

PSCI 3031: Political Parties & Interest Groups
Spring 2017
Tu/Th 9:30 – 10:45 am
MUEN E113

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Both acclaimed and reviled, groups are seen as vital to the functioning of democracy. In American politics, political parties and interest groups act as intermediaries between citizens and government. They can give voice to the concerns and ideas of large numbers of people who might otherwise remain unheard. Parties can simplify our choices in elections by providing us with a slate of candidates, and can bring together elected officials who have similar policy preferences and help them get those preferences passed into law. By supporting and endorsing candidates, organized interests can tell their sympathizers which candidates are most likely to do what the group wants, and groups can put pressure on office-holders to get certain proposals passed. Ultimately, it is citizens acting through groups that have the power to keep government accountable.

How well are groups living up to these vital political roles? What are these political intermediaries capable of doing in a democracy, what do they actually do in American politics, and what would a variety of reformers have them do differently? The goal of this course is to critically examine the theories and evidence regarding the role and effects of political parties and interest groups in the American political system – including with respect to current political developments.

Course Reading

Readings are drawn from two books, and additional selections as listed on the class schedule. In addition, all students should be paying attention to current political news.

Books:

- Marjorie R. Hershey, *Party Politics in America* (16th ed. or other recent edition)
- Jeffrey M. Berry & Clyde Wilcox, *Interest Group Society* (5th ed. or other recent edition)

Course Requirements

This course is designed to stimulate active thinking and application of key theories and assumptions about the role of political parties and interest groups in American politics, with assignments as follows:

- Class participation and attendance: 10%
- Exams – three short in-class midterms: 3 * 10% = 30%
- Analytical writing assignments providing opportunity for in-depth investigation, interpretation and evaluation of key questions related to political parties and interest groups; detailed instructions will be posted on D2L: 2 * 20% = 40%
- News log, involving weekly review and analysis of a current event item or development related to political parties and interest groups: 20%
- Extra credit opportunities will be made available

DUE DATES	
Thu, Feb 2: writing assignment 1	Tue, Mar 21: midterm 2
Thu, Feb 16: midterm 1	Thu, Apr 13: news log
Tue, Mar 14: writing assignment 2	Thu, Apr 27: midterm 3

Class Policies & Expectations

- **Class Participation:** You have to be there – physically and mentally – to be participating. This is an important element of the course, both in grading and for the intellectual value of the class for all involved. Related to this, students are expected to refrain from activities such as web-surfing, emailing, texting and other competing forms of multi-tasking that distract both you and everyone around you.
- **Assignment Submission:** Assignments will be available on D2L and are due to the D2L drop-box before class on the specified due dates. There is no need to submit paper copies. Assignments must be submitted in either MS Word or pdf format. Students are responsible for ensuring that documents are successfully submitted and accessible for grading purposes. If you're having trouble with D2L, you may submit a back-up copy via email as well. Required papers may be subject to Turnitin.com for plagiarism review.
- **Late Assignment Policy:** No late midterm exams, except under prior arrangement due to documented schedule conflicts or illness. The writing assignments will be accepted late for reduced credit, as follows:
Same day, after class begins: -10% Next day: -25% 2 days + after due date: -50%
- **Students with Disabilities or Special Needs:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (at least one week prior to an assignment due date or exam) explaining your required accommodations so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition, see Temporary Injuries guidelines under Quick Links at [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with me.
- **Religious Observances:** Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please contact me in advance to explain your circumstances and to discuss any special scheduling needs. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.
- **Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [student code](#).
- **Misconduct, Discrimination & Harassment:** The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).
- **Honor Code:** All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [academic integrity policy](#) of the institution. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at honorcode.colorado.edu.

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CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

*** *Class schedule subject to change* ***

Jan 17 & 19: Class introduction; the role of groups in American politics

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 1
- James Madison, Federalist 10, "The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection (continued)," available at <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federal10.htm>
- Alexis de Tocqueville, "Of the Use Which the Americans Make of Public Associations in Civil Life," Chapter 5 in Volume 2, Part 2 of *Democracy in America*, 1840; on D2L.

Jan 24 & 26: Political parties and party systems: basic features

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps. 1 & 2

Jan 31, Feb 2 & 7: Political parties in the US: a decentralized organizational system

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps. 3, 4, 5 & 9

➔ **Thurs, Feb 2: Assignment 1 due to D2L dropbox before class**

Feb 9, 14 & 16: Party history, development and change

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps. 6, 7 & 8

➔ **Thurs, Feb 16: In-class short midterm 1**, focused on material covered to date, followed by regular class lecture and discussion

Feb 21, 23 & 28: Parties and election rules

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps. 10, 11 & 12
- Douglas Amy, "How Proportional Representation Elections Work," Proportional Representation Library, 2005, available at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/polit/damy/BeginnningReading/howprwor.htm>
- William Kimberling, Office of Election Administration, Federal Election Commission, "The Electoral College," revised May 1992, available at <http://www.fec.gov/pdf/eleccoll.pdf>

Mar 2 & 7: The party in government

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps. 13 & 14

Mar 9, 14 & 16: Contemporary politics and polarization

Reading:

- Hershey, Chaps. 15 & 16

➔ **Tues, Mar 14: Assignment 2 due to D2L dropbox before class**

Mar 21 & 23: Collective action

Reading:

- Mancur Olson, "A Theory of Groups and Organizations," Introduction and Chapter 1 in *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Good and the Theory of Groups*, 1965 (pp. 1-52); on D2L.
- "The Free Rider Problem," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, May 21, 2003, available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/free-rider/>

➔ **Tues, Mar 21: In-class short midterm 2**, focused on material covered since the previous short midterm, followed by regular class lecture and discussion

SPRING BREAK

Apr 4 & 6: Interest groups

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 2 & 3

Apr 11 & 13: Interest group influence

Reading:

- E.E. Schattschneider, "The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System," Chapter 2 in *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*, 1960 (pp. 20-46); on D2L.
- Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 4 & 5

➔ **Thurs, Apr 13: Weekly log and analysis of news due to D2L dropbox before class**

Apr 18, 20 & 25: Insider lobbying

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 6, 8 & 9

Apr 27: Citizen groups and lobbying from the outside

Reading:

- Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 7 & 10

➔ **Thurs, Apr 27: In-class short midterm 3**, focused on material covered since the previous short midterm, followed by regular class lecture and discussion

May 2: Evaluating the effects of group action on American politics