Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this course are three-fold. First, the students will achieve a fluency in the academic research on interest groups in the American government context—both on the demand aggregation of groups and the influence of these groups. Second, there will be an increase in student’s critical thinking and communication skills, as they lead class discussion and probe new ideas in their writing. Third and finally, the students will, via their end of the semester presentations, prepare a research presentation and practice the skill set necessary to present at academic conferences and within the academic job market.

Method of Instruction

The course will use a seminar format. The expectation is that all students will have read the assigned topics and completed any assignments ahead of class. The majority of class will be a discussion of the weekly course readings. These discussions will be lead by the students. Students ought to come to class with questions and topics for discussion. My role, as the Instructor, will be to facilitate discussion and spur new thinking about the assigned readings.

Course Components and Evaluation

There are three main course components.

(1) Reaction Papers. The first component of the course will be four reaction papers. Students may choose to hand-in one reaction paper in any week in which course readings are assigned. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that he/she completes all four papers by the end of the semester. Papers not turned in will receive a zero. Papers are due by 11:00 AM on the Sunday before class. Normal late penalties apply and will be enforced. Papers should be emailed to me. Each reaction paper should be three pages long. As always, write long and then cut out all unnecessary text. The text should be double-spaced and in a readable font with page numbers. Please include a bibliography, as necessary, which may be included in addition to the three-page document.

The reaction papers should critique one or more of that week’s assigned readings. Each reaction paper should develop a coherent main argument and then develop this argument with several delineated examples from other work, broader arguments, or suggested inconsistencies. The reaction papers are not to reiterate or summarize the assigned readings. A good reaction paper will draw on the already completed readings for the course in developing the argument. A great reaction paper will go beyond these readings into the broader academic literature and list citations, arguments, and ideas from other scholarly writings. I will provide a letter grade and short comments on each reaction paper within one week.
(2) **Academic Presentation and Book Review**

The final two class sessions will be taken up by academic presentations. These presentations will simulate a “job talk” on the political science job market. The presentations will be 25-30 minutes long and will be followed by 5-10 minutes of questions from the audience. The format for the presentation will be: introduction and puzzle, literature review, methodology, data, presentation of findings, and conclusions. The presenters will use PowerPoint to guide their discussions. Given that we are simulating the job market experience, the presentations should be practiced, polished, and professional. Presenters should come in professional dress. Please practice and time the presentations in advance.

On the job market, you will present your own arguments and original research. Given the limits of the class, I will not be requiring you to present your own research. Instead, you will choose a major recent book in the interest group tradition that we have *not* covered in class. For the purposes of this presentation, you will be acting as if you devised the argument and conducted the research found in the book. You will have to argue for the book’s methodologies and defend the research choices made in the book. Thus, you must be extremely familiar with the book in question. Additionally, you may have to perform additional research to become familiar with the book’s research methodologies and whether there have been any updates in the literature since the book has been published. You will not be able to present the entirety of the book. Therefore, you will have to make strategic decisions about what to present and how to present it. You should assume that you are presenting to an audience of established political science colleagues who may not be interest group or even American government specialists.

**Academic Presentation = 40%**

Additionally, you will practice your skills in professional writing by composing an academic review of the same book. You will be writing as yourself in this assignment. Before writing this review, you should skim a number of reviews within *Perspectives on Politics*. Your book review will be no longer than 400 words. In keeping with the guidance of one venue for book reviews (taken here from *Political Studies Review*), you should use the first half of the review to tell readers what the book is about—including its fundamental argument and aims. Use the remainder of the review to provide an assessment of how well the book succeeds in achieving these aims. Also comment on whether it is innovative work and if so, how (in theory, method, or empirical work). You may want to discuss how well the book is written. I’ll be looking for grounded criticisms and for you to compare the book to other benchmark books and articles in the interest group field. Do not strive to be over praise or over criticize.

**Book Review = 15%**

Below is a list of potential books for the main assignment. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but only illustrative. Additionally, we will discuss you book choice early in the semester to make sure that there are not duplicates within the class.


Reaction Papers = 35% (5% for the first paper, 10% for the remaining papers.)


(3) Discussion Leaders and Participation

All seminars live and die by the quality of discussion. Student participation is necessary to make this seminar a lively and engaging educational experience. Discussion leaders will be assigned each week. I expect noteworthy discussion and participation from all students within each class meeting.

Discussion and Participation = 10%

Overall Grading Format

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<tr>
<th>Letter Grade Equivalents</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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Expectations for Academic Integrity
I expect a full adherence to UW’s code of academic integrity. I also expect that you will acknowledge all ideas that are not your own through proper citation. Please put all direct quotes in quotations. Any accepted format for citation may be used as long as it is used consistently. You may want to follow the style format of a major academic journal, such as, the American Political Science Review. There is to be no cheating in this course - be it via plagiarism or some other form of falsification. I may run all student papers through the software that checks for academic violations. Students who do not adhere to the highest levels of integrity may receive zero credit on assignment or exam, fail the course, or suffer some other consequence, depending on the action.

Disabilities
People with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform me if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of the UW’s McBurney Disability Office - http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/
Email
I will return emails from students within three business days. Do not email me shortly before a class, presentation, or exam with the expectation that I will be able to respond immediately to your concern.

Late Assignments and Make Up Policy
All assignments that are not provided to me at the beginning of class (or when I request them in class) will be reduced by a letter grade automatically. Assignments will then be deducted by another letter grade for each additional day late (beginning at 8 AM the next day). I do not accept late assignments in my mailbox or under my door. Also, I do not accept assignments via email unless otherwise indicated by me. Late presentations (or other assignments) due do to illness will be handled on a case-by-case basis and may also result in deductions. Make up assignments are at my discretion and may not match the assignment provided in class.

Required Books


Other readings can be found using the UW-Madison’s library resources (or, if unavailable, then from me directly).

Course Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 23</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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| Jan 30 | The Development of Interest Groups in the U.S.  
| Feb 6 | The Collective Action Problem  
Feb 13  Overcoming the Collective Action Problem


Feb 20  Race, Class, and Gender Inside Groups


Feb 27  Iron Triangles and Issue Networks


Mar 5  Parties and Public Opinion


**Mar 12**

**Population Ecology Models**


**Mar 19**

**Individual Meetings**

**Mar 26**

**Lobbying Strategies and Coalitions in the U.S. Context**


**April 2**

**Spring Break**

**April 9**

**Influencing the President and Courts**


April 16  

**Influencing the Bureaucracy**


April 23  

**Influencing the Bureaucracy**


April 30  

**Class Presentations A**

May 7  

**Class Presentations B**

May 11  

**Book Reviews Due**