

Professor McAvoy
Political Science 329
Fall 2009

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American Interest Group Politics

Public participation is an important component of contemporary politics and policy making. This class critically engages students with theories and debates that surround concepts of participatory politics and its impact on policy and public opinion. We will be particularly concerned with the social and political context of group politics, focusing on basic questions such as: what conditions facilitate or hinder the emergence of interest groups? how are interest groups organized? why and how do people join these groups? how do activists choose tactics and strategies? and, how does group politics affect social and political change? In order to answer these questions in concrete terms, students will conduct research on political groups and provide presentations of their findings to the class.

Learning Objectives

Students will learn to:

- Assess and evaluate existing theories about activism and political participation
- Conduct original research on group politics
- Synthesize and organize information for oral and written presentation

Course Requirements

Students are required to complete:

- 1). A midterm examination (20%)
- 2). A ten to fifteen page paper based on an organization that you research (20%).
- 3). An oral presentation to the class based on interest group research (15%)
- 4). In-class presentations and debates (10%)
- 5). Quizzes (10%)
- 6). Assessment of Presentations (5%)
- 7). Final Examination (20%)

Speaking Component

Because a speaking-intensive course focuses on learning of content through active engagement in oral communication, the class will be interactive. You will be encouraged to share ideas, argue viewpoints, and engage in meaningful discussion. Individual improvement is a key component in the course. You will learn to analyze and evaluate your skills and set goals for improvement. You will receive constructive feedback from your instructor and peers.

Resources to Help with Presentations

The University Speaking Center is designed to help you improve your oral communication skills. You have the opportunity to practice your individual or group presentations and work with a trained consultant. The Center is located in 3211 HHRA Building. To schedule an appointment, call 256-1346. It is open Monday through Wednesday from 10am - 8pm, on Thursday from 10am

- 6pm, and on Friday from 9am -12noon. They also have a webpage with links to articles and other reference materials, www.uncg.edu/cst/speakingcenter

Required Texts

The following texts are available from the UNCG bookstore or on-line.

Berry, Jeffrey and Clyde Wilcox. 2008. *The Interest Group Society*, 5th edition. Longman Publishing.

Christopher Buckley, *Thank You for Smoking*. (The novel upon which the movie is based. This book is readily available at bookstores, libraries, and on-line book sellers, and the UNCG bookstore).

Goss, Kristin A. 2008. *Disarmed: The Missing Movement for Gun Control in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Additional readings are available through electronic reserve or Blackboard.

Honor Code:

I expect all students in this course to abide by both the letter and spirit of the university's academic integrity policy. Violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted. The full text of the Academic Integrity Policy can be viewed at:
<http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Policy/HonorPolicy.html>.

A fundamental tenet of all educational institutions is academic honesty; academic work depends upon respect for and acknowledgment of the work and ideas of others. Misrepresenting someone else's work as one's own is a serious offense in any academic setting and it will not be condoned. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation (e.g. papers, projects, examinations and assessments - whether online or in class); presenting, as one's own, the ideas, words or calculations of another for academic evaluation; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the instructors involved.

A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation, and shall be subject to the sanctions and other remedies described in The Student Code. Violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted.

Etiquette

During class sessions, I do not check my cell phone for messages, walk out of the room to take calls, text message, surf the Internet, check my email, go get something to eat from the vending machine, and neither should you.

Course Schedule

I. Introduction, Theories and Concepts

Week 1 (Aug. 25,27)

Berry & Wilcox, Chapter 1 & *Federalist* #10

II. Group Origins

Week 2 (Sept. 1,3) Organization and Mobilization

Berry & Wilcox, Chapter 2 & 3

Goss, Chapter 1

Week 3 (Sept. 8,10) Workshop on Class Presentations

Chapter 2: "Your First Speech." from *Between One and Many: the Art and Science of Public Speaking*," Steven R. Brydon and Michael D. Scott Available from UNCG E-reserves.

Chapter 11: "Delivery Skills" from *The St. Martin's Guide to Public Speaking*," Joseph S. Tuman. Available from UNCG E-reserves.

Instructions to access these readings are at:

<http://speakingcenter.uncg.edu/resources/ereserve/>

Goss, Chapter 2

Week 4 (Sept. 15, 17) Organization and Mobilization, cont'd

Goss, Chapters 3-5

Goss, Chapters 6 & 7

III. Interest Group Activities

Week 5 (Sept. 22, 24) Lobbying

Thank You for Smoking, by Christopher Buckley.

Week 6 (Sept. 29, Oct. 1) Lobbying and Lobbyists

Berry & Wilcox, Chapter 6 & 8

"Lobbying Boom" (July 22, 2005) CQ Researcher available through the UNCG library webpage.

Week 7 (Oct. 6,8)Lobbying the Legislature and the Courts

"Where Have All the Interest Groups Gone? An Analysis of Interest Group Participation in Presidential Nominations to the Supreme Court of the United States,"Karen O'Connor, Alixandra B. Yanus, and Linda Mancillas Patterson, Chapter 13 in *Interest Group Politics*. Available from UNCG E-reserves

Midterm Exam, October 8th

Week 8 (Oct. 15) Lobbying the Public

Berry & Wilcox, Chapter 7

Health Care Bill Summary (HR 3200) on Blackboard.

Other readings TBA.

Week 9 (Oct. 20, 22) PACs

Berry & Wilcox, Chapter 5

“527s: the New Bad Guys of Campaign Finance ,” Diana Dwyre, Chapter 9 in *Interest Group Politics*. Available from UNCG E-reserves.

Week 10 (Oct. 27, 29) Parties & Elections

Berry & Wilcox, Chapter 4

“Interest Group Money in Elections,” M. Margaret Conway, Joanne Connor Green, and M. Margaret Conway, Chapter 8 in *Interest Group Politics*. Available from UNCG E-reserves.

Week 11 (Oct. 29-31) Parties and Elections, cont'd

“Campaign Finance Reform” (June 13, 2008) CQ Researcher available through the UNCG library webpage.

IV. Examples of Interest Group Politics

Week 12 (Nov. 3, 5) Religion and Politics.

“ The Spirit Willing: Collective Identity and the Development of the Religious Right,” John C. Green, in *Waves of Protest*. Available from E-reserves.

“Getting the Spirit? Religious and Partisan Mobilization in the 2004 Elections,” James L. Guth, Lyman A. Kellstedt, John C. Green, and Corwin E. Smidt , Chapter 7 in *Interest Group Politics*. Available from UNCG E-reserves.

Week 13 (Nov. 10, 12) Group Politics and Business Interests

Berry and Wilcox, Chapter 10

Week 14 (Nov. 17, 19)

Presentations on Group Politics Research

*Research Papers are Due at the Time of the Presentation

Week 15 (Nov. 24)

Presentations on Group Politics Research

*Research Papers are Due at the Time of the Presentation

Week 16 (Dec. 1,3)

Presentations on Group Politics Research

*Research Papers are Due at the Time of the Presentation

Final Exam: Thursday December 10, 8 to 11am