INTEREST GROUPS IN THE U.S.

*The latent causes of faction are thus sown into the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity.... A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning Government and many other points...have in turn divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other, than to co-operate for their common good...*[And] the most common and durable source of factions, have been the various and unequal distribution of property.*

James Madison, Federalist 10

More than 230 years have passed since Madison wrote these profound and prescient words. Little has changed that would cause us to rethink them today. We define ourselves, in part, by interests (union members, the Christian Coalition, the NRA, even the American Association of University Professors, etc.). Interest groups have long stood at the center of the study of American politics and understanding interest groups is a necessary (though not sufficient) element in gaining an understanding of the culture and processes of American politics. Nonetheless, perhaps the one political pastime extensively engaged in by both average citizens and elected officials of virtually every political persuasion is railing against the influence wielded by “special interests” in American politics. Interest groups and their political practices are overwhelmingly looked upon with distaste – viewed as sneaky, corrupt, and ultimately even dangerous to America’s representative democracy.

**Course Objectives:**

Over the course of the semester we will attempt to engage in a critical examination of interest groups to determine the extent to which such views are accurate and have any basis in fact. Throughout the semester we will try to think critically about various matters related to the fundamental question of whether interest groups are, when taken as a whole, more beneficial or harmful to American democracy? In the process, students will develop the ability to:

- Recognize the importance of interest representation in a free society
- Explain the constitutional basis for the American interest group system
- Comprehend how interest groups are formed and maintained
- Understand the various types of interest groups and their differences
- Be cognizant of the tactics and methods used by interest groups to influence politics and public policy
- Realize the crucial role played by interest groups and social movements in fostering social change
- Understand the interests of lobbyists and their distinct role in interest representation and policy-making
• Recognize bias in interest group representation and its effects on government policy

Course Requirements:

Please read the course requirements listed below with care. It is important that there be no misunderstanding concerning them, so if you have any questions concerning them be sure to ask. They constitute the "ground rules" for the course, and I will operate under the assumption that you are aware of and understand them.

Attendance and Participation – Class attendance will significantly enhance your ability to perform well on exams and in the class more generally. I will introduce additional material in class and we will explore issues raised in the text in greater depth. Moreover, some of the more rewarding aspects of the course will come during discussions with other students. To assure the best and most enlightening in-class experience, I also expect each student to be aware of what is going on in contemporary American politics – that is, to follow the news. Much of what is going on is relevant to the study of interest groups, and there are many legitimate news outlets to choose from available on broadcast media, the internet, and in Bell library at no cost.

Required Readings -- all the readings listed in the syllabus that follows are considered required. However, the required readings are not limited to those listed in the syllabus. There are several reasons for this. I have limited the materials I ask you to purchase to keep your costs to a minimum, other important material may be published during the course of the semester, and our discussion may lead us in directions that make other readings useful. The basic texts for the course are: Thomas T. Holyoke, Interest Groups and Lobbying and Lee Drutman, The Business of America is Lobbying.

Reading Response Assignments – Class discussion will be in part structured around and informed by the required readings. To make the discussions work and be most productive, students should have read the material prior to attending class. The reading assignment is designed to encourage such reading and thought about the text material. For each text chapter and reading assignment, each student will be responsible for preparing a Reading Response prior to discussing the material in class. The purpose of this assignment is to assure that we are all “on the same page” for discussions and to aid you in reading the material “actively” and thinking about it more thoroughly. A guide for preparing the Reading Response Assignments will be provided.

Team Investigative Assignments: Each student will have the opportunity to further explore some group activities in an issue area of interest to them as part of an investigative team. The nature of the investigative assignment generally is to identify several interest groups in an issue area for the team to investigate, and have each member of the team focus on one of these groups for analysis. The Team Investigative Assignments take the place of the traditional term paper, and involve the development of a bibliography and shorter reports (typically 5-7 pages) and presentations. A list of issue areas and associated interest groups and more specific information on the nature and expectations of the assignments will be provided separately.
Course Evaluation:

Evaluation of the above requirements will be based on the point distributions and policies indicated below. Weights for those choosing to write a research paper are indicated in parentheses.

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Team Investigative Assignments  30%

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Course Policies:

**Late Assignments** -- Due to the importance of timeliness to the function of reading assignments, those turned in late will be assessed a penalty of 40%. Other course assignments will be assessed a 10% penalty if late. If you have a valid reason for a late assignment (verified illness, accident, unavoidable or university excused absence) you may receive an exemption from the above penalties. I should be notified before the due date or, in the case of a sudden emergency, within 24 hours after the due date.

**Make-up Exams** – If you have a valid reason for missing an exam (verified illness, accident, unavoidable or university excused absence) you should arrange to take a make-up exam prior to or within two weeks after the exam date. If you miss an exam without a valid reason, will be allowed to take a make-up exam for partial credit (85%).

**Extra Credit:** No individual extra credit opportunities will be available, but circumstances may arise during the semester for which extra-credit opportunities for the entire class would enhance the learning experience.

**Grading** -- My primary concern in grading your work is to maintain fair standards and assure that you learn what it is you should know. Thus, I think you should have the right to appeal if you feel that you have received a grade which does not reflect the quality of your work, or if you just don't understand why you received the grade you did. If you can orally demonstrate the knowledge that I felt absent in your written work, I will be happy to give you a more appropriate grade.

**Assignment Turn-around Time** -- Students have the right to expect assignments returned promptly. Therefore, I promise, barring unforeseen disasters, that your assignments will be returned within one week of their due date.
Consulting Rights -- You have a right to reasonable access to me for outside-of-class help. I will always be available during office hours, and will welcome students that “drop-in” at other times when I am in my office.

Freedom of Speech -- The student has the right to have his or her hand acknowledged for the purpose of asking questions or making comments at any time in class. Reducing confusion, providing clarification, or responding to student curiosity will be treated as an important part of the classroom process. We will also be discussing subjects and ideas that may be controversial. Students should feel free to express themselves on such matters, but also respect the opinions of those with whom one may disagree. Class discussion animated by questions and thoughtful opinions makes for a better class.

Freedom to Learn -- Universities must maintain standards of academic etiquette in order to effect an atmosphere conducive to learning. Students are expected to help maintain such an atmosphere by demonstrating courtesy to one another both in and out of the classroom. In the classroom all students should consider the right of others to have the opportunity to learn, and behave in a manner that best preserves that right. Talking to one's neighbor(s) during class lectures or general discussions, chronic lateness, leaving class before it has been dismissed, etc., is inherently disruptive and thus injurious to others' opportunity to learn. Students who are unable to respect the right of others to learn may be asked to leave.

Academic Integrity -- Cheating or plagiarism on an assignment or test, or failure to complete any of the course requirements will result in a zero grade for the assignment in question. If you are in doubt about what practices might constitute plagiarism, consult with me or your academic advisor.

Dropping a Class -- I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. Events can conspire in such a way to make dropping a course necessary or wise, however. In the case of this class, I hope you will consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is necessary or wise. Current university policy designates November 15th as the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W.” After this date a student is not allowed to drop a course. This means that if you have not dropped by this date, you will receive a regular letter grade even if you don’t complete the course. Any outstanding assignments will, therefore, “count” and have a very damaging effect on your grade.
Notifications

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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Grade Appeals Process -- As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that she or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf). For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

Disability Services -- 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, or 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.
SYLLABUS

Part I: Overview and Theoretical Matters

1. Interest Groups: What Are We Talkin’ about?
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Introduction & Chapter 1

2. Some Deep Thoughts (and some not so deep)
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 2
   Drutman, Chapter 1

3. Interest Organization and Maintenance
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 4
   Drutman, Chapters 2 & 3

4. Lobbyists and Influence
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 5
   Drutman, Chapter 4

5. What Interest Groups are Not: Social Movements and Political Parties
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 3

Part II: Means and Methods of Influence

6. Interest Groups and the Legislature
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 6
   Drutman, Chapter 6

7. Lobbying beyond the Legislature: The Executive and Judiciary
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapters 7 & 8

8. Amplifying Influence: Leveraging allies and enemies
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 9
   Drutman, Chapter 5

9. Amplifying Influence: The Pervasiveness of Lobbying
   \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Drutman, Chapters 7, 8 & 9

10. Amplifying Influence: Elections and Money… So much money
    \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 10

11. Deep Thoughts II: Representation, Power, and Responsiveness Bias
    \( \textit{READINGS:} \) Holyoke, Chapter 11
    Drutman, Chapter 10