POLS 303: Politics of Organized Interests
Department of Political Science
Fall 2018
MWF 12:00-12:50 pm (Clark C 359)

Professor: Dr. Mitchell Sellers (Mitchell.Sellers@colostate.edu)
Office: 326 Clark C Hall
Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesday 10:00-11:30 am (or by appointment)
Homepage: http://sites.temple.edu/msellers/

- To help me keep track of email messages, please include POLS 303 in the subject line of any email message you send to me.

Course Description and Objectives
Perhaps the one political pastime extensively engaged in and thoroughly enjoyed by both average citizens and elected officials is railing against the influence wielded by special interests in American politics. Business interest groups and their political clout are overwhelmingly looked upon with distaste, viewed as sneaky, corrupt, and ultimately dangerous to America’s representative democracy.

However, public interest groups also received greater attention in recent years. Much like the 1960s, social justice groups are fighting for social change in the 2010s. The Culture War includes: Black Lives Matter; the Christian Right; Environmentalists; the Feminist Movement (#MeToo); the LGBTQ Movement – just to name a few. These groups are fighting amongst themselves, along with against government and big business at times. This course examines the role and influence of interest groups in American politics by teaching students how to become effective interest group leaders.

The learning objectives are for students 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
- Increase their awareness 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 justice movements, such as the Feminist Movement and Black Lives Matter, in fostering social change
- Effectively participate in and take advantage of the American interest group universe

Required Text (copies are on reserve at Morgan Library)

Required Software: Echo 360
We will use the program Echo 360 to take attendance, quizzes and foster discussion throughout the semester. The program is free for students. It allows students to use their computers or smart phones to answer questions and take attendance in class. Texting in answers is also
possible. For alternative ways of participating, such as on paper, please speak with Dr. Sellers. There is no penalty if you do not have these electronics, but you will be asked to sit towards the front of the class, so that you can quickly hand in your answers on paper.

**Required Videos (copies are on reserve at Morgan Library)**
* 100 years (2016) (1 hr. 15 min)
*** A Class Apart (2009) (1 hr. 29 min)
* AWAKE: A Dream from Standing Rock (2017) (1 hr. 28 min)
* The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution (2015) (1 hr. 29 min)
* Dirty Money (episode 3) (2018) (1 hr. 6 min)
God in America (episodes 5 and 6) [Free here](#)
* KKK: The Fight for White Supremacy (2015) (52 min)
*** How to Survive a Plague (1 hr. 49 min)
* Water & Power: A California Heist (2017) (1 hr. 27 min)

*Available streaming on Netflix
**Available streaming through Audible
*** Available on YouTube

**Class Participation/Attendance**
Students are expected to do the readings, attend class, and participate in class discussions. My lectures will be organized around the topics and readings found in the schedule outlined below. Lectures will include interactive discussion of the core themes of the readings. Students should **read the assigned literature before class** in order to participate. **If a class is canceled due to extenuating circumstances, a video lecture may be posted to keep us on track.** I will do my best to not cancel any lectures. **As with all the required assigned materials, students are responsible for content covered in these makeup video lectures as well.**

You are responsible for the content of all classes, including issues raised in the spontaneous class discussions. Attendance may be checked at random throughout the semester. Also, note that class **participation accounts for 15% of your grade, so missing classes will negatively influence your final grade.** As a matter of mutual courtesy, please let the instructor know when you’re going to be late, when you’re going to miss class, or if you need to leave early. Please try to do any of these as little as possible. If you must miss a class, please request notes from your classmates prior to contacting me (then you can come to my office for questions).

**Class Discussions**
The course will have a series of discussions throughout the semester (9 discussion days with 4-5 students participating as leaders in each discussion). Rather than outright debating, each student that serves as a discussion leader for the day will propose solutions or policy reforms to address the problem for the discussion day (transparency, attack ads, political tactics etc.). You are to act as the advocate of your solution for the day. This includes introducing your proposal at the start of class and continuously promoting/encouraging discussion of why these reforms would help. See instructions in Canvas for more details.
Discussion days are selected at the start of the semester. In addition to leading discussion, students are expected to write a 400-600 word paper (due 2 days before the day of their discussion), where they discuss the problems outlined by the assigned materials. The paper will then provide a brief overview of 2-3 possible solutions to the problems discussed. **Students are expected to bring in evidence from current events, scholarly articles or reputable news sources to support the arguments made in their paper and during the discussion.**

Students are expected to attend all discussions. The paper is worth 5% of your final grade, your performance in leading discussion is worth 5%, and your participation in other discussions is worth 10%, for a total of 20% of your final grade. A more detailed explanation of what is expected from discussion participants is provided on Canvas.

