

COURSE SYLLABUS: 790-330-90, sp17

Prof. Bert Levine: Email; <bjlevine@rci.rutgers.edu.>; Phone Number; 508-358-2858; Virtual Office Hours: Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00pm EST, or by arrangement.

I. **OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES:**

“Interest Groups (IGs), sometimes known as “Lobby Groups,” “Pressure Groups,” or “Special Interests,” are at the core of much political activity in the United States and other countries as well. In James Madison’s writings—we will read “Federalist #10”—these sorts of interests and organizations were known as “factions.” Whatever we call them, they are today a well-established part of our national policymaking landscape. In the context of this course we will consider them to be *groups of people and or organizations with common interests that seek to influence public policy in a manner they deem beneficial to those mutual interests.*

They come in many forms and in a range of sizes. Some, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, are huge and are composed of a broad-based membership—everything from “Mom-and-Pop” businesses to Apple and Exxon; their common interest is often the nation’s business environment. Others, the Sierra Club for instance, have few-to-no business or economic interests; they are focused on what they deem to be the “public good.” Fittingly, we know them as “Public Interest Groups.” Still other groups are what have come to be called “single issue groups:” they are concerned with one issue or a narrowly drawn category of issues—the National Rifle Association (NRA), the Christian Coalition, and the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) are examples.

Our main focus for this course will be on “Trade Associations (TAs).” These are organizations composed mostly of businesses that are involved in a single—or narrow range—of industries. Examples are: PHARMA (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America), NADA (National Automobile Dealers Association), and the NAR (National Association of Realtors). There are many more such organizations.

We will concentrate on these because they are generally considered to be the most influential segment of the association “universe.” Perhaps for that reason many critics allege that they have much too much influence over Congressional and Executive Branch policy decisions. They (the critics) further allege that at least part of the reason these associations and the businesses they represent gain their influence is due to the large numbers of hefty campaign contributions to political campaigns that they make. Many TAs maintain substantial “separate segregated funds,” also known as Political Action Committees (PACs). We will exam the contributions-related issues in detail in the last major segment of the course; more on this just below.

Of course, many authorities argue that campaign money is not the only—perhaps not even the major—source of TA influence. TA’s hire some of the most well schooled lobbyists that are available. These professionals know how policy is made and the most effective ways to attempt to influence it. Frequently they know the policymakers on a first name basis; in fact, many of these lobbyists once worked in or for Congress and/or the federal executive branch agencies. They have moved through what has become known as the “revolving door;” that is, they have left their government posts and now represent the companies that government currently seeks to regulate. Some see this to be a great and unethical advantage for these companies—even as being corrupting.

All of this we call *lobbying*—a much maligned, frequently misunderstood activity/profession, but nonetheless, the core function of many interest groups (IGs). Studying and understanding how lobbyists function and the extent to which they succeed (or fail) will form the “spine” of our course.

But, before we get into these controversial (and, I believe, fun) issues, we will have to “eat our vegetables.” That is to say, we will spend some time looking at the history and theories that provide a necessary foundation for understanding interest group formation and behavior. That portion of our work will cover the first two or three weeks of the course.

When we get to the final major segment of the course—beginning during week #9 (or thereabouts)—we will examine the use of campaign money. If lobbying is a controversial activity, it is frequently because campaign donations are alleged to be so prevalent in the process. Critics are not limited to academics, journalists, and consumer rights activists, many of whom consider campaign money to be a form of bribery; several members and former members of Congress join in this criticism. Yet, most of the carefully designed academic studies have failed to find that this influence really does exist. (A question we will look at here is: Why have the studies not found a link between money and policy outcomes?)

This last segment of the course will conclude with a brief but important series of readings and commentaries on campaign finance reform. Most “authorities” on this subject believe that more and better reporting of campaign contributions is the best way to do this; I disagree and will share some of my thoughts on this as the course draws to a conclusion. (In other words, I’m going to get my two-cents in here.)

My intent for this course will not be to convince you of any single position on these issues. My job, as I see it, is to expose you to the relevant facts and arguments, and to provide some commentary and data produced by academics and public figures—yes, I do hope this will spawn some rigorous debate; that is what will make this course fun and especially informative--I hope!!

I look forward to doing all of this with you.

One further point, this one regarding course administration: It is not always possible to see in advance where student interests and/or external events will take a course. For this reason, **I may from time-to-time make slight modifications in assignments or in timing.** You will be given plenty of advance notice if and when these should occur.

II. GENERAL WEEKLY ORDER OF BUSINESS

- A. **Readings and Lectures:** Each week, unless otherwise directed, students should complete the assigned reading and listen to the recorded “lesson” by not later than Monday evening. The readings are included in the syllabus; lessons will be posted for the appropriate week by no later than 10:00a.m. Monday mornings.

