

PSC 312
Political Parties and Interest Groups
Spring 2006

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Location: WRI C235
Time: Tu and Th 2:30 – 3:45

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Office Hours: Tu and Th 1:30 – 2:30; W 4 – 5:30

Scope and Purpose:

This course offers an in-depth understanding of interest groups and political parties in the American political system with particular emphasis given to the debate about the desirability of political parties and interest groups; whereas some critics lament that “partisan bickering” and “special interests” have a negative influence on American democracy, others argue that parties and interest groups provide an invaluable service by linking citizens to the electoral and policy processes. The purpose of this course is to help students better understand political parties and interest groups so that they may think critically about this debate and form their own opinions concerning the proper role that these institutions should play in the American political system. The course is divided into two parts. Part one focuses on interest groups with particular attention given to the origins and formation of groups and assessing group influence on the electoral and policy making processes. Part two examines political parties by assessing the party system and party organizations in the United States, as well as the role of parties in elections and governmental decision making.

Course Readings:

Berry, Jeffrey M. 1997. *The Interest Group Society*, 3rd edition. New York: Longman.

Bibby, John F. 2003. *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America*, 5th edition. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth.

Cigler, Allan J. and Burdett A. Loomis. 2002. *Interest Group Politics*, 6th edition. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly.

Royko, Mike. 1971 *Boss, Richard J. Daley of Chicago*. New York: Plume.

Course Requirements:

1. Exams (70%) – Two in class exams that are essay in format. Highest exam score counts for 40% of course total and lowest exam counts for 30% of course total
2. Quizzes (4 x 5% each = 20%) – Four quizzes that are multiple choice and short answer in format.

3. Classroom Contribution (10%) – Determined by students’ attendance, attentiveness, and contribution to class discussions.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred to the proper authority.

2. UNLV requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit the University’s copyright web page (<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>).

3. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well). If the assignments for this course conflict with other obligations, plan ahead and either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly. If you need to miss class because of observance of a religious holiday or because you represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity you must notify me no later than week three of the semester.

4. Lecture begins at 2:30 and ends at 3:45. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for its duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Repeated interruptions, including ringing cell phones and pagers and text messaging, will adversely affect your final grade. It is your choice to take this course; if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unable to meet its expectations, do not enroll.

5. It is expected that assigned reading will be completed prior to lecture.

6. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of material presented in lecture and readings. Rather, students are expected to synthesize course material in a coherent and succinct manner that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their understanding (e.g., you will need to think and apply yourself to do well in this course).

7. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you need to contact Disability Service (DS) for coordination of your academic accommodations (the DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in the Student Services Complex, Room 137, 895-0866, www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les).

8. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93.0	B = 86.9–83.0	C = 76.9–73.0	D = 66.9-63.0
A- = 92.9–90.0	B- = 82.9–80.0	C- = 72.9–70.0	D- = 62.9-60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9– 67.0	F = 59.9-0

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
January 17		Course Overview
Part I: Interest Groups and American Politics		
January 19	Pluralism	Berry: chapters 1 and 2 Cigler and Loomis: chapters 1-3
January 24, 26	Pluralism and Its Critics	Berry: chapter 4 Cigler and Loomis: chapters 4 and 15
January 31		Quiz 1
January 31, February 2	Interest Groups and the Elections Process	Berry: chapter 3
February 7, 9	Interest Groups and Campaign Finance	Berry: chapter 7
February 14,16	Interest Groups and Voters	Cigler and Loomis: chapters 6, 7, and 8
February 21		Quiz 2
February 21, 23	Direct Lobbying of Congress	Berry: chapter 5 and 9, pages 162 - 168 Cigler and Loomis: chapters 9 and 16
February 28	Informal Lobbying of Congress and Corruption	Berry: chapter 10 Cigler and Loomis: chapter 10
March 2	Lobbying the Executive and Judiciary	Berry: pages 168 - 185 Cigler and Loomis: chapter 11
March 7	Lobbying the Public	Berry: chapter 6 Cigler and Loomis: chapters 12 and 13
March 9		Exam 1
March 14, 16		Spring Break

Part II: Political Parties and American Politics

March 21, 23	Parties and Party Systems	Bibby: chapters 1 – 3 Royko: Introduction and chapters 1 and 2
March 28, 30	Party Organization and Activists	Bibby: chapter 4 Royko: chapters 3 and 4
March 31		Drop Deadline
April 4, 6	Parties and Voters	Bibby: chapter 8 Royko: chapters 5 and 6
April 11		Quiz 3
April 11, 13	Parties Nominations	Bibby: chapters 5 and 6 Royko: chapters 7 and 8
April 18, 20	Parties and Campaigns	Bibby: chapter 7 Royko: chapters 9, 10 and Epilogue
April 20		Quiz 4
April 25, 27	Parties and Congress	Bibby: pages 406 - 433
May 2, 4	Parties, the President, and the Judiciary	Bibby: pages 377 - 405, chapter 10
May 9		Exam 2, 3:10 – 5:10

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.