university finals week. (Exact times and locations TBA.)
3. **Office Hours:** Office Hours will be held Wednesday evenings from 7:00pm to 9:00pm EST. I will accept or make phone calls during this period. If a student prefers, we can simply use back-and-forth email. (I hope to set up “Chat Room” as well. More on that later.) (NOTE: I will not be available “iin person ”for these hour. They will be conducted remotely as per above.)

III. REQUIRED TEXTS: (Available at the RU Book Store.)

1. Berry, Jeffrey and Clyde Wilcox; The Interest group Society 5th ed.

2. Levine, Bertram: The Art of Lobbying.

3. Various Academic Articles to be provided via Internet links or scans.

4. Supreme Court Cases to be provided via Internet links or scans.

IV. GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS: Students must complete ALL of the assignments below including ALL 5 quizzes and all 6 required participation. Each quiz and/or participation missed will deduct 10 points from the student’s final course grade.

Five 40-Minute Quizzes: (Best four grades will “count.”) 5% each: Total, 20 % of final grade. (Quiz Dates: September 24; October 15; and 29; November 12; December 3.)

Discussion/Participation 25%

Midterm: 25%

Final: 30

Note re grading student participation:

* + 1. ALL students must participate in six (6) weekly discussion sessions. (Please see item B above.)
    2. Your course participation grade will be based primarily on two factors:
       1. Satisfying the 6 participation requirement,
       2. The quality of student comments, e.g., understanding and use of course material, insightfulness.

V. WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULES.

**Section 1: Interest Groups—the Basics (Weeks 1-4)**

WEEK 1: (SEPT. 1 – 6) Because the first week begins on a Tuesday, I will issue a modified schedule for that week some time before classes begin.

1. Read: Berry Chs. 1 and 2; Federalist 10, James Madison. (Note: If you do not already have a copy of “The Federalist Papers,” Federalist 10 is easily found on-line.)
2. “Lecture” Topic: The Fundamentals of Interest Group Formation and Operation:” or, Collective Action in the making.
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Monday - Wednesday via Forum as per above) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 2: (SEPT. 7 – 13)

1. Read: Berry Chs. 8 and 9
2. Lecture Topic:” Trade Associations, Coalitions, and Issue Networks Further Investigation of How and Why Interest Groups Form.
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Monday - Wednesday) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 3: (SEPT. 14– 20) QUIZ #1, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17; ALL MATERIAL TO DATE.

1. Reread: Berry Ch. 2; Read Scans from to be supplied
2. “Lecture” Topic: The Types of Interest Groups that now function.
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Tuesday and Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 4 (SEPT. 21 – 27)

1. Read: Berry Chs. 4 and 5; Cigler Ch. 9 (via scan)
2. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups and Parties, and Political Campaigns
3. Forum “Discussion:” ((Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content

**Section 2: Interest Groups—Influencing Public Policy (Lobbying)**

**(Weeks 5-10)**

WEEK 5: (SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 4) QUIZ#2, THURSDAY OCTOBER 1; ALL MATERIAL FOR WEEKS 3-5.

1. Read: Levine: “Red Flags” and “Lobbyists’ Working Environment” (to be supplied via scan.)
2. Lecture Topic: Why So Many People Do Not Trust Lobbyists, and a Brief Overview of How U.S. Congress Conducts its Business. (Note: Interest groups and the lobbyists who work for them do not function in a vacuum. Somebody or something must be the target of their lobbying efforts. At the federal level, this is often the U.S. Congress. Thus, we will provide a brief overview of the how the United States Congress functions…Call it “Congress 101 Light.”) This will be a very important discussion.
3. Forum “Discussion:” ((Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content.

WEEK 6: (OCTOBER 5 – 11)

1. Read: Berry Chs. 6 and 7
2. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups Lobbyists at Work
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content.

WEEK 7- (OCTOBER 12 – 18) MIDTERM EXAMINTION (IN CLASSROOM): ALL MATERIAL TO DATE. (ESSAY AND SHORT ANSWERS - 90 MINUTES) (Time and Location TBA.)

WEEK 8: (OCTOBER 19 – 25)

1. Read: Berry Chs. 8, and reread 9
2. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups Lobbyists at Work (Continued)
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content.

WEEK 9: (OCTOBER 26 – 31)

1. Read Berry Ch. 10
2. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups and Influence Resources.
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Monday - Wednesday via Forum ) re reading and lecture content

**Section 3: Interest Groups—Campaign Money: Effective? When? How?**

**(Weeks 10-13)**

WEEK 10 –(NOVEMBER 2 – 8) QUIZ #3, MATERIAL COVERED DURING WEEKS 8, 9 AND 10.

1. Read Outlines/Overviews of the Federal Election Reform Act (1971, 74, 76) and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. (To be supplied.) History of Campaign Finance Regulation from “Campaign Reform Source Book”, to be supplied via scan.)
2. Lecture Topic: The History and Approach of Campaign Finance Regulation
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 11: (NOVEMBER 9 – 15)

1. Read: Criticism of Money in Politics: Excerpts From Various Texts. From Too Damn Much Money; dollars and votes. (To be suppied via scan)
2. Lecture: What is Wrong, What is Right with Private Funding of Political Campaigns? (If this subject does not open up a “hornets’ nest,” I do not know what will.)
3. Forum “Discussion:” (Tuesday - Wednesday via Forum in SAKAI) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 12: (NOVEMBER 16 – 22) QUIZ #4, MATERIAL COVERED DURING WEEKS 10, 11, 12.

A. Read: Supreme Court Decisions: *Buckley v Valeo* (1976), and *Citizen’s United v. FEC* (2010)

B. Lecture: The Roles That These Cases Have Played In The Regulation Of Campaign Financing .

C. Forum “Discussion:” (Tuesday - Wednesday via Forum in SAKAI) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 13: (NOVEMBER 23 – DECEMBER 1) THANKSGIVING WEEK (Enjoy the break!)

1. Read: Diana Evans Article (lobbying the committee); John Wright Article (lobbying Committees) (To be supplied via link)
2. Lecture Topic: Lobbying and the Committees - Strategic Thinking
3. “Discussion:” NO DISCUSSION THIS WEEK

WEEK 14: (DECEMBER 1 – 6) QUIZ #5, MATERIAL COVERED DURING WEEKS 12, 13, 14.

1. Read: Grenzke, and Hall/Wayman (To be supplied via link)
2. Lecture Topic: Lobbying and Money: Strategic Thinking Continued

C. “Discussion:” (Tuesday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 15: (DECEMBER 7 -12)

Wrap Up Discussion – Course Overview and Review

FINAL EXAMINATION (ESSAYS AND SHORT ANSWERS, 3 HOURS) (TIME AND LOCATION TBA)

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