Monday evenings I will be available for questions re the lesson for the week. We will use telephone, email, or Skype (your choice) for this purpose. The window for doing this will be **between** 7:00 and 9:30 pm.

- B. **PLEASE PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THIS PORTION OF THE SYLLABUS.**

Forum Discussion: There will be 8 graded forum discussions during this course. **EACH STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN FIVE (5) OF THESE DISCUSSIONS FOR THE TERM.** “PARTICIPATION” MEANS THAT A STUDENT MUST POST **TWO** COMMENTS—**The first responding to my prompt,** and **the second critiquing a fellow student’s response to my prompt.** Submitting only one response **will not qualify as having participated** for that week. Here in more detail is how “discussion will work—“

Students opting to participate in discussion for the week must:

- i. Respond to my prompt by not later than 12:00 midnight on Tuesday of that week.
- ii. After all responses to my prompt have been posted (by early Wednesday morning) the student must then critique, either positively or negatively, another student's observation re my prompt. This must be done by midnight on Wednesday.
- iii. (Students who do not respond to my prompt are considered to have "passed"—i.e., opted not to participate for the week—and are thus not expected to critique a fellow-student's comment that week. This is OK, as students are only expected to fully participate 5 times (5 weeks) during the course.)
- iv. Please see "SYLLABUS ADDENDUM" for a more detailed explanation of the discussion process.

C. Quizzes: There will be three quizzes for this course. All quizzes will be given on-line and will be given on Thursdays. The quizzes will be "short-answer" format; i.e., questions must be answered in four lines or less. Students will be given 40 minutes to complete each quiz. The quiz may be taken within **any 40-minute period between 2:00pm and 12:00 midnight** on the days that they will be given.

D. Examinations: There will be one midterm and a final exam for this course. The midterm will be given **online on Thursday, March 2nd. The window for this exam will open at 2:00pm and will close at midnight** on the day that it is given. The final exam will be given on Friday, April 28. **The window for this exam will open at 2:00pm and will close at 2am, Saturday, April 29.**

(SPECIAL NOTE: You are being given notice of quiz and exam times and dates well in advance. Please make arrangements with other professors and/or your employer to be available to take all course examinations at these times. Rutgers is very conscientious about protecting exam security. If you miss a date on which your classmates will be taking an exam it will be necessary to make up an alternate test and post it at a different time---a fairly complex and time-consuming process)

E. General Office Hours: Office Hours will be held Wednesday evenings from 7:00pm to 9:00pm EST. I will accept or make phone calls during this period. If a student prefers, we can simply use back-and-forth email, or we can use Skype--if I can get my Skype function working.

III. REQUIRED TEXTS: (Available at the RU Book Store or available at Amazon.)

1. Berry, Jeffrey and Clyde Wilcox; The Interest Group Society 5th ed.
2. Levine, Bertram: The Art of Lobbying.
3. Various Academic Articles to be provided via Internet links or scans.
4. Supreme Court cases to be provided via Internet links or scans.

IV. GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS: Students must complete ALL of the assignments below *****
participation missed will deduct 10 points from the student's final course grade.

Three 40-Minute Quizzes, 5% each: Total, 15 % of course grade. (Quiz Dates: February 9; March 30; April 20.)

Discussion/Participation 6% each: Total 30%

Midterm: 20% (March 2)

Final: 35% (April 28)

Note regarding student participation:

- i. ALL students must participate fully in Five (5) weekly discussions sessions. Full Participation is defined as: 1) Responding to the weekly prompt, AND 2) Critiquing a fellow student's response to the prompt. (Please see SYLLABUS ADDENDUM for more detail.)
- ii. Your course participation grade will be based primarily on two factors:
 1. Satisfying the 5-participation requirement,
 2. The quality of your comments, e.g., understanding and use of course material, insightfulness.

V. WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULES.

Section 1: Interest Groups—the Basics (Weeks 1-4)

WEEK 1: (January 17 - 20)

- A. Read: Berry Chs. 1 and 2; Federalist 10, James Madison. (Note: If you do not already have a copy of “The Federalist Papers,” “Federalist 10” is easily found on-line.) For all other weeks follow the timetable set out in
- B. Lecture Topic: The Fundamentals of Interest Group Formation and Operation: or, Collective Action in the making.
- C. Forum Discussion pursuant to the schedule outlined just above for this week.
- D. Students must complete the written assignment as set out in Week One of the SAKAI course presentation. This will be graded Pass/Fail. Students who do not receive “P” grade will be required to redo the assignment until they do receive a “P” grade. A student may not pass this course until s/he passes this assignment.

