

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY POLITICS DEPARTMENT

American Politics Seminar (POL-GA 3300)
Interest Groups in American Politics
Focal topic: membership associations
Fall 2020

Section 003: Friday 12:00 – 1:50 PM
Instructor Clifford Frasier: cliff.frasier@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Friday 2:00 – 3:30 PM and by appointment

7 East 12th, room 217

Course description:

This seminar examines theories and research about the role of interest groups in American politics, with emphasis on debates about the degree and arenas of interest group influence as well as methods of influence. In defining the topic, the seminar touches on adjacent themes of civil society and social movements. The second half of the seminar focuses on a particular form of organized interest: associations based in organizational and individual membership, such as: the US Chamber of Commerce; labor unions; professional associations; infrastructure and trade associations; and constituency-based groups such as the AARP and NRA, among many others. The course should help graduate students think systematically about organizational and collective advocacy, and about complex, group-based political behavior.

Overview

This course provides an advanced introduction to the study of interest groups in American politics. The field of study is expansive and we will not be able to review all of the literature, instead we will consider a number of major processes involved in the politics of interests and advocacy collaborations that petition government for policy change and that mobilize civil society. The course is organized into two parts. In the first part, we examine groups through the broad topics of influence and collaboration, with attention to the civil society context of organized interests. In the second part, we focus on membership associations, itself a broad category. This part of the course uses different forms of member participation as an approach to a number of themes, such as institutional, professional, industry, constituency, and issue dimensions of organized interests. We wrap up the course by considering interconnections between public governance and membership associations.

The course will be conducted as a seminar. You should treat class meetings as an opportunity to practice your analytic skills and improve your comprehension of the material. Very little time will be devoted to lecture, so it is essential that you complete the readings in advance of each meeting.

Course Materials

All required course readings are available on NYU Classes. For those who may wish to brush up on basic details about how the American government functions, the textbook *American Government: Power and Purpose* (Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsburg, and Kenneth Shepsle) is a good place to start. New and used copies can be readily purchased.

Course Requirements

(1) Seminar Participation (15%)

Be engaged and ready to contribute at each seminar meeting. Active listening, particularly insightful comments, or frequent contributions to discussion can all signal high levels of engagement. Be prepared for short in-class assignments and activities.

(2) Synopsis (10%)

You will be responsible for presenting a succinct review of the readings for one seminar meeting. This entails writing a 2-4 page (total) synopsis of the readings that: (1) identifies the principal argument or debates on the issue; (2) comments on the main empirical approach of the works under study; and (3) discusses how the scholarly debates have been resolved and/or remaining questions. For the week you write your synopsis, you will distribute it to the entire class the Wednesday before the seminar. In class, you will give an informal 10-minute presentation designed to initiate focused and critical discussion of the readings.

(3) Take-Home Exams (75% total, 25% each)

The principle requirements for this course are three take-home exams. They will provide you with an opportunity to critically, creatively, and systematically analyze course readings and theoretical debates. The later exams may give you opportunities to explore thematic connections to earlier parts of the course. To help prepare for the exams, most weeks there will be posted a question for your reflection — the question will ask you to consider a connection between the week's readings and a topic from earlier weeks. Each exam will be released on a Friday afternoon after the class meeting and will be due by the following class (or on the Friday following the last class). Late exams will result in a 10% grade reduction for each day late. Respond to one out of two or three possible short essay questions that cover the required readings in the weeks preceding each exam. Responses on each exam should total no more than 6 pages (double-spaced) in length.

Course Schedule

This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses.

PART 1: Interest Groups: Concepts, Influence, and Collectives

September 4 Meeting (Week 1): Course Introduction

No assigned reading in advance of Week 1.

Assignments of weekly presentations.

September 11 Meeting (Week 2): Background concepts

Walker, Jack. 1994. *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press. Chapter 3. "Explaining the Mobilization of Interests."

Berry and Wilcox. 2018. *The Interest Group Society*. Chapter 3 "Mobilization and Organization."

