COURSE PURPOSE
Interest groups are often talked about in a negative light; the word "special interest" mentioned with dis-taste, interest groups considered as a source of corruption. Is the negativity justified? Before answering this question, it is necessary to learn about interest groups. With a more thorough understanding, you will be in a better position to evaluate interest groups politics. In this course, you will learn basic facts about interest groups and scholarly research about group politics. More specifically, the course prepares you to answer the following questions:

- How do groups form? Why do (or don’t) people join groups?
- Are interests equally represented by groups? Who get represented and why?
- What are the goals of interest groups? How do groups achieve these goals?
- How do interest groups lobby? Whom do they lobby?
- What is the policy consequence of interest group lobbying?
- What is the relationship between interest groups activities and public opinion?
- What is the role of money in interest group politics? Does money buy policy?
- What do the founding fathers and contemporary scholars think about interest groups politics?
- What do you think about interest groups politics? Why?

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is comprised of four main parts. The first part is on interest group formation and maintenance, introducing classic theories of as well as recent empirical research on the emergence and organization of interest groups. The second part is on interest groups lobbying, including different types of lobbying activities and their policy consequences. This part is organized based on the relationships between interest group and different government branches. The third part is on other interest group activities including grassroot lobbying, campaign contributions, and involvement with political parties. The fourth part is on the normative concerns; it evaluates the representation of interests, interest group influence on public policy, and the role of interest groups in American politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENT
For this course you are required to complete the following four main tasks:
1) a 7 - 10 minute group presentation, 2) a 7-page term paper, 3) a midterm, and 4) a final exam.

The short group presentation will be done in two people teams introducing an interest group of your choice. The presentation should include the background, membership, political goals, and general activities of the interest group. The presentation should also elaborate on one notable activity of the group. At the end of the syllabus there is a list of interest groups for your reference. You are welcome to find your own interest group that is not on the list. The presentation will take place at the end of the lectures and should be
between 7 - 10 minutes long. You are allowed to use visual-aid for your presentation, but it is not required. If you choose to use visual aid, please email me your material at least two hours before the class so that I can set things up before the start of the class.

The term paper is a literature review focusing on one set of the recommended readings. In the syllabus there are three sets of recommended readings for each of the first three parts of the course. You can decide which set of readings to focus on. In the paper you will review the readings and synthesize the content (5 pages), and then connect the readings to real world examples (2 pages). There are many ways you can connect the readings to examples. For instance, you may make recommendations to interest group entrepreneurs, make suggestions to legislators, or provide ideas for campaign finance reforms. To make sure that your paper is on track, you are required to talk to me about your paper before April 1st. The paper should be using 12 point font, double-spaced, and is due in print in class on April 16th.

In summary:

**Group presentation: 10%**  
Time: at the end of the lectures, sign up during the second week of class.  
Location: Ingraham 120

**Midterm exam: 30%**  
Time: March 12th, 4.30 to 5.15 pm  
Location: Ingraham 120

**Term paper: 30%**  
Due date: April 16th in class

**Final exam: 30%**  
Time: May 14th, 10.05 am to 12.05 pm  
Location: TBD

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Two textbooks are required for this class:


This textbook is the more accessible one of the two. If it has been a while since you took the Introduction to American Politics class, start with this book to “ease” into the lectures.


This book is the more technical one. I recommend reading this book in conjunction with the lectures.

There are additional readings including book chapters and journal articles. They are listed on the syllabus and available at Learn@UW.

**Office Hours**

I am available to meet during my office hours: Tuesdays 3 - 5 pm at North Hall 411. Just drop by if you need to talk to me. If the office hours don’t work for you, feel free to email me and set up an appointment.
Also I am reasonably quick to respond to emails during working hours, so emails are also a good way to reach me.

**Special Accommodation**

If you need special accommodation, please talk to me during the first/second weeks of the class, and I will set up the appropriate arrangements.

**Academic Integrity**

DO NOT CHEAT. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. I am very good at spotting suspicious behavior.

Here is a link to review school policy:

http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html

If you are not sure if certain behavior constitute plagiarism, come talk to me.

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**SCHEDULE**

(subject to change)

**Course Introduction**

What is an interest group?

- Introduction (January 22nd)
  - Course syllabus. (distributed during class)
  - Nownes, Chapter 1

**Part 1: Interest group formation and maintenance**

How do groups form? How do groups overcome the collective action problem? How do groups operate? How do groups maintain their membership?

- group formation and maintenance (January 27th and 29th, February 3rd and 5th)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 2 and 3
  - Nownes, Chapter 2 and 3

- interest group governance and operation (February 10th and 12th)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 4
  - Nownes, Chapter 4
Recommended readings for part 1:


Part 2: Direct lobbying

What do lobbyists have to offer to gain access of public officials? Why do elected officials grant access to groups? What is the role of information in interest group lobbying? What are the relationships between interest groups and different government branches?

- the lobbying environment in Washington (February 17th and 19th)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 5
- lobbying Congress (February 24th and 26th, March 3rd, 5th, and 10th)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 6
  - Nownes, Chapter 5

Midterm Exam in class, March 12th

Spring Break

- lobbying the executive branch (March 24th)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 7
- lobbying the judicial branch (March 26th)
Recommended readings for part 2:


Part 3: Other ways of influencing the government

What is grassroot lobbying? How does grassroot lobbying work? What is the role of money in interest group politics? What is the relationship between interest groups and political parties?

- grassroot lobbying (March 31st and April 2nd)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 8
  - Nownes, Chapter 7
- interest groups and political campaigns (April 7th and 9th)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 9
  - Nownes, Chapter 6
- interest groups and political parties (April 14th)
  - Nownes, Chapter 8

Recommended readings for part 3:


Term paper due in class, April 16th

Part 4: Evaluating interest groups

What is pluralism? What is the critique of pluralism? How influential are interest groups? What are the pros and cons of interest groups' involvement in American politics?

- interest groups representation (April 16th and 21st)

- interest groups influence (April 23rd and 28th)
  - Nownes, Chapter 9

- Interest groups in American politics (April 30th, May 5th and 7th)
  - Ainsworth, Chapter 10
  - Nownes, Chapter 10

Final Exam, May 14th
A list of interest groups:

**Health Care**
American Medical Association  
American Hospital Association  
Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Research Association (PhRMA)  
American Society of Anesthesiologists  
American Association of Health Plans

**Environment / Energy**
Sierra Club  
League of Conservation Voters  
Shell Oil  
Dow Chemical  
Edison Electric Institute

**Labor**
AFL-CIO  
National Education Association  
Carpenters & Joiners Union  
Communications Workers of America  
SEIU

**Business**
U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
National Auto Dealers Association  
FedEx  
National Association of Manufacturers  
General Electric

**Telecommunications / Electronics / Entertainment**
Microsoft  
AT&T  
Walt Disney  
National Cable Television Association  
National Association of Broadcasters

**Transportation**
Boeing  
General Motors  
American International Auto Dealers Association  
Association of American Railroads  
American Public Transit Association

**FIRE (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate)**
American Bankers Association  
American Council of Life Insurance  
Fannie Mae  
National Association of Realtors  
Securities Industry Association