WEEK 2: (January 23 - 27)

- A. Read: Berry Chs. 8 and 9
- B. Lecture Topic: Trade Associations, Coalitions, and Issue Networks Further Investigation of How and Why Interest Groups Form.
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 3: (January 30 – February 3)

- A. Reread: Berry, Ch. 2; See the piece “SOME OF THE MORE COMMON TYPES OF INTEREST GROUPS” (In your Resources file for this week.)
- B. Lecture Topic: The Types of Interest Groups that now function.
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday via Forum in SAKAI) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 4 (February 6 -10) **QUIZ #1, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9; ALL MATERIAL COVERED DURING WEEKS 1-4**

NO FORUM DISCUSSION THIS WEEK

- A. Read: Berry Chs. 4 and 5;
- B. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups, Parties, and Political Campaigns

Section 2: Interest Groups—Influencing Public Policy (Lobbying)
(Weeks 5-10)

WEEK 5: (February 13 - February 17).)

- A. Read: Levine: “Red Flags” and “Lobbyists’ Working Environment” (to be supplied via scan.)
- B. Lecture Topic: Why So Many People Do Not Trust Lobbyists, and a Brief Overview of How U.S. Congress Conducts its Business. (Note: Interest groups and the lobbyists who work for them do not function in a vacuum. Somebody or something must be the target of their lobbying efforts. At the federal level, this is most often the U.S. Congress. Thus, we will provide a brief overview of the how the United States Congress functions. Call it “Congress 101 Light.”) This will be a very important discussion.
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday via Forum in SAKAI) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 6: (February 20 – 24)

- A. Read: Berry Chs. 6 and 7
- B. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups Lobbyists at Work
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 7- (February 27– March 3): **MIDTERM EXAMINATION, THURSDAY MARCH 2: THE EXAM WINDOW WILL OPEN AT 2:00 PM AND WILL CLOSE AT 12 MIDNIGHT. ALL MATERIAL TO DATE. (SHORT ESSAYS - 90 MINUTES.) NO FORUM DISCUSSION THIS WEEK;**

WEEK 8: (MARCH 6- 10)

- A. Read: Berry Chs. 8, and reread 9
- B. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups Lobbyists at Work (Continued)
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content.

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9: (March 20 – 24)

- A. Read Berry Ch. 10
- B. Lecture Topic: Interest Groups and Influence Resources.
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday via Forum) re reading and lecture content.

Section 3: Interest Groups—Campaign Money: Effective? When? How?
(Weeks 10-13)

WEEK 10 –(March 27 – March 31) **QUIZ #2, THURSDAY, MARCH 31; ALL MATERIAL COVERED DURING WEEKS 8-10.**

NO FORUM DISCUSSION THIS WEEK;

- A. Read Outlines/Overviews of the Federal Election Reform Act (1971, 74, 76) and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. (To be supplied.) History of Campaign Finance Regulation from “Campaign Reform Source Book”, to be supplied via scan.)
- B. Lecture Topic: The History and Approach to Campaign Finance Regulation

WEEK 11: (April 3 - 9)

- A. Read: Criticisms of Money in Politics: Excerpts From “Too Damn Much Money;” “Dollars and Votes” (and, perhaps, other sources). (To be supplied via scan)
- B. Lecture: What is Wrong, What is Right with Private Funding of Political Campaigns? (If this subject does not open up a “hornet’s nest,” I do not know what will.)
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday via Forum in SAKAI) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 12: (APRIL 10 - 16)

- A. Read: Syllabi of Supreme Court Decisions: *Buckley v Valeo* (1976), and *Citizen’s United v. FEC* (2010). (To be supplied via link.) (Note: In Supreme Court language a “syllabus” is another name for an outline of the majority opinion in the case.)
- B. Lecture: The Roles That These Cases (and others) Have Played In The Regulation Of Campaign Financing.
- C. Forum Discussion: (Monday - Wednesday via Forum in SAKAI) re reading and lecture content

WEEK 13: (APRIL 17 – 21) **QUIZ #3, THURSDAY, APRIL 20; MATERIAL COVERED DURING WEEKS 10 - 13.**

NO FORUM DISCUSSION THIS WEEK.

- A. Read: Diana Evans Article (lobbying the committee) (To be supplied via scan); John Wright Article (lobbying committees) (To be supplied via link)
- B. Also, be sure to view the clips containing further discussion about the Citizens United Supreme Court case. (These clips are available by links contained in the weekly lesson page,)
- C. Lecture Topic: Lobbying and Campaign Money at the Committee Level - Strategic Thinking.

WEEK 14: (APRIL 24 - 28) **FINAL EXAM, FRIDAY, APRIL 28; ALL MATERIAL FOR ENTIRE COURSE. 2 HOURS AND 30 MINUTES, SHORT ESSAY QUESTIONS.**

- A. Read: Grenzke, and Hall/Wayman (To be supplied via link)
- B. Lecture Topic: Lobbying and Campaign Money at the Committee Level: Strategic Thinking Continued

FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, APRIL 28: The exam window will open at 2:00 pm and will close at 2 am Saturday, April 29. All course material to date. (Short essays – 2 hours and 30 minutes)

