

Political Science 3031
Political Parties and Interest Groups
Spring 2009

Section 001: Tues/Thurs 12:30 – 1:45 pm

Section 002: Tues/Thurs 6:30 – 7:45 pm

HLMS 211

Professor Nancy Billica, PhD

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A democratic system requires that citizens keep at least a certain amount of control over what government does. Yet, we know that most of us, and most other Americans, are not much interested in government, much less in making the effort to keep it under control. How can we be sure that democracy will survive when most of the population would rather not bother to control its government?

One possible answer: In American politics, *intermediaries* such as political parties and organized interests can keep our government responsive. 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. A party 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.

This course examines how political parties and organized interests describe American political life. 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?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

While this is a lecture course, students are expected to actively engage with the readings and lecture materials and participate in class discussion and related activities. Grades will be based on the following:

- A. Discussion Questions:** Students are required to prepare responses to 5 discussion questions of your choice (see class schedule and reading assignments; written responses should be approximately 1 page, single-spaced, in length). Information included in the responses can come from the readings and any outside materials of your choice (provide citations); specific examples are always helpful. The discussion papers are due as noted on the schedule. (25 percent of course grade, total)
- B. Group Lobbying Strategy Project** (see explanation of assignment following class schedule)
 - **Individual paper** (15 percent of course grade): **due Tue, Apr 21**
 - **Group presentations** (10 percent of course grade): **due Apr 21 or 23**
- C. Exams:**
 - **Midterm** (25 percent of course grade): **Thu, Mar 5**
 - **Final** (25 percent of course grade)
 - Section 1: Tue, May 5, 4:30 – 7:00 pm**
 - Section 2: Tue, May 5, 7:30 – 10:00 pm**

TEXTS

Texts are required and should be available in the campus bookstore:

- Hetherington and William Keefe, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America*, 10th ed. (CQ Press, 2007)
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)

EXPECTATIONS

- Attend class and be prepared. This means reading each assignment prior to that class.
- Contact me early and often. Individual meetings are valuable to both of us. If you cannot meet during my office hours, I am easily reached via e-mail. You should especially talk with me as soon as possible when particular questions or concerns arise, or when guidance is needed in carrying through a particular assignment.
- Academic honesty. Any cheating is grounds for an automatic F, expulsion from the class, and referral to the College Committee on Academic Dishonesty. Cheating specifically includes use of unauthorized materials or others' work during exams, plagiarism (which also covers the use of materials made available on the internet), and misrepresentation of someone else's work or work from another course as your own. If you have questions about what is or is not permissible, ask first.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability should let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You may be required to provide documentation of your special needs to the Disability Services Office. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and 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, assignments or required attendance. Let me know as soon as possible any schedule conflicts due to religious observances. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS

Students and faculty each have 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 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. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The University of Colorado at Boulder policies on Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships (found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>) apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Groups in American Politics

Course overview

Jan 15 Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 1

Federalist 10, available at <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federal10.htm>

Discussion question (due Jan 15):

- One of the enduring questions of American politics focuses on the relative power of groups in American politics – one group relative to another, and groups relative to other elements in the political system. Discuss the importance of power in describing groups in American politics.

The Role of Political Parties in American Politics

Discussion questions (due Jan 22):

- The inauguration sets the tone for all that follows in the president's term of office. Among other things, the new president might lay out a broad framework for leadership, identify opportunities and challenges facing the nation, and introduce a set of policy priorities. We judge political speech on the basis of both content (the issues covered) as well as style. Assess and discuss this speech (strengths, weaknesses, surprises, challenges presented, passion, tone, wording, coherence, inspiration, etc.) in terms of moving forward in American politics.
- What functions of political parties seem to be the most important in contemporary politics? How well are these functions being fulfilled by the major parties?

Jan 20 & 22

Hetherington & Keefe, Chap. 1

Watch the Presidential Inauguration and related media coverage on January 20th!

Political Parties, Representation and the Electoral Process

Discussion questions (due Feb 5):

- “For either major party to win the presidency, it must have strong leadership, effective organization and attractive policies.” To what extent do you agree?
- Candidate-centered campaigns have become very common over the last several decades in the United States and it appears that other industrialized democracies are quickly following suit. What has caused the rise of candidate-centered campaigns and what are the implications of this change?
- Discuss how globalization is affecting the nature of political parties in the United States. How well are the two major parties adjusting their messages and policy interests to address broad social and economic changes (and related concerns) from globalization?

Jan 27 Hetherington & Keefe, Chap. 2

Jan 29 Hetherington & Keefe, Chap. 3

Feb 3 Hetherington & Keefe, Chap. 4

Feb 5 Douglas Amy, “How Proportional Representation Elections Work,” Proportional Representation Library, 2005, available at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/polit/damy/BeginningReading/howprwor.htm>

Parties and Government

Discussion questions (due Feb 12):

- “In terms of policies, philosophy and leadership styles, there are few differences between the Democratic and Republican parties.” Discuss. To what extent do you agree?

