Two themes run throughout this class – and throughout the interest group literature. The first is the theme of collective action and how it is that groups form and individuals succeed in working together for collective goals. The second theme is that of power: the extent of interest group and social movement influence on political decisionmaking.

Collective action – and the problems and puzzles it poses – is at the center of virtually every political act, from the formation of the state to voting in an election. Collective action is present in the consolidation of oligarchic power as well as in the uprisings of grassroots peace movements. Collective action is integral to agenda formation and policymaking as well as to riots and genocide. In this class most of our focus will be the application of collective action theory to interest groups and social movements (and mostly in the American case), but I hope that the broader implications also become clear.

Power and influence are notoriously difficult to study and measure, and scholars of interest groups and social movements have struggled (only occasionally successfully) to do so. While popular news accounts and mass-market books decry the extraordinary power of “special interests,” efforts to document such influence systematically have come to mixed conclusions. The theme of interest group influence also has implications that reach far into other subfields. Understanding how interest groups affect policy helps us understand the policymaking process more generally.

My goal for this class is not only that you become familiar with the topics listed in the syllabus, but that you learn generally how to evaluate a body of literature and the evidence on which it rests, and become able to propose your own ideas about how knowledge in a particular area could be advanced. For more advanced graduate students, I hope the class provides a platform from which to conduct original research.

Readings

Required:


Provided by instructor:

Recommended but not required:

All other chapters and articles will be available on the Sakai website: https://sakai.rutgers.edu/

Requirements
Your grade will be based on your participation in class, a week spent as discussion leader, six reaction papers, and a research paper. Notice that you cannot get an A in this class if you do not participate in discussions. This is a seminar, and interaction among the participants is crucial.

Grades will be calculated based on the following formula:

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Percentage} & \text{Component} \\
\hline
10 \% & \text{Class participation} \\
10 & \text{Discussion leader} \\
30 & \text{Reaction papers} \\
50 & \text{Research paper} \\
100 \% & \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Discussion leader
This is a chance for you to try your hand at graduate teaching. Each student will pick one week from the semester to serve as a discussion leader. Discussion leaders should read one of the optional readings from that week and give a 10-minute presentation on the most important aspects of that reading to the rest of the class. After the presentation, the discussion leader also is responsible for posing discussion questions to the class about the required readings.

Reaction papers
Each week I will distribute discussion questions to help you prepare for the following week’s class. During the semester you must write three reaction papers (of approximately 3-5 pages each) based on one of the discussion questions. Reaction papers are due by midnight on Tuesday before class, uploaded to Sakai. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss all of the required readings each week, regardless of whether they wrote a reaction paper.

Reaction papers are not meant to be simple summaries of the week’s readings, but rather analytical critiques of the readings. These should help you prepare for comprehensive exams as well as
helping you think through some of the issues raised by the readings. Your papers should show that you have done all of the readings, but need not spend equal time on each of the readings.

**Research paper**

Each student will write a research paper on a topic related to some aspect of interest groups. There are three general alternatives: an analytical literature review, a research design, or an original research paper. All three papers will of course include a review of the literature, but that review would be most extensive in the first alternative and least extensive in the research paper.

Literature review papers should cover all of the major pieces of published work on the topic, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the research, summarize the state of knowledge in the area, and make suggestions for what future research might be most fruitful. Research design papers do the same thing, except spend a large chunk of the paper laying out the specifics of how that future research should be done.

For students who choose to write an original research paper, there are several existing data sets that might be useful, including my data from the U.S. Lobbying Disclosure Reports, the quantitative data (not interviews) from my collaborative lobbying project, and Jack Walker’s surveys of associations. Data on lobbying expenditures from either the Senate website or the Center for Responsive Politics, PAC contributions from the FEC or the CRP, and nonprofit expenditures from the IRS are also readily available. A student may also choose to undertake the pilot version of some original data collection project, using web pages, press releases, news coverage, transcripts of congressional hearings or other available primary sources. Students who are interested in writing original research papers should be sure to talk with me early in the semester so that data availability can be worked out.

Case studies of interest group involvement in a particular policy area or on a particular policy issue are another option, based in part on a literature review and in part on original research from a variety of sources, such as congressional testimony, organizational documents, lobbying disclosure forms, information from the IRS and FEC, and news reports. (The Kennedy School at Harvard has many such case studies, written by its graduate students, available for purchase; these would serve as a good model.)
Weekly topics and reading assignments

**Week 1. Sept. 7. Introduction to Interest Groups and the Class**

*We will not meet this week.*

Students with no undergraduate background in interest groups may find it helpful to read through one of the following undergraduate textbooks:

- Schlozman, Kay Lehman, and John T. Tierney. 1986. *Organized Interests and American Democracy.* Harper Collins. *(This is both a piece of original research AND a textbook. A classic. Although it is out of print, there are used copies available from Amazon for about $5)*

- Berry, Jeffrey M., and Clyde Wilcox. 2008. *The Interest Group Society.* Longman, 5th ed. *(Any of the earlier editions would be fine, too. This is a quick read and gives a good overview of what interest groups actually do.)*

- Lowery, David, and Holly Brasher. 2003. Organized Interests and US Government. McGraw-Hill. *(This is has the best summary of the scholarly literature.)*

**Week 2. Sept. 14. What is the role of interest groups/social movements in politics?**


**Recommended:**


- Madison, James. Federalist #10


**Week 3. Sept. 21. Olson and his critics.**

*Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. (Selected chapters on the Sakai site.)


**Recommended:**


**Week 4. Sept. 28. Whom do groups represent?**


**Recommended:**


Week 5. Oct. 5. Tactics, strategies, and targets: What do groups do?


**Recommended:**


Austen-Smith, David and John R. Wright. 1994. “Counteractive Lobbying.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 38:25-44. **Note:** You should review the exchange about counteractive lobbying between Austen-Smith and Wright, and Baumgartner and Leech in the *AJPS* 40:521-69.


La Pira, Timothy. 2009. Is It Who Says It, Or How They Say It? An Experimental Study Of Lobbying Influence And Agenda Setting In Congress. Unpublished ms.


**Recommended**


Class canceled. We will discuss this book in tandem with the book for next week on Oct. 27.


**Recommended:**


**Recommended:**

Bygnesa, Susanne. 2012. “‘We are in Complete Agreement’: The Diversity Issue, Disagreement and Change in the European Women's Lobby.” *Social Movement Studies.*


**REQUIRED TALK**

*Thursday, Oct. 27, 3:30 a.m.-5 p.m.* Professor Tim LaPira of James Madison University, a Rutgers PhD, will discuss his forthcoming book on revolving door lobbyists.

Week 9. Nov. 2. *Interest Groups vs. The Public?*


**Recommended:**


**Week 10. Nov. 9. PACs**


**Recommended:**


Week 11. Nov. 16. What causes the group system to grow?


Recommended:


**Week 12. Nov. 30. Business and Lobbying**


**Recommended:**


**Nov. 23 NO CLASS**

**University re-defined day**

**Week 13. Dec. 7. Collective Action and Social Movements**


*McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1*

**Recommended**


**Recommended:**


RESEARCH PAPER DUE FRIDAY, DEC. 16

(One-week extensions are available upon request, but you must ask.)

XX HISTORY WEEK – not currently on syllabus


**Recommended:**


