COURSE SYLLABUS
DPI-332M
Interest Group Activism and Representation

This is a Period One module, with classes beginning on Thursday, September 1, 2011. The final class is on October 18, and a final paper is due on October 21.

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<td>Seminar Discussions: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:40-4:00 p.m., RG-20</td>
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Course Description. The first half of this module reviews the political science literature on interest groups in the United States. Students learn about the pluralist tradition in America, as well as commentary from the Olsonian paradigm. Attention is paid to the nonprofit sector. The class is run as a seminar, with students reading materials deeply and raising questions for group discussions. The second half is much more applied. A lobbying simulation finds students developing lobbying strategies and "visiting" a member of Congress. The “theoretical” and “practical” components are knitted together in a final paper.

Book (Available at the Harvard Coop, or on-line)


Readings. Some readings are available in a course packet, for sale at the Course Materials Office (CMO), which is on the ground floor of the Belfer Building; and others are available on the Class Web Page.

Grades are based on

1. Political Models Paper (4 pages, due September 8), 20%,
2. A group-graded lobbying simulation, 30%
3. A final paper (10 pages, due October 21), 40%
4. Participation in classroom discussions, 10%

We employ the HKS recommended grading distribution, as outlined by the school's academic council. Grades distributions may range as follows: A (10-15%), A- (20-25%), B+ (30-40%), B (20-25%), B- or lower (5-10%).

Lobbying Simulation: Students will be assigned to one of six groups. Each group will prepare a lobbying strategy for an issue to be assigned by the professor, and each group will then lobby an elected official (in the context of the simulation only) on the issue. Lobbying interactions will be videotaped and debriefed.
Final Paper (in lieu of a final exam): Address this question: “Why are some political groups powerful, others less so, and how might we think about groups that do not yet exist?” A successful paper will:

1. draw on the interest and lobbying groups active in a specific policy area (chosen in consultation with the professor) either in the United States or elsewhere,
2. utilize course readings, exploring at least two of the models raised in the Dye reading, and
3. employ historical reasoning and empirical data wherever possible.

The paper should be 10 pages in length and must include footnotes in the conventional form as well as a bibliography with at least 8 references.

Course Schedule

Class # 1–Thursday, September 1
Course Overview

Goals: Outline structure of the argument in Federalist 10. Compare Madison’s basic assumptions about how to define "groups" with de Tocqueville’s definition a generation hence. Explore differences (in the U.S. system) between interest groups and "parties." Students should come to class ready to outline Federalist 10.

Readings:
2. Alexis de Tocqueville, "Political Associations in the United States," in Democracy in America, Chapter 10. [Course Packet]

Class # 2 – Tuesday, September 6
Theory: Models of Politics I

Goals: Familiarize students with nine basic models of politics: the Institutional model, the Process model, the Group model, the Elite model, the Rational Choice model, the Incremental model, the Game Theory model, Public Choice model, and the Systems model. Each student may be called on to discuss one.

Reading:

Background Readings on reserve: (Please read at least two chapters in at least two of the books on reserve.)

Class # 3 – Thursday, September 8

**Theory: Models of Politics II**

Goals: Consider the Thomas Dye reading in more depth. The first written assignment (4 pages long) will be raised by students to give a sense for the tradeoff implicit in the ways that we use models.

Paper Assignment: Focus on these models – Institutionalism, Process, Group Theory, Elite Theory, and Rationalism. Choose a single article about a single policy area that was published in a newspaper or magazine during 2011. Critique that single article from the perspectives of three of the models. How would the story or interpretation be different in each case? The paper needs to be 4 pages long, must be turned in at the beginning of the class, and will be discussed in class.

Class # 4 – Tuesday, September 13

**Theory: What does the Interest Group System Look Like?**

Goals: Map the size and terrain of the interest group system. We will pay particular attention to differences between groups representing the "nonprofit" sector of the economy and the "profit" sector of the economy. Students, following the Baumgartner reading, should come prepared with definitions of "group," "interest" and "membership."

**Theory: Who Joins Interest Groups and Why?**

Goals: Understand the basic "Olsonian" dilemma, and explore solutions to it. Class discussion will focus on the kinds of incentives used to attract – and retain – members. Students should be ready to argue whether "new technologies" (such as the Internet) have the potential to reshape the basic calculus of group membership.

Readings:

Background Readings on Reserve: (These readings are not required for the class discussion on September 13, though students will find them to be especially valuable when preparing for the final paper.)


Class # 5 – Thursday, September 15

**Theory: Lobbying Strategies**

Goals: Outline the fundamental elements of a lobbying campaign. Learn how to identify whom to lobby, and which approach (or approaches) to use – inside lobbying or outside. Explore different thresholds for “truth” in inside and outside lobbying campaigns, and consider the limits of using interest groups to provide “information subsidies.”

Reading:

Class # 6 – Tuesday, September 20

**Practice: Building an Interest Group**

Goals: Examine a case of the building of an interest group. Learn from practitioners. Students should come with a list of potentially-generalizable lessons from the Common Cause example in Mundo. Understand that the Mundo reading is “unrealistic.” Try to identify elements that seem to make it so. And come prepared to discuss how, and what niche, you might be able to build an interest group.

Readings:
Class # 7 – Thursday, September 22  
**Practice: Grassroots Lobbying Strategies**

Goals: Explore the Interest Withholding Tax case in its many dimensions. Consider whether John Zorack’s admonitions hold up in this case. Consider the tensions between inside and outside approaches and the legitimacy of claims made from either position. And above all, read the case through the lens of “organizational maintenance” discussed on September 20.

Readings
2. HKS Case: "Interest Withholding Tax", Parts A & B [Class Page]. (Part C in class)

Background Readings (Not Required. On Reserve)

Class # 8 – Tuesday, September 27  
**Theory: Non-Governmental Organizations**

Goals: Explore the roots of the non-profit sector in the U.S. and internationally. Come to a better understanding of the peculiar history of NGOs in the U.S. and their relationship with governments. Assess the sources of legitimacy for NGOs in other countries and International NGOs operating across national boundaries.

Readings:

Class # 9 – Thursday, September 29  
**Practice: Lobbying Strategies**

Goals: Imagine yourself as the director of policy for the American Association of Retired Persons, as described in the case for today. What went “wrong,” how could you have worked to change the outcome, and what lessons do you – in your role in the organization – take from the case?

Readings
2. HKS Case: "Catastrophic Health Insurance for the Elderly" [Class Page]

Class # 10 – Tuesday, October 4

Theory & Practice: Grant writing and Maintaining NGOs

Goals: A theme of this module has been the fragile nature of groups and the constant struggle for funding. Today’s discussion outlines frameworks for writing successful grant applications. At a broader level, you will be asked to think through tradeoffs between writing grants “so that they’ll be funded” and pursuing broader goals for your group that may be at odds with funders’ interests.

Readings:

Class # 11 – Thursday, October 6

Practice: Lobbying Presentations to Peers

Goals: each of the six lobbying groups will present, to the full class, the basic approaches and appeals that will be used the following week. Mock-ups of all lobbying materials should be handed out in class.

Readings: none

Class # 12 – Tuesday, October 11

Practice: Lobbying Visits I

Goal: Experience what it is like to visit with a member of Congress to lobby. These visits will be videotaped for review during class on October 18

Readings: none

Class # 13 – Thursday, October 13

Practice: Lobbying Visits II

Goal: Experience what it is like to visit with a member of Congress to lobby. These visits will be videotaped for review at the next class.

Readings: none

Class # 14 – Tuesday, October 18

Practice: Review the Lobbying Simulation and Module Summary
Goals: Watch video of the lobbing visits. Reflect on what worked "well" and what did not. Hand out copies of the "best practices" materials from groups that did particularly well.

Readings: none

Friday, October 21: Final paper due in L303 by 5pm.

Simulation:
The Member:
   Representative Trey Grayson, Kentucky 4th CD
   Committee Assignment: Ways and Means, notably the Subcommittee on Trade -- http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Subcommittees/Subcommittee/?IssueID=4921
The Issue:
   Imported footwear products are leveled with an import duty under the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States.
The Proposal:
   Eliminate the import duty
The Bill:
   Sponsor: Representative Lynn Jenkins (KS-2) -- http://lynnjenkins.house.gov/. Several co-sponsors, though in an important signal, Representative John Kline (R-MN-2) is sitting this one out.
Representative Grayson’s position:
   Unknown. He is not a co-sponsor, but neither has he been asked to be one. The representative has a reputation as a “protectionist,” although that seems to depend on the issue. He has been a critic of the North American Free Trade Agreement.
Lobbying Group One:
Lobbying Group Two:
Lobbying Group Three:
   Red Wing Shoes: http://www.redwingshoes.com/Red-Wing-Video---The-Factory

Each group will structure their meetings with Representative Grayson around a specific ask. Deliverables must include a one-page brief, a ten-page background packet, and business cards and contact information for everyone on the team. Each group will designate a point person who will introduce the team to the Member and Staff. Each team will be able to place their “ask” in the context of the Member’s past voting and sponsorship history. Each team will have a sense for the impact of the “ask” on the Member’s constituency, and each team will be prepared to have their time with the Member cut short.