Walker, Jack. 1994. *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press. Chapter 10. "The Three Modes of Political Mobilization"

Baumgartner, F. R. 2009. "Interest groups and agendas." In *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*.

For further reading:

Nownes, Anthony. 2013. *Interest Groups in American Politics*. Chapter 9.

Background on interest groups and pluralism:

Berry, J. M., & Wilcox, C. 2018. *The interest group society*. Routledge. Chapter 1.

Andrews and Edwards. 2004. ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* Pp. 479-491.

Schlozman and Tierney. 1986. Organized Interests and American Democracy. Chapter 3 "Interest Organizations in Politics."

September 18 Meeting (Week 3): Estimating interest group influence: challenges and methods

Leech, Beth. 2010. "Lobbying and Influence." in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest*

Lowery and Gray. 2010. "The Comparative Advantage of State Interest Organization Research." In *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*..

Taylor, Haider-Markel, and Rogers. 2019. "Toward a New Measure of State-Level LGBT Interest Group Strength."

For further reading:

Gray, V., Lowery, D., Fellowes, M., & McAtee, A. (2004). Public opinion, public policy, and organized interests in the American states. *Political Research Quarterly*, 57(3), 411-420.

September 25 Meeting (Week 4): Theories of interest group influence (Part 1)

Berry and Arons. 2003. *A Voice for Nonprofits*, pp. 127-145.

Pralle, Sarah. 2010. "Shopping around: environmental organizations and the search for policy venues," in Prakash and Gugerty (Eds) *Advocacy Organizations and Collective action*.

Blanes i Vidal, J., Draca, M. and Fons-Rosen, C., 2012. Revolving door lobbyists. *American Economic Review*, 102(7), pp.3731-48.

For further reading:

Godwin, Ainsworth and Godwin. 2013. *Lobbying and Policymaking*. Chapter 2, "Models of Influence."

Gilens and Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics*.

October 2 Meeting (Week 5): Theories of interest group influence (Part 2)

Exam #1 due in class.

Walker, Jack. 1994. *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press. Chapter 6. Gais and Walker: "Pathways to Influence in American Politics."

Kollman, Ken. 1998. *Outside Lobbying. Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies*. Chapter 3 (pp. 68-77) and Chapter 4.

For further reading:

Kollman, Ken. 1998. *Outside Lobbying. Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies*. Chapter 5.

Lax, J.R. and Phillips, J.H., 2012. The democratic deficit in the states. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(1), pp.148-166.

October 9 Meeting (Week 6): Interest groups in coalitions (Part 1)

Berry and Wilcox. 2018. *The Interest Group Society*. Chapter 9 "The Rise of Networks and Coalitions."

Hula, Kevin. 1999. *Lobbying Together*. Chapters 7 & 9.

Ozer, M., & Lee, S. (2009). When do firms prefer individual action to collective action in the pursuit of corporate political strategy? A new perspective on industry concentration. *Business and Politics*, 11(1), 1-21.

Oct 16 Meeting (Week 7): Interest groups in coalitions and networks (Part 2)

Hojnacki, Marie. 1997. Interest Groups' Decisions to Join Alliances or Work Alone. Vol. 41, No. 1 (Jan., 1997), pp. 61-87

Grossman, Matt and Casey Dominguez. 2009. "Party Coalitions and Interest Group Networks" *American Politics Research*, Vol. 37, No. 5.

Garrett, K.N. and Jansa, J.M., 2015. Interest group influence in policy diffusion networks. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 15(3), pp.387-417.

For further reading:

Berry and Wilcox. 2018. *The Interest Group Society*. Chapter 4 "The Party Connection"

Heaney, M.T. and Lorenz, G.M., 2013. Coalition portfolios and interest group influence over the policy process. *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, 2(3), pp.251-277.

October 23 Meeting (Week 8): Civil society

Skocpol, T., Ganz, M. and Munson, Z., 2000. A nation of organizers: The institutional origins of civic voluntarism in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, pp.527-546.

