Topics in American Politics: Interest Groups  
Political Science 319  
Fall 2004

Class Time: Monday 01:30-04:20  
Classroom: 176 Schaeffer  
Instructor: Fred Boehmke  
Office: 361 Schaeffer  
Office Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 2:00-3:00, or by appointment.  
Email: frederick-boehmke@uiowa.edu  
Phone: 335-2342  
Web Page: http://rubagalo.polisci.uiowa.edu/~fredb/Classes/polisci319  
Mailing List: polisci319@rubagalo.polisci.uiowa.edu  
AIM: ProfBoehmke

Course description

Grades will be based on four components: class participation (35%), research proposals (35%), a research project (20%) and (about) three written assignments (10%).

Course Requirements

1. Class participation (35%).  
   This is a discussion class, so you are expected to complete the reading before class and come prepared to discuss it. This implies the ability to answer the following questions: 1) What is the central research question? 2) How is it tested? and 3) Are there any alternative tests or improvements that could be made? What are the implications of the paper for other studies and future research? I reserve the right to put these questions in quiz format if you do not come to class prepared.

2. Research Proposals (35%).  
   Over the course of the semester you will complete research proposals based on the data sets listed below. The purpose is to practice developing research ideas and to familiarize you with some very useful data sets on interest groups. Proposals should outline the hypotheses to be tested, the method of analysis, the variables used in the analysis and the relevant literature (as discussed in class). Your proposals should be about 1000 words and must be distributed to your classmates the Friday before we discuss them. I do not expect every idea to be a good one; rather I want you to practice coming up with ideas and to learn how to pursue the ones with potential. Discussion will allow us to flesh each proposal out and hopefully will result in one or more good ideas per student by the end of the semester. If you wish to prepare a qualitative research proposal, it must be on same topic as the relevant data set. Here are the data sets I have in mind:
   a. Survey of State Interest Groups.  
   b. Agendas and Public Policymaking data.
c. State Lobbying Registrations.
d. Campaign Expenditures Data:
   i. Open Secrets,
   ii. Follow the Money,
   iii. FEC Web site.

3. Research Project (20%).
   You will turn one of your research proposals into a research project by the end of the semester. This is not meant to be a completed research paper. I just want you to carry out the empirical analysis described in one of your research proposals – the theoretical implications and hypotheses should have been described in the proposal. You should revise your research proposal as necessary and add a few pages describing the data and the methods you used to perform your analysis. The total length should be about 3000 words, excluding tables and documentation.

4. Written Assignments (10%).
   Over the course of the semester I will ask you to perform a couple of written assignments. One will be to write up a conference proposal for one of your research projects. Another will require you to write a review of an unpublished article. There may be a third along these lines.

Policy on Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangements. This is particularly important for the research proposals since the class is designed so that they can all be discussed in class at the same time. I understand that graduate students are busy and that fluctuations in your workload from other classes and assignments may tempt you to decrease your attention the current week’s assignment. Try not to let that happen – there will always be other projects claiming your attention during your career and it is best to learn to manage your time now. Obviously planning can help, but when you are pressed for time my advice is to read faster rather than not at all. If you have a more serious problem emerge, talk to me as soon as possible and we will make arrangements.

Books

All or significant portions of the following books will be used in the class. It may not be worth it to purchase all of them, but some should be considered indispensable if you are interested in interest groups as a research topic.


Here are some additional books that are used or that may be of interest beyond the topics covered in class.


Course Outline

August 23: Perspectives on Interest Groups and American Politics.

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:
August 30: Pluralism and its Critics.

Required Reading:

September 06: Labor Day (no class)

September 13: Collective Action.

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:


September 20: Bias in Organizational Mobilization and Representation.

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


**September 27: Population Ecology/ESA Model.**

*Required Reading:*


Wolak, Jennifer; Adam Newmark; Todd McNoldy; David Lowery; and Virginia Gray. 2002. “Much of Politics is Still Local: Multi-State Lobbying in State Interest Communities.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 27: 527-555.

*Additional Reading:*


**October 04: Discuss Research Proposals Using State Lobbying Registrations Data.**

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:


**October 11: Campaign Contributions and Votes.**

**Required Reading:**


**Additional Reading:**


October 18: Discuss Research Proposals Using Campaign Contributions Data.

October 18: Campaign Contributions, Lobbying and Votes.

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


October 25: Lobbying Tactics and Strategies.

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:


November 01: Discuss Research Proposals Using Survey of State Interest Groups Data.

November 01: Interest Groups and Direct Legislation.

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


November 08: Issues and Agendas.

Required Reading:

Additional Reading:

November 15: Discuss Research Proposals Using Agendas and Public Policymaking Project Data.

November 15: Lobbying networks.

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


December 29: Interest Groups and the Courts.

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:

Chapter 15.

**December 06: Social Movements.**

*Required Reading:*

*Additional Reading:*

**Other Information:**
Please visit the Political Science Department’s Website at [http://www.uiowa.edu/~polisci](http://www.uiowa.edu/~polisci). It is frequently updated regarding events and procedures in our department, changes in the Schedule of Courses, plus TA and faculty hours when available. You may also find current information on pre-advising, and registration. Our Vernon Van Dyke Computing Facility (Political Science ITC) is located in Room 21 Schaeffer Hall. Available hours are listed at our website and also posted outside Room 21 Schaeffer.