

Political Parties and Interest Groups

PLSC 426
Thomas 217
Mon-Fri 10:15 am - 12:15 pm

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Course Website: Canvas
Office: Pond Lab 314
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1 to 2:30 pm

Course Description:

The 2016 election revealed some stark divisions within political parties. Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders were cast as threats to their respective parties. But what exactly are political parties? Are they the Congressional caucuses? Primary election voters? The DNC and the RNC? Are parties controlled by “special interests” like Planned Parenthood, unions, the Tea Party or the Chamber of Commerce? Why do all these interest groups even form? This course will tackle questions about what political parties are, why they are so important, and what exactly they do. We will also cover interest groups, how they form, what they do, and what the relationship is between interest groups and political parties.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course you ought to be able to critically evaluate claims about the roles of political parties and interest groups. Popular discourse about these two entities consists mainly of negative claims about their roles in corrupting the political process. By the end of this course you should be able to evaluate these claims and make your own decisions about what roles political parties and interest groups do play. This requires a set of knowledge:

1. What political parties are, how they operate, and what motivates their creation. This includes how parties operate as electoral devices but also as organizations within legislative bodies.
2. Why interest groups exist, what sort of tactics they use, and how they mobilize membership.
3. The sorts of interest that parties and groups represent.
4. The relationship between political parties and interest groups (and other sets of actors).
5. How to test theories of political parties and interest groups.

Finally, you should be able to integrate these different sets of knowledge so that you can be an informed consumer of media.

Course Policies:

Respect: This course will discuss and tackle issues where opinions can differ, and where opinions can be strongly held. We will do so with respect for all members of the class, in a way that everyone feels welcome to share and discuss. It is also important to remember that this is a *political science* class, not a discussion of politics. We will be discussing how interest groups and parties represent issues, but we will not, necessarily, be discussing our own opinions on the issues. I do not expect anyone to be detached from the subject matter, as these are important subjects, but I do expect everyone to remain focused on the goals of the class: understanding political parties and interest groups.

Preparation: This is a 400 level courses and so you will be expected to do the readings for the day prior to coming to class. In addition, given the nature of the course, I expect you to be aware of current events. Class discussion will revolve around translating what we have been discussing in class to contemporary actions by political parties and groups. As such, you will be better prepared to participate if you are aware of what is happening.

Technology: In the class you are expected to be focused on what is going on within the class. Laptops are more than welcome, but should not be a distraction from participation.

Email Policy: I will check email between 8am and 9pm, and will try to always respond to any contact within 24 hours. Although I do not expect formality in email communications, I do expect you to respect that emails are not a costless act.

Grade Distribution and Assignments:

Item	Percentage
In-Class Participation & Assignments	30%
Two Memos	15% each (30% total)
Midterm	20%
Final	20%

Course Participation & Assignments: This will be based on attendance, participation in class discussions, and in-class assignments. This is only a month long course and so missing a class can quickly put you far behind. Life happens though, and so everyone is granted two absences, no questions asked. If you miss more than two classes, you will need to complete an alternative assignment to receive participation credit. Notes on class participation:

- Focus on quality over quantity. You don't have to constantly be speaking to receive full credit for participation. A few thoughtful comments are worth as much as a multitude of irrelevant remarks.
- Participate \neq answer. Do not feel like you always have to be answering a question to participate. Asking questions is just as valuable as answering questions. This could include clarifications—was there something you didn't understand in the reading or the lecture?—or following up on someone else's point.

Two Memos: You will be asked to write two memos. The purpose of these memos is to get you to apply some of the concepts we are working with to contemporary events. You will have to do research on parties or interest groups in the United States and then write up your findings. Each

memo should be no more than two pages double spaced. There are four potential memos, you will select two of them to complete, one from the “Party memo” options and one from the “Interest group memo” options. There are additional suggestions about how to tackle the memos on canvas.

Party Memo: You must submit one of the following memos by the beginning of class on Friday May 19th.