**Essays**

Students are expected to write two essays. These essays are intended to stimulate student engagement with the content and to prepare students for upcoming exams. The paper should be between 1,500-1,750 words (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins) and must include a References page (not part of the word count) if outside sources are utilized.

**Essays must be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 pm MST on the due date.** Any assignments submitted after midnight will be treated as late regardless of an excused attendance (submission is online and can be done early). Grades and comments will be returned via Canvas in the grades section. Each essay is worth 10% of your overall grade, which accounts for 20% of your final grade.

A more detailed explanation of what is expected from these essays and how to write a good paper is provided in the files section on Canvas. Note that Vericite evaluates all submissions for plagiarism. Be sure to cite any and all sources that you draw from. Any plagiarism will be given a 0 for the assignment, and will be submitted to the University for Disciplinary Review.

**Midterm and Final Exam**

There are two exams – a Midterm and Final (cumulative). Both exams will test your knowledge of the material covered in the lectures and in the assigned readings/videos. The Midterm will consist of 30 multiple choice questions and 10 matching questions (all questions are worth 2.5 points each). The Final will be 20 multiple choice questions and 10 matching questions (worth 60% of the final) with 2 essay responses (worth 40% of the final). The Midterm is worth 20% of your final grade; the Final is worth 25% of your final grade.

**Make-up Exams, Missed Classes and Late Papers**

As a matter of mutual courtesy, please let Dr. Sellers know when you are going to be late, when you are going to miss class, or if you need to leave early. Please try to do any of these as little as possible. If you must miss a class, please request notes from your classmates prior to contacting me. Students may then supplement their notes by coming to my office during office hours to view slides or ask questions. However, this should be done sparingly, and be aware that I do not give my powerpoint slides to students, except under extenuating circumstances.
It is expected that no students will miss any exams or classes. No make-up exams or participation points will be possible unless due to university excused absences, which will require documentation and must be brought to Dr. Sellers’ attention prior to the class that you know that you will miss. An unexcused absence on an exam results in a grade of 0%. Essays not turned in by their due date will incur a grade reduction of 10% every day after the deadline (and will not be accepted if it is more than 2 days late). Since essays are submitted through Canvas, this applies to all students (even those with excused absences).

**Extra Credit**
The class may receive up to **two points** of extra credit toward their **overall final grade** by working as a team on a scavenger hunt. That means if your final grade is an 88, the extra credit will bump your grade to a 90.

To receive credit for the scavenger hunt: you must complete a series of tasks worth different points. These tasks include: lobbying state legislators, governors and designing ballot initiatives. Strategize with each other and work like an interest group to complete tasks (your interest is getting an A). You get 1 bonus point bonus for earning 50 points, and 2 bonus points for earning 70 points. Dr. Sellers is always available to tell you the easiest/best way to complete tasks or answer any questions you may have. The Straayer Center may be allowed to help you on some tasks; however, remember that they are nonpartisan. **You are not allowed to break any laws**, but you can use any/all resources at your disposal (including friends and family) to accomplish your tasks. **The tasks must be completed by the last day of class: Friday, December 5. Also, pictures or it doesn’t count.**

**Summary of Grading**
- 15% Class Participation/Attendance
- 5% Discussion Paper
- 5% Discussion Leader Day
- 10% General Participation in Discussions
- 20% Essays (2 worth 10% each)
- 20% Midterm Exam
- 25% Final Exam

**Course Grades**
Final grades will be assigned based on the scale below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98% - 100%</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93% - 97.9%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% - 92.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87% - 89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83% - 86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% - 82.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77% - 79.9%</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% - 76.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% - 69.9%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.9% or less</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
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Unless a computational error has been made, grades will not be changed after the end of the semester. Only in the rarest of circumstances will I grant an Incomplete (‘I’).
**Academic Dishonesty**
Students are encouraged to discuss homework and reading outside of class, but I expect all submitted work to be the product of individual effort. Written assignments will be checked for plagiarism using Vericite, which is Colorado State University’s plagiarism detection software. Be sure to cite all sources.

Plagiarism, failure to cite texts or ideas borrowed from other sources, copying written assignments from other students, falsifying attendance records, and cheating during exams are all acts of academic misconduct. **All academic misconduct will result in a 0 for the assignment, and may be submitted to the University for Disciplinary Review.** This will drop your overall grade significantly. **Repeated academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the course.**

**Academic Freedom Policy**
Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities, which can be accessed through the following link: [https://president.colostate.edu/memorandum-of-understanding-on-academic-freedom/](https://president.colostate.edu/memorandum-of-understanding-on-academic-freedom/)

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**
This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Dr. Sellers privately to discuss the possibility of accommodations as soon as possible.

Colorado State University is committed to providing students with access to its facilities and the technology and information they need to succeed in and out of the classroom, and that these resources are accessible in accordance with applicable law. Students who need accommodations for coursework should contact Dr. Sellers and the Student Disability Center online ([https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/](https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/)), by phone (970-491-6385) or in person in TILT Building, room 121 to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**Counseling and Student Health**
Students may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you or a friend find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and to seek confidential assistance at CSU Health Network Counseling Services: CSU Health & Medical Center, 151 W. Lake St. Drop-in hours: Monday-Friday 9 am- 4 pm (970-491-7121) or Mental Health Crisis Intervention: (970) 491-7111 (after hours emergencies ONLY) Visit their website for more information: [https://health.colostate.edu/mental-emotional-health/](https://health.colostate.edu/mental-emotional-health/).

**FREE Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from:**

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK (8255).*
Course Schedule
Section 1: Introduction to Interest Groups
Week 1: August 20-24
Aug 20  Intro to Course
        Assigned:  None
Aug 22  Effective Communication and Strategy
        Assigned:  Syllabus
Aug 24  Coordinating Response/Electioneering Strategy
        Assigned:  Mayer, Semiatin and Graf (2017) Campaign Press Coverage – Changed Forever, Ch. 9, Campaigns on the Cutting Edge.
Week 2: August 27-31
Aug 27  Introduction to Interest Groups
        Assigned:  Nownes: Ch. 1
                   America’s Lobbying System is Broken (Huffington Post)
Aug 29  Introduction to Interest Groups
Aug 31  Collective Action Problems
Week 3: September 3-7
Sept 3  NO CLASS: Labor Day
        Assigned:  None
Sept 5  Introduction to Pluralism
        Assigned:  Nownes: Ch. 3
Sept 7  Critiques of Pluralism
        Assigned:  Federalist No. 10 (Federalist Papers)
Week 4: September 10-14
Sept 10 History of Interest Groups
        Assigned:  Nownes: Ch. 2
Sept 12  History of Interest Groups  
Assigned:  How Corporate Lobbyists Conquered American Democracy  
           (Atlantic)  
           Interest Groups, By Any Other Name (New York Times)  

Sept 14  Discussion 1: The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution  
Assigned:  Video  

**Section 2: A Look at Interest Groups**  
**Week 5: September 17-21**  
Sept 17  Avoiding Capture: Interest Groups and Political Parties  
 Assigned:  Nownes: Ch. 7  
Sept 19  Avoiding Capture: Interest Groups and Political Parties  
Sept 21  Avoiding Capture: Interest Groups and Political Parties  
 Assigned:  Sexual Harassment at Work in the Era of #MeToo (Pew Research)  

**Week 6: September 24-28**  
Sept 24  Big Business and Iron Triangles  
           Watch: Corporate Taxes (Last Week Tonight) (16 min)  
Sept 26  Big Business and Iron Triangles  
           When Poverty is Profitable (Atlantic)  
Sept 28  Discussion 2: Water & Power: A California Heist  
 Assigned:  Video  

****************************************************************************** Essay 1 Due in Canvas ******************************************************************************

