

Political Science 3031: Political Parties & Interest Groups
Fall 2011
Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30 – 1:45 pm, HUMN 250

Prof: Nancy Billica, Ph.D.
Office: Ketchum 34
E-mail: billica@colorado.edu

Office Hours: Tu/Th 2:00 – 3:00 pm
Phone: 303-492-3998

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.

Course Reading

There are three required books, and additional readings as listed on the class schedule:

- Marc Hetherington and Bruce Larson, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America*, 11th ed. (CQ Press, 2010)
- Jeffrey M. Berry and Clyde Wilcox, *The Interest Group Society*, 5th ed. (Pearson Longman, 2009)
- Bertram J. Levine, *The Art of Lobbying: Building Trust and Selling Policy* (CQ Press, 2009)

Course Requirements

- Four (out of five possible) writing assignments, due throughout the semester (see below) – each worth 20% of the course grade. A fifth paper may be submitted for extra credit.
- In-class final exam: Tuesday, December 13, 4:30 to 7:00 pm (20% of course grade)

Writing Assignments

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 the American political system. Textbooks at times create the false impression that knowledge is fixed and that learning involves nothing more than mastery of the information presented. Thinking is not driven by answers but by questions. Learning about these issues involves more than developing an academic understanding; it means learning how to participate in the conversation of American political life. Among other things, that conversation involves grappling with the issues of yesterday, the problems of today, and the policies we adopt moving forward.

The writing assignments for this course will require students to respond to a variety of questions of interpretation, assumption, implication, point of view and relevance. In addition, the writing assignments will require students to develop and respond to questions of their own that help to deepen understanding of current issues of debate. Questions of interpretation force us to examine how we are organizing or giving

meaning to information. Questions of assumption force us to examine what we are taking for granted. Questions of implication force us to follow out where our thinking is going. Questions of point of view force us to examine our point of view and to consider other relevant points of view. Questions of relevance force us to discriminate what does and what does not bear on a question.

Writing Assignment Schedule

| | Assignment Distributed | Assignment Due |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Assignment 1 | Thurs, Aug 25 | Thurs, Sept 8 |
| Assignment 2 | Tues, Sept 13 | Thurs, Sept 29 |
| Assignment 3 | Tues, Oct 4 | Tues, Oct 18 |
| Assignment 4 | Thurs, Oct 20 | Thurs, Nov 3 |
| Assignment 5 | Tues, Nov 8 | Tues, Nov 29 |

Class Policies & Expectations

It is presumed that all students are enrolled with the goal of gaining maximum value from the course and will thus be in regular attendance and actively engaging with the material. Students should take advantage of office hours and feel free to contact the instructor with any questions or concerns.

- **Policy on Use of Electronic Devices in Class:** To support a quality classroom experience for all, the use of electronic devices, including laptops, for non-class-related purposes is prohibited. Students failing to comply with these restrictions will lose the privilege of laptop use in class for the remainder of the semester.
- **Late Assignment Policy:** All assignments are due in class on the specified due date. Late papers may be submitted for reduced credit.
- **Academic Honesty:** All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy. Students who are found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>
- **Students with Disabilities:** Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability should let the instructor know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. (See <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>)
- **Religious Observances:** Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams or assignments. Let the instructor know as soon as possible of any schedule conflicts (http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).
- **Behavioral Standards:** Students and faculty share responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and national origin. See university policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code
- **Discrimination & Harassment:** University policies on Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Anyone who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment for any reason should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. See <http://www.colorado.edu/odh> and <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>.

PSCI 3031, Political Parties & Interest Groups

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

I. Introduction: Groups in American Politics

Aug 23 **Course introduction**

Aug 25 **Groups in American politics**
& 30

- Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 1
- James Madison, Federalist 10, available at <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>
- Alexis de Tocqueville, "On the Use That the Americans Make of Association in Civil Life," from Democracy in America (1835), excerpt available at <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/805328.html>

Sept 1 **Historic roots of the American political party system**
& 6

- Hetherington & Larson, Chap. 1

II. Describing and Explaining the Contemporary American Political Party System

Sept 8, **A two-party system**
13 & 15

Assignment 1 due, 9/8

- Hetherington & Larson, Chap. 2
- Douglas Amy, "How Proportional Representation Elections Work," Proportional Representation Library, 2005, available at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/polit/damy/BeginnningReading/howprwor.htm>
- U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, "U.S. Electoral College," available at <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/about.html>
- William Kimberling, Office of Election Administration, Federal Election Commission, "The Electoral College," revised May 1992, available at <http://www.fec.gov/pdf/eleccoll.pdf>

Sept 20 **Decentralization of political party organization**
& 22

- Hetherington & Larson, Chaps. 3 & 4

Sept 27 **Majoritarian tendencies versus polarization in the two-party system**
& 29

Assignment 2 due, 9/29

- Hetherington & Larson, Chap. 5
- Morris Fiorina, "What Culture Wars?," *Hoover Digest*, October 30, 2004, available at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/hoover-digest/article/6699>
- William Galston & Elaine Kamarck, "Make U.S. Politics Safe for Moderates," *Brookings*, February 23, 2011, available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0223_moderates_galston.aspx

Oct 4 **Citizens, partisanship and government accountability**

- Hetherington & Larson, Chap. 6

Oct 6 **Evaluating the party system**
& 11

- Hetherington & Larson, Chap. 7

III. Interest Groups & American Politics

- Oct 13 **The role of interest groups**
▪ Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 2

- Oct 18 **Mobilizing, organizing and collective action** *Assignment 3 due, 10/18*
& 20
▪ Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 3
▪ “The Free Rider Problem,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, May 21, 2003, available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/free-rider/>

- Oct 25 **Interest Insider & outsider lobbying**
& 10
groups and money
& 27
▪ Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 4 & 5

IV. Lobbying

- Nov 1 **Building lobbying relationships** *Assignment 4 due, 11/3*
& 3
▪ Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 6

- Nov 8 **Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 7 & 8**
▪ Levine, Chaps. 1 & 2

- Nov 15 **Lobbying techniques** *Assignment 5 due, 11/29*
17 & 29
▪ Levine, Chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

V. Reevaluating the Role and Effects of Groups in American Politics

- Dec 1 **American politics moving forward**
6 & 8
▪ Berry & Wilcox, Chaps. 9 & 10

FINAL EXAM: Tues, Dec 13th, 4:30 – 7:00 pm

*** Class schedule subject to change ***