Skocpol, T., 2004. Voice and inequality: The transformation of American civic democracy. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(1), pp.3-20.

Skocpol, T. and Oser, J.L., 2004. Organization despite adversity: The origins and development of African American fraternal associations. *Social Science History*, pp.367-437.

Part II. Membership associations

October 30 (Week 9): Concepts and background

Knoke, D., 1986. Associations and interest groups. *Annual review of sociology*, 12(1), pp.1-21.

Tschirhart, M., 2006. Nonprofit membership associations. *The nonprofit sector: A research handbook*, 2, pp.523-541.

Walker, Jack. 1994. *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press. Chapter 4 ("An Ecology of Interest Groups in America").

November 6 (Week 10): Issue Publics

Exam #2 due in class.

Classen and Nicholson. 2013. Extreme Voices: Interest Groups and the Misrepresentation of Issue Publics. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 4.

Krueger, J.S. and Pedraza, F.I., 2015. Ties that bind: revisiting context, identity, and attitudes. *Research & Politics*, 2(3)

For further reading:

Krosnick, J.A., 1990. Government policy and citizen passion: A study of issue publics in contemporary America. *Political behavior*, 12(1), pp.59-92.

Holbrook, A.L., Sterrett, D., Johnson, T.P. and Krysan, M., 2016. Racial disparities in political participation across issues: The role of issue-specific motivators. *Political Behavior*, 38(1), pp.1-32.

November 13 (Week 11): Implications of membership

Hager, M.A., 2014. Engagement motivations in professional associations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2_suppl), pp.39S-60S.

Ahlquist, John and Margaret Levi. 2013. *In the Interest of Others: Organizations and Social Activism*. Princeton, Princeton UP. Chapters 1 and 9.

For further reading:

Skocpol, Theda, Marjorie Abend-Wein, Christopher Howard and Susan Goodrich Lehmann. 1993. Women's Associations and the Enactment of Mothers' Pensions in the United States.

Jacobson, R.D., 2011. The politics of belonging: Interest group identity and agenda setting on immigration. *American Politics Research*, 39(6), pp.993-1018.

November 20 (Week 12): Participation in system and sector-level interests

Lowery, D., Gray, V., Anderson, J. and Newmark, A.J., 2004. Collective action and the mobilization of institutions. *The Journal of Politics*, 66(3), pp.684-705.

Salisbury, R.H., Heinz, J.P., Laumann, E.O. and Nelson, R.L., 1987. Who works with whom? Interest group alliances and opposition. *The American Political Science Review*, pp.1217-1234.

Frasier, C. 2020. How Collective Action Problems Suppress Participation in Nonprofit Trade Associations. Resubmitted to *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

For further reading:

Kroszner, R.S. and Strahan, P.E., 1999. What drives deregulation? Economics and politics of the relaxation of bank branching restrictions. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114(4), pp.1437-1467.

November 27 (Week 13): NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

December 4 (Week 14): Infrastructure and trade associations

Abramson, A.J. and McCarthy, R., 2012. Infrastructure organizations. *The state of nonprofit America*, 423.

Walker, Jack. 1994. *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press. Chapter 2.

For further reading:

Esparza, N., Walker, E.T. and Rossman, G., 2014. Trade associations and the legitimation of entrepreneurial movements: Collective action in the emerging gourmet food truck industry. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2_suppl), pp.143S-162S.

Wilts, A. and Meyer, M., 2005. Small firm membership in national trade associations. *Journal of Public Affairs: An International Journal*, 5(2), pp.176-185.

December 11 (Week 15): Governance and associations

Balogh, B., 2015. *The associational state: American governance in the twentieth century*. University of Pennsylvania Press. Introduction, and chapter 5.

Cohen, J. and Rogers, J., 1992. Secondary associations and democratic governance. *Politics & Society*, 20(4). *Selected pages*:

For further reading:

Berry, J.M. and Portney, K.E., 2011. The group basis of city politics. In *APSA 2011 Annual Meeting Paper*.

- **Dec 18 at 12:00 pm** Final exam due