- **Partisan Identification:** How do partisans conceive of different political issues? Select a political issue. In one paragraph summarize the issue. Then find polling data on the issue, look to see if there is differences in opinion based on partisanship and explain what you find. Finally, look on party websites to see if the parties have positions on these issues. What is the relationship between party organizational positions and voter positions? If the parties do not have an opinion on this issue, why do you think that is the case?
- **State Comparison:** Select two states, look at the websites of either the Democratic or Republican state party organizations for what issues they focus on. Look also to see if there are legislative caucus websites. What issues do they bring up? Write a memo discussing what the party in each state focuses on, and how the party varies between the two states. Hypothesize what might be leading to these differences and suggest what you could do to test if your hypothesis is right.

Interest Group Memo: You must submit one of the following memos by the beginning of class on Monday June 5th.

- **Issue Areas:** Pick a political issue. Find two groups, one on each side of the debate. In one paragraph summarize the issue. Then for each group explain their position on the issue, who they represent, and what sort of tactics they use. All of this should be available on their website.
- **Interest Groups & Parties:** Pick a political issue. Find two groups, one on each side of the debate. In one paragraph summarize the issue. For each group I want you to investigate if they support candidates of particular parties. Write about the degree that each group supports certain candidates. Speculate on why these groups would support certain candidates.

Midterm: Will cover the first two weeks of content (political parties) and will take place on Monday, May 22. We will discuss the format of this test prior to it.

Final: Will cover the second two weeks of content (interest groups) and will take place during the finals period. We will discuss the format of this test prior to it

Extra Credit (*up to an additional 5%*):

There is one possible extra credit assignment. You can select one movie or TV show that heavily features political parties or interest groups and discuss and apply what we have learned to what happens in the movie. For example, you can discuss the roles of parties in an episode of *The West Wing* or *Veep*, or lobbyists in the movie *Thank You For Smoking*.

What you turn in **must be 2 pages, double spaced, begin with a half page summary of the movie or show, and then must apply at least five terms from the class** to the events within the story. You **must receive approval from me on what you will watch prior to submitting** the extra credit. Extra credit can be submitted up to the last day of class (June 5th).

You may receive up to 5 extra points on your final grade (for example taking an 87% to a 92%), but the quality of your write up and application of terms will dictate how many of these 5 possible points you receive.

There are NO other extra credit possibilities

Make-up Work: In the event of an excused absence—from a University-sanctioned activity, illness, religious observance, or family emergency—you have the opportunity to make up any in-class exercise missed during your absence. If you know in advance that you will be absent, please contact me beforehand so we can make arrangements about make-up work. If your absence is unexpected please contact me as soon as possible. You will have one week from the day you return to class to make up a missed assignment

Late work policy: In order to receive a deadline extension you should contact me more than 24 hours before the deadline (by 10:15am the day prior to when a memo is due). If an assignment is turned in late without an extension but within 24 hours of the due date, your grade will decrease by 5 percentage points (a 95% would become a 90%). For every additional 24 hours after this it loses another 5%.

Letter Grade Distribution:

≥ 93.00	A	77.00 - 79.99	C+
90.00 - 92.99	A-	73.00 - 76.99	C
87.00 - 89.99	B+	60.00 - 69.99	D
83.00 - 86.99	B	<59.99	F
80.00 - 82.99	B-		

Academic Integrity:

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one’s work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on

academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: <http://laus.la.psu.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/college-policies>.

Disability Services:

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807 (V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services website at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>. In order to receive consideration for course accommodations, you must contact ODS and provide documentation (see the documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/guidelines>). If the documentation supports the need for academic adjustments, ODS will provide a letter identifying appropriate academic adjustments. Please share this letter and discuss the adjustments with your instructor as early in the course as possible. You must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of each semester.

Course Outline:

Monday, May 8: Intro to Political Science

- For background on regression: <http://egap.org/methods-guides/10-things-know-about-reading-regression-table>

Tuesday, May 9: Parties and Groups - Their Roles and History

Read one of the following:

- George Washington’s Farewell Address: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp
- James Madison, Federalist No. 10, and Alexander Hamilton or James Madison, Federalist No. 51. <https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers>

Wednesday, May 10: Parties as Organizations

- Skinner, Richard, Seth Masket and David Dulio. 2013. “527 Committees, Formal Parties, and Party Adaptation.” *The Forum* 11(2):137-156.

