INTEREST GROUP POLITICS

Purpose: This course principally introduces students to the political science and political economy literatures on interest groups, with a special focus on how these groups operate in the context of American politics. This will include developing an understanding of the makeup of the group system, the contribution decision, the internal politics of organizations, and the role that groups play with respect to political institutions. As the study of organized groups cuts across many subdisciplines in political science and political economy (one of the reasons that groups are often viewed as understudied is because there are very few scholars interested in groups in and of themselves), this course might have a wide appeal.

Requirements: Course requirements include a short (2-3 pages) essay analyzing each week's readings, either as an overview or as a detailed “referee report” of one paper, and a longer final paper—either original research, a detailed literature review, or a research proposal (roughly 15 pages will suffice). Each week's essay should be submitted to me in electronic form by 9 a.m. on the day of class. Also, from time to time, I will ask students to present a given paper(s) in more depth.

Office Hours. I am located in Room 108 at Harkness (Department of Political Science/Wallis Institute of Political Economy). You can come by any time and I will see you barring extenuating circumstances. My phone number is x3-4903 and my e-mail is lrot@mail.rochester.edu.

Availability of Readings. Articles are generally available via the web (I will coordinate on any complications). Students should think about ordering books through Amazon.com or the like.

Grading. Grading will reflect your weekly papers, your class participation, and your final paper (weighted approximately 1/4, 1/2, 1/4).
Weekly Assignments

Week I: Introduction. (Sept. 6th)

Week II: Micro- and Macro-Perspectives (Sept. 13th).


Terry M. Moe. *The Organization of Interests*.


Lawrence S. Rothenberg. *Linking Citizens to Government*. Chapters 2-7 (or 1988 *APSR* article)


Week III. Lobbying: Purpose and Strategies—Part I (Sept. 20th)


Optional:

Gene Grossman and Elhanan Helpman. Special Interest Politics. Chs. 4-6 [Note this discussion includes an overview of important work by people like Battaglini and Krishna and Morgan on information aggregation; the student may also want to turn to the original work.]


Week IV. Lobbying: Purpose and Strategies—Part II (Sept. 28th)


Optional:


Week V. Campaign Contributions—Part 1 (Oct. 4th)

A. General Perspectives.


B. Who Organizes and Organizational Impacts.


Optional:

Grossman and Helpman, Chs. 6-10.


Week VI. Campaign Contributions—Part II (Oct. 11th)

C. Electoral Effects—Voter and Candidate Behavior


http://econ.lse.ac.uk/staff/prat/papers/handbook.pdf

Optional:


Week VII. Campaign Contributions—Part III (Oct. 18th)

D. Policy and Service


Optional:


Weeks VIII and IX. Presidency, Bureaucracy, and Judiciary. (Oct. 25th and Nov 1st).

Presidency:


Bureaucracy:


Optional:


Courts:

Gregory A. Caldeira and John R. Wright. 1998. Organized Interests Before the Supreme Court: Setting the Agenda,” [Note: Might want to also look at "Organized Interests and Agenda Setting in the U.S. Supreme Court." American Political Science Review 82:1109-1128, by the same authors]

Optional:


Week X. Alternative Lawmaking Options. (Nov. 8th)


Optional:


*Weeks XI and XII. Private Politics* (Nov. 15th; no class Nov. 22nd—work on projects)


Optional:


*Week XIII. Consequences and State of the Field.* (Nov. 29th).


Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth I. Leech. *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and Political Science*.


Optional:


*Week XIV. Student Presentations* (Dec. 6th).