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**OBJECTIVE**

Interest groups are a mainstay in the American political system. The purpose of this seminar is to critically analyze the role of interest groups in American democracy and beyond from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. We will examine pressure group formation and maintenance, who joins groups and why, how groups attempt to influence public policy, and the systematic influence of groups across the political system. To achieve our ends, we will read a wide range of theoretically rich, empirically driven research in order to shed light on how social scientists approach the study of these essential actors in government.

**READINGS**

Please purchase the following books from the UNT bookstore:


In addition to these books, the bulk of our reading will consist of scholarly articles and book chapters. Journal articles can be found on-line (www.jstor.org) and in the journal stacks in the library. In addition, I will also have copies of some of the less accessible articles and chapters in my office for students to borrow for a short period (1 hour).


**GRADES**

Final grades will be computed on the following basis:

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Review Essays</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Design Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Participation

Students are expected to come to all classes well prepared, having done the readings for each seminar. In addition, I suggest preparing notes on the readings we are discussing as a guide for class discussion. Failure to attend class will negatively influence your participation grade. As this is a seminar class, a substantial proportion of the grade is based on participation in in-class discussions. In addition, the participation grade will be based in part on serving as a discussion leader. Students will rotate responsibility for leading class discussions, with each student serving as a discussion leader at least twice throughout the semester. In the capacity as a discussion leader, students will facilitate discussion by providing a list of 10 discussion topics (often phrased as questions), which we will focus on in class. These discussion topics will be emailed to each member of the class no later than 5:00 PM on the Sunday before class. Note that students will have some control over the topics for which they are responsible.

Critical Review Essays

Students are required to write three critical review papers (5-8 pages) on any of the sets of readings required in the course (plus at least one recommended reading). These papers will NOT be summaries of the readings, but instead should be thoughtful critiques of the readings, with attention paid to the development of theory, the relevance of theory vis-à-vis the hypotheses, measurement issues, the appropriateness of the data employed, and the like. Critical review essays are due 24 hours in advance of the class at which the relevant readings are to be discussed (i.e., by 2:00 on the Monday before the topic will be discussed). Students are free to select any of the sets of readings as the focus of their papers with the following limitations: at least one review must be completed by the last seminar meeting in October and only one review can be submitted on either November 18th or November 25th. Note that the Lowery and Brasher (2004) book is intended to provide requisite background on organizational activity in American politics. As such, students are prohibited from critiquing this volume.

Research Design Paper

Students will design an original research project that addresses questions central to the scholarly understanding of interest groups. The research design papers should be structured similarly to the journal articles we will read throughout the semester and should be about 15-25 pages long. The papers will consist of four main parts. First, you should introduce your topic, discuss its importance (the age-old “who cares” question), and explain how this project will advance our understanding of organized interests. Second, using relevant literature, you will formulate a theory that informs a specific hypothesis (or hypotheses) that can be subjected to empirical testing. Third, you will discuss what data can be collected to
provide a rigorous test for your hypothesis. Note that you are not required to collect data. Rather, you should explain what data can be utilized to test your hypothesis in an ideal world. As such, you should explain what dependent and independent variables you would utilize to test your hypothesis, as well as what control variables are appropriate. In addition, in this section you should also discuss what statistical test(s) you would use to evaluate the validity of your hypothesis, as well what the results would look like if your hypothesis was supported. Finally, you should provide a conclusion section, situating your research proposal in the broader interest group literature.

Students are implored to see the professor to discuss possible topics during the first month of the semester. Also, I strongly encourage you to select a topic that will serve as a foundation for a future publication. A brief proposal (about one page) of the paper topic is due in class on September 23rd. References will follow the citation style of the American Political Science Association. The papers are due in class on December 2nd. During that class period, students will present their research design in front of the class. The purpose of doing so is to familiarize students with presenting work at academic conferences. Students will be given about 10 minutes to present their research, which will be followed by a very brief question and answer section with the audience.

**SCHEDULE**

**AUGUST 26 – GENERAL CLASS INFORMATION**

Recommended Reading:


**SEPTEMBER 2 – STUDYING INTEREST GROUPS IN AMERICAN POLITICS**

Required Readings:


Yoho, James. 1995. “Madison on the Beneficial Effects of Interest Groups: What was Left

SEPTEMBER 9 – THE FORMATION AND MAINTENANCE OF INTEREST GROUPS I

Required Readings:

McGraw-Hill. Read chapter 2.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Carefully read chapters 1, 2, and 6; skim
chapters 3, 4, and 5.


Recommended Readings: see Recommended Readings for The Formation and
Maintenance of Interest Groups II.

SEPTEMBER 16 – THE FORMATION AND MAINTENANCE OF INTEREST GROUPS II

Required Readings:

Natural Regulation of Interest Group Numbers in the American States.” American

Resources, Interest, Group Size, and the Free-Rider Problem.” American Journal of
Sociology 84(6): 1335-1360.

43(2): 531-543.

Rothenberg, Lawrence. 1988. “Organizational Maintenance and the Retention Decision in

Institutional Origins of Civil Voluntarism in the United States.” American Political

**Recommended Readings:**


SEPTEMBER 23 – INTEREST GROUP REPRESENTATION: PLURALIST OR ELITIST?

**PAPER PROPOSALS DUE**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**SEPTMBER 30 – INTEREST GROUPS IN THE LEGISLATURE I**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:** see Recommended Readings for Interest Groups in the Legislature II

**OCTOBER 7 – INTEREST GROUPS IN THE LEGISLATURE II**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**OCTOBER 14 – INTEREST GROUPS IN THE EXECUTIVE**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**OCTOBER 21 – INTEREST GROUPS IN THE COURTS I**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:** see Recommended Readings for Interest Groups in the Courts II
OCTOBER 28 – INTEREST GROUPS IN THE COURTS II

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


**NOVEMBER 4 – INTEREST GROUPS, MONEY, AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**November 11 – Interest Group Coalitions**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**NOVEMBER 18 – GRASSROOTS LOBBYING**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**November 25—Social Movements**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**DECEMBER 2 – IN CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

**RESEARCH DESIGN PAPERS DUE**

**Miscellaneous Information**

**Academic Honesty:** Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated in this class. Incidents of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course (0.0) and appropriate steps to remove that person from the program will be taken.
The UNT Department of Political Science Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism: The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying others’ tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one’s own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty.

Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of “F” in the course. In the case of graduate departmental exams, the minimum penalty shall be failure of all fields of the exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the field faculty in the case of departmental exams.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Graduate Studies Committee. Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary coursework may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Undergraduate Studies Committee in the case of undergraduate students, or the Graduate Studies Committee in the case of graduate students. These committees, acting as agents of the department Chair, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if they determine that the case warrants it. In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case.

Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

Grade Disputes: A great deal of time is invested in grading student assignments. If a student wishes to dispute a grade, he or she must do so in writing. When doing so students should provide a clear explanation as to why they feel a different grade is in order, as well as what grade they believe to be more representative of their work. Simply “wanting” or “needing” a higher grade is an insufficient reason. Students should also be aware that when work is reviewed for a grade dispute, the entire work is reviewed, not simply the specific detail being disputed by the student. Note that there is no opportunity for extra credit, unless I specifically indicate such an opportunity in class.

Office Hours: Office hours are currently scheduled from 11:00-12:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays. If these times prove to be inconvenient, special appointments are available. Students should contact me to schedule special appointments. Contact via e-mail is encouraged.

Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please notify me by the second week of class. You are also encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Accommodation at (940) 565-4323. The ODA makes formal recommendations regarding necessary and appropriate accommodations based on specifically diagnosed disabilities. Information regarding disabilities is treated in a confidential manner.

Statement of ADA Compliance: The Political Science Department cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable accommodations for qualified
students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request on or before the sixth class day (beginning of the second week of classes).

**Religious Holidays:** In accordance with University policy, I will excuse any absences that result from religious observances, provided that you notify me in advance of your planned absence.

**Stipulation:** I reserve the right to change this syllabus as I see fit at any point in the semester.