**Week 7: October 1-5**  
Oct 1  Maintenance/Internal Politics  

Oct 3  Identity Politics
Assigned:  What are Identity Politics? (3 min)
Are Identity Politics Dangerous (Economist) (3 min)

Oct 5  Assessing Representation: When to know you are “captured”
Watch: Equifax (Last Week Tonight) (15 min)

Week 8: October 8-12
Oct 8  Discussion 3: AWAKE: A Dream from Standing Rock
Assigned: Everything

Oct 10  Midterm Exam

Oct 12  No Class
Assigned: None

Section 3: Think Like a Leader
Week 9: October 15-19
Oct 15  Policymaking: Knowing your options
Listen: Crack 101: Episode 2

Oct 17  Policymaking: Short v Long-term Plans
Assigned: The Logic of Bad Policies (US Newsweek)

Oct 19  Discussion 4: A Class Apart
Assigned: Video

Week 10: October 22-26
Oct 22  Outsider Strategies: Shaping Public Opinion
Assigned: Nownes: Ch. 4
Lobbying for the Faithful (Pew Research) (pages 1-5)

Oct 24  Outsider Strategies: Shaping Public Opinion
Assigned: #MeToo Has Changed Our Culture, Now It’s Changing Our Laws, (Pew Research)
Oct 26 Discussion 5: God in America: Episode 5 and Episode 6 (Click Here)
Assigned: Video

Week 11: October 29-November 2
Oct 29 Outsider Strategies: Mobilizing Support
Assigned: Nownes: Ch. 7

Oct 31 Outsider Strategies: Mobilizing Support
Assigned: Nownes: Ch. 9

Nov 2 Discussion 6: 100 Years and KKK: The Fight for White Supremacy
Assigned: Both Videos

Week 12: November 5-9
Nov 5 Outsider Strategies: Electioneering and Ballot Initiatives
Assigned: Nownes: Ch. 6
Interest Groups Report Major Political Contributions (Washington Post)

Nov 7 Outsider Strategies: Electioneering and Ballot Initiatives
Assigned: Astroturfing (Last Week Tonight) (17 min)
Colorado Ballot Initiative Issues to Watch in 2018
Public Policy Institute of California. How Interest Groups Use the Initiative Process in California. Research Brief. (Canvas)

Nov 9 Discussion 7: Incorruptible
Assigned: Video

Week 13: November 12-16
Nov 12 Insider Strategies
Assigned: Nownes: Ch. 5
Lobbying Battle begins over GOP Tax Bill (Washington Post)
The Solution to Lobbying is more Lobbying (Washington Post)

Nov 14 Insider Strategies
Watch: Economic Development (Last Week Tonight) (15 min)

Nov 16 Discussion 8: Dirty Money: Episode 3
Assigned: Video

Week 14: November 19-23
*************************** NO CLASS: Fall Break ***************************
Week 15: November 26-30
Nov 26  Coordinating Efforts
        Assigned: McClain and Stewart (2010) Coalition or Competition Patterns of Interminority Group Relations,” Chapter 5, Can We All Get Along? (Canvas)

Nov 28  Negotiations

Nov 30  Leadership Strategies/Styles
        Assigned: 15 Ways to Identify Bad Leaders

************************************************************************** Essay 2 Due in Canvas **************************************************************************

Week 16: December 3-7
Dec 3  Discussion Day 9: How to Survive a Plague
        Assigned:  Video

Dec 5  The Revolving Door and Course Wrap Up
        Assigned:  Nownes: Ch. 10
                  Shadow Lobbyists and the Revolving Door

Dec 7  Review Session
        Assigned:  Everything since Midterm

********************** Final Exam is Wednesday, December 12 from 7:30-9:30 am **********************

Important Dates:
    Sept 28  Essay 1 Due 11:59 pm
    Oct 10  Midterm Exam (In-Class)
    Nov 30  Essay 2 Due 11:59 pm
    Dec 12  Final Exam from 7:30-9:30 am (In-Class)

End Course Withdrawals ("W") Period, Repeat/Delete Deadline Monday, Oct 15, 2018
Last day of classes Friday, Dec 7, 2018