Thursday, May 11: Parties and Elections

- McGhee, Eric, Seth Masket, Boris Shor, Steven Rogers, and Nolan McCarty. 2014. “The Primary Cause of Partisanship? Nomination Systems and Legislator Ideology.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2): 337-351

Friday, May 12: Partisan Identification

- Taub, Amanda. 2017. “Why Americans Vote ‘Against Their Interest’: Partisanship” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/12/upshot/why-americans-vote-against-their-interest-partisanship.html>

Monday, May 15: Who do Parties Represent?

- Brown, Robert D. 1995. “Party Cleavages and Welfare Effort in the American States.” *American Political Science Review* 89(1):23-33.

Tuesday, May 16: Parties in Congress

- Chapter 2 of Aldrich, John. 2010. *Why Parties?*

Wednesday, May 17: Parties in the States

- Barrileaux, Charles. 1997. “A Test of the Independent Influences of Electoral Competition and Party Strength in a Model of State Policy-Making.” *American Journal of Political Science* 41(4):1462-1466.

Thursday, May 18: Local Parties

- Chapter 3 of Roscoe, Douglas D and Shannon Jenkins. 2015. *Local Party Organizations in the Twenty-First Century*

Friday, May 19: Parties in 2016

- **Party memo due by the beginning of class.**

Read one of:

- Dropp, Kyle and Brendan Nyhan. 2017. “Republicans Have One Big Incentive to Stick With Trump” *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/upshot/republicans-have-one-big-incentive-to-stick-with-trump.html>
- Grossmann, Matt and David A. Hopkins. 2017. “How different are the Democratic and Republican Parties? Too different to compare” *Washington Post* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/08/how-different-are-the-democratic-and-republican-parties-too-different-to-compare/>
- Victor, Jennifer N. 2017. “The Dangers of Partisan Animosity” *Vox* <http://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction/2017/4/3/15153780/partisan-animosity-danger>

Monday, May 22:

Midterm

Tuesday, May 23: What are Interest Groups

- Browne, William P. 1990. “Organized Interests and Their Issue Niches: A Search for Pluralism in a Policy Domain.” *Journal of Politics* 52:477-509.

Wednesday, May 24: Mobilization of Interest Groups

- Walker, Jack L. 1983. “The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America.” *American Political Science Review* 77(2):390-406.

Thursday, May 25: Who do Interest Groups Represent?

- Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Phillip Edward Jones, Hye Young You, Traci Burch, Sidney Verba and Henry E. Brady. 2004. “Louder Chorus – Same Accent: The Representation of Interests in Pressure Politics, 1991-2011.” *Issues in Governance Studies* 65(January). <https://www.brookings.edu/research/louder-chorus-same-accent-the-representation-of-interests-in-pressure-politics-1991-2011/>

Friday, May 26: Representation of Marginalized Interests

- Strolovitch, Dara Z. “Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender.” *Journal of Politics* 68(4):894-910.

Tuesday, May 30: Interest Groups as Lobbyists

- Hally Richard L and Alan V. Deardorff. 2006. “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy.” *American Political Science Review* 100(1):69-84.

Wednesday, May 31: Interest Groups as Agenda Setters

- Kimball, Davd C., Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Berry, Marie Hojnacki, Beth L. Leech and Bryce Summary. 2012. “Who Cares About the Lobbying Agenda?” *Interest Groups and Advocacy* 1:1-21.

Thursday, June 1: Interest Groups as Mobilizers

- Chapter 3 of Kollman, Ken. 1998. *Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies*. Princeton University Press.

Friday, June 2: Social Movements

- Chapter 1 of Tarrow, Sydney. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Monday, June 5: Interest Groups and Parties

- **Interest Group memo due by the beginning of class.**
- Bawn, Kathleen, Martin Cohen, DAvid Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2012. “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3).

Additional Resources

- Writing Center: <https://pennstatelearning.psu.edu/tutoring/writing>
- Students also may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and to seek confidential assistance at the Penn State Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center at (814) 863-0395. Visit their website for more information <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>. Also, crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from Centre County CAN HELP (1-800-643-5432), or contact University Police at (814) 863-1111.
- If you are facing issues of food insecurity please look into Lion’s Pantry <http://sites.psu.edu/lionspantrypsu/>
- If you experience an issue of bias during your time as part of the Penn State community, please report it here: <http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias>