Course Description and Goals
Welcome to Interest Groups! This class is an overview of how and why groups and organizations choose to become and interest group. What does being an interest group mean? We will discuss the different positions and strategies groups can take to influence policy. Are some strategies more successful than others? Are all strategies available to all organizations? These are just a few of the questions that we will attempt to address in our readings and in your own research.

Student Expectations
To ensure a good semester, please observe the following class expectations:

- Respect for others is very important. Each person should feel comfortable sharing opinions and ideas in an appropriate fashion.
- Make every effort to be on-time to class. Latecomers are a distraction to me and your fellow classmates.
- Reading newspapers, doing anything on a laptop that is not related to class, working on crossword puzzles, listening to music, texting or doing any outside work is not allowed in class.
- Turn off all cell phones.
- You are expected to have all readings complete BEFORE class. Preparation before class will facilitate better class discussions, aid in your completion of in class assignments, and enhance your overall learning experience.
- You are also expected to complete all assignments on time. No late work will be accepted.

Learning Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students should be able to identify the differences between different interest groups and their strategies to influence policy.
2. Students will be able to discuss how recent campaign laws such as Citizens United has changed the way interest groups can shape campaign dialogue.
3. Students will also be able to identify ways that interest groups can appeal to potential membership and whether or not membership actually matters.

Contact Preferences
If you would like instruction and clarification beyond the lectures and discussions, please feel free to come to my office hours which are listed at the top of this page. If these times do not
work into your schedule, I am also willing to set up an appointment to meet with you at a time
that works for both of us. A face-to-face meeting is the most effective means of communication
for more complex issues and allows me to work with you at your individual level of
understanding. Please use email (juan.urbano@tamucc.edu) to voice any questions/comments
you may have that will involve a ‘quick’ response. Effort will be made to address you email
within 48 hours, if you do not receive an email within than time frame please send me another
email. I do not answer emails on the weekends and I will not answer exam questions on the day
of or the day before an exam.

**Students with Disabilities/Religious Needs:**
If you are a student with a disability or have special needs, please let me know during the first
week of class. In addition, students observing religious holidays that conflict with class
exams/presentations must let me know during the first week of class.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides
comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this
legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that
provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability
requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in
Driftwood 101.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the
classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-
5816.

**Academic Honesty:**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards
of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all
forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or
plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) If unsure
of what honesty entails or if for more information regarding the penalties for academic
dishonesty, please refer to the University Catalog.

**Academic Advising:**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as
they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must
be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic
Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Intellectual Property Issues**
Course materials prepared by myself, including the course syllabus, together with the content of
all lectures and review sessions presented by me are my property alone. Video and audio
recording of lectures and review sessions without my consent is prohibited. On request, I usually
grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are
only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is
obtained by me, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be
transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course. Any individual or organization violating my copyright on course materials and lectures could be subject to charges of academic misconduct and/or to civil action for copyright violations.

**Grading**
Your POLS 4390 grade is broken down in the following fashion:

- Attendance & Participation 10%
- Pop Quizzes on Readings 10%
- 2 Reaction Papers/Discussion Leader 20%
- 3 Exams 60%

A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=Below 60

**Grade Appeals:**
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts’ website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**Attendance and Participation**
If you would like to earn the full 10% for attendance and participation you must attend regularly and eagerly participate in a way that reflects careful preparation for class. This includes taking the initiative to introduce relevant ideas and asking/answering well-reasoned questions.

**Pop Quizzes on Readings**
I will randomly choose several weeks throughout the semester where I will ask you questions pertaining to the readings for the week. You will be allowed to use your notes that you might take while you read, but you will not be allowed to use your books or articles. Read the material before class each week. The quizzes will be optional for me to give on Monday and/or Wednesday.

**Reaction Papers and Presenter/Class Leaders**
At the beginning of the semester, each student will be required to sign up for 2 weeks in which you will decide to write a 3 page reaction paper and lead discussion on Monday or Wednesday of our schedule, usually Wednesday. We will decide the day of the week on a case by case basis and dependent on the # of presenters in a week. You are free to choose any of the weeks that are available and any of the topics that we will be discussing throughout the course. When you choose the weeks that you will be writing your reaction paper you will also be responsible for leading our class discussion. This will require you to be prepared to discuss the important topics and issues regarding the week’s readings, obtaining interesting and relevant information about the week’s topics outside of class, and formulating questions to bring up during class that will stimulate discussion and debate with your classmates. Your questions can come from readings...
that we read for the week or from your own research. Your questions should be provocative, interesting, and engaging to your peers and should create thoughtful perspectives and interesting debate.

*Students should strive for polished and academic writing in each category. They must be stapled, and all works should be cited. There will be NO MAKE-UP REACTION PAPERS. Please choose a week that will work for you.

**Exams**  
A total of 3 exams are administered in class during the semester (including the final) and will test students on the content covered in class and in the assigned reading materials. Each of the student’s exam scores count as 20% of the total grade (totaling 60%). The first exam will be multiple short answer questions and the other two will be research papers.

**Required Texts:**  

**TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR**  
As this topic is ever changing, I reserve the right to adapt our course calendar if new issues arise that begs for our attention.

**Week 1** 8/26-28:  
Introduction, review course syllabus, Holyoke-Intro & Cigler-Intro

**Week 2** 8/31, APSA Conference No Class 9/2 & 9/4:  
Intros Continued

**Week 3** 9/9-9/11:  
Holyoke-Chapter 1-Interests and Interest Groups  
Holyoke-Chapter 2-Collective Action and Interest Group Organization  
Cigler-Chapter 3-Interest Group “Policy Agendas”: What Are They? And How Might We Study Them?

**Week 4** 9/14-18:  
Holyoke-Chapter 3-Social Movements  
Cigler-Chapter 4-Changing Policies/Changing Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of the LGBT Movement  
Ciger-Chapter 5-The Tea Party as an Interest: Movement? Group? Brand? Faction?

**Week 5** 9/21-25:  
Holyoke-Chapter 4, 6, 7
Week 6 9/28-10/2:
10-30-15
Exam 1 Covering Chapters 1-5

Week 7 10/5-9:
Cigler- Lobbying 11, 14, 16

Week 8 10/12-16:
Cigler-7, 8
Holyoke-10

Week 9 10/19-23
Holyoke-8
Cigler-9

Week 10 10/26-30:
Exam 2 Covering Chapters 7-9

Week 11 11/2-6:
Marquez 1-2

Week 12 11/9-13:
Marquez 3-4

Week 13 11/16-20:
Marquez 5-6

Week 14 11/23-27, Thanksgiving Week
Discussion of research project

Week 15 11/30
Last Day of Class-Presentations of research projects

Final Exam Monday, December 7 11:00-1:30pm