...y particular moment in time, the majority party in American government exercises power and influence far in excess of its electoral support and to the detriment of American democracy.” Discuss. To what extent do you agree, and what are the implications?

Jan 10 & 12

Hetherington & Keefe, Chap. 5

The Parties and the Public

Discussion questions (due Feb 19):

- “Neither the Democratic nor Republican parties represent the views, needs or concerns of the American electorate.” To what extent is this a fair assessment?
- Considering the key functions of political parties, is democracy well served by these structures, or are they a hindrance?

Feb 17 & 19

Hetherington & Keefe, Chap. 6

Evaluating the Role of Parties in American Politics

Reading questions (due Mar 3):

- Why has the U.S. always had two and only two major political parties? Would things improve if this were changed? Why or why not?
- While globalization has led to rapid social and economic changes, political parties are fairly resistant to change. Given the current coalitions of interests describing the two major political parties, to what extent can we expect coherent messages on how best to address rising issues related to globalization? Discuss alternative coalitions of interests that you think might make better sense for the two major parties in terms of presenting clear policy responses to globalization.

Feb 24 & 26, and Mar 3

Hetherington & Keefe, Chap. 7

Mar 5 MIDTERM EXAM

Interest Groups and American Politics

Discussion questions (due Mar 19):

- “Interest groups can make a significant contribution to the formulation of government policy.” Discuss. Do you agree or disagree?
- “Interest groups undermine democracy. They use undemocratic tactics, they inevitably hold governments to ransom and they rarely represent the views of their members.” To what extent do you agree?
- “Interest groups provide widespread opportunities for all individuals and groups to participate equally in the American political system.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Mar 10 Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 2-3

Mar 12 Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 4

Mar 17 Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 5

Mar 19 Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 9

**** SPRING BREAK ****

Lobbying
Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 6

Apr 2 Levine, Chaps. 1 & 2
NOTE: No Class today

Apr 7 Levine, Chap. 3

Apr 9 Levine, Chap. 4

Apr 14 Levine, Chap. 5

Apr 16 Levine, Chap. 6

➤ ***Paper #4 due at the beginning of class: Individual Lobbying Strategy Papers Due***

Apr 21 **Class Group Lobbying Presentations.** Mandatory attendance

Apr 23 **Class Group Lobbying Presentations.** Mandatory attendance

Apr 28 & 30
Berry & Wilcox, Chap. 8

FINAL EXAM **Section 1: Tue, May 5, 4:30 – 7:00 pm**
 Section 2: Tue, May 5, 7:30 – 10:00 pm

REQUIREMENTS FOR LOBBYING STRATEGY ASSIGNMENT: Individual Paper and Group Presentation

This assignment is designed to provide insight on the opportunities and methods of interest group lobbying. Good papers and group presentations will show mastery of the information learned this semester and creative application of this knowledge to strategic planning. Papers will be graded on research (demonstrating that all relevant information was located and used); analysis (appropriately interpreting the information and developing an argument using that information); and presentation (paying attention to the details of careful writing, including style and editing for errors).

- **Individual paper (15 percent of grade), due Tue, Apr 21st**
- **Group presentation (10 percent of grade), due in class April 21st or 23rd**

Your task in this assignment is to form an interest group to lobby for an issue of interest to you. Students will be organized into groups early in the semester, according to shared interests. Your goal in this dual assignment is to develop a strategy for success in terms of lobbying for policy change. You will have opportunity to describe your preferred interest group strategy in an individual paper but will have to work together in your group to come up with a persuasive presentation that will win support for your interest group objectives and strategy.

The Interest Group Strategy paper: Using the Levine text, *The Art of Lobbying* as your guideline (especially Chapter 7), write a paper that explains how you would organize a group to achieve a policy objective of interest to you.

- What is the issue(s) of concern to your group, and what is the particular aim in developing this strategy (such as gaining political support for your preferred policy solution)?
- How is your interest group organized? Consider how you would fund your organization and how you would build and maintain membership (e.g., how much would it cost to join? What benefits would members receive? How many members would you need to have in order to be successful? How would you communicate with members?)
- How will you achieve your policy objective?

Group presentation: Prepare a presentation (it can be through speech, drama, PowerPoint presentation, video, other) that explains your group interests and specific objective(s) and how you plan to achieve your objective(s). Your audience may or may not agree with your policy interests. Instead, you will be judged on the soundness of your strategy for gaining policy success. Your classmates will help to critique the presentation. Among other things, consider the type of issue, the interests of the American population more generally, who else would be interested in this issue, the different avenues for attracting attention and support for an issue, the resources you would need to educate and build knowledge and interest, and who in the American political system would need to be persuaded in order to realize policy change. The group presentation should involve all group members (but you decide how to use your group members) and should last about 10 minutes.