

# POLI 100E

## INTEREST GROUP POLITICS

Summer Session I, 2020

---

<b>Instructor:</b> Huchen Liu	<b>Lectures:</b> 11 AM - 1:50 PM M & W (PST) on Zoom ( [REDACTED] 5)
<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:HUL045@ucsd.edu">HUL045@ucsd.edu</a>	<b>Office hours:</b> 2-3 PM Th on Zoom (same link)
<b>Teaching Assistant:</b>	Micah Farver ( <a href="mailto:mfarver@ucsd.edu">mfarver@ucsd.edu</a> ) <b>Office hours:</b> By appointment on Zoom ( [REDACTED] )

---

## 1 Course Description

In his iconic account of early American society *Democracy in America* (1835-1840), French aristocrat and diplomat Alexis de Tocqueville observed that the United States was “a nation of joiners.” He would still be right today, nearly two centuries later. Tens of millions of Americans belong in myriad organizations, many of which have political agendas. Political and policy processes in the American government make available various electoral and institutional avenues for organized interests to exert influence. What does this mean for democracy? On one hand, numerous groups’ utilization of these avenues to participate in politics is certainly a reflection and a pillar of healthy representative government. On the other hand, groups’ pursuit of political strategies and the consequences of who wins and who loses in policymaking bear enormous implications for the fairness of government policy and its accountability to the general public. These questions matter to all individuals interested in the nature of the American political system, and will guide us through a broad look at interest group politics in America over five weeks. At the same time, students will situate their learning in a more detailed exploration of specific policy areas, resulting in fairly in-depth knowledge of interest group politics specific to these policy areas.

We will strive to achieve the following learning outcomes:

1. Broad and current knowledge of the landscape of interest groups in American politics
2. Enumerating and defining political strategies available to interest groups based on the American political system
3. A basic understanding of analytic strategies with which researchers assess interest group influence and their conclusions
4. Conceptualizing the organizational complexities facing interest groups with political agendas
5. Relatively thorough understanding of the state of key government policy and advocacy in a specific issue area
6. Engaging in intelligent and multi-faceted evaluations of the role of interest groups in American politics

To these ends, this class combines a broad instructor-led overview of research on interest group politics (the “overview” component) with student-led exploration of it within specific policy domains (the “exploration” component). As such, this class equips students with knowledge on both political processes and government policies, as well as familiarity with common tools of political science research and how to evaluate research. Students are assigned policy domains early in the course, and the instructor-led overview and student-led exploration components progress simultaneously.

## **Instructor-Led Overview**

Each lecture is divided between instruction of key facts, rules, and research findings of interest group politics and more interactive discussion of assigned readings. Logically, the course material starts with an overview of the landscape of interest group advocacy in American politics - how many groups exist and of what kinds, what rights and responsibilities they have according to the law, and how groups have evolved in American history. Setting the focus on the contemporary, the class then discusses the main political processes that interest groups try to influence and their cooperative and adversarial relationships, with an eye on specific issue areas. The class then discusses in more detail several key avenues of influence available to interest groups in national politics - influencing elections, lobbying the legislative branch (Congress), and lobbying the executive branch (the presidency and the bureaucracy). The class then devotes one lecture to the more emergent fascination with foreign lobbying in American politics, provoked by controversies surrounding the 2016 presidential election and the ensuing Trump administration. The class ends with zooming in and then out: first looking within interest groups to examine their internal organizational issues and then looking back at the general landscape of interest group politics to debate its implications for the pluralist political ideal.

As a minimal gauge and inducement for students’ adequate absorption of the assigned readings, the class will include five easy reading quizzes to be given after lectures chosen by the instructor. They will be given on Canvas and announced in advance. They will be due no less than 24 hours after lectures conclude to allow students to view asynchronous lecture recordings.

## **Student-Led Exploration**

As the instructor-led overview progresses, students will explore their assigned policy areas, chosen from three to five of them, in relation to the recently covered course material. For example, students assigned to research interest group politics in national defense should explore which main political players exist in this policy area, what avenues of influence they utilize, what they do in these avenues of influence and to what effect, following the course material that covers these inquiries in broader terms.

To facilitate students’ effort to explore their issue areas, the class assigns three research reports which ask students to report their findings. Prompts to be circulated contain questions corresponding to the instructor-led overview that students should answer based on investigating assigned policy areas. During lectures, the instructor will introduce to students conventional sources of data and information and discuss how to produce research reports. Students should approach these reports as genuine opportunities for fact-finding and assume that there are few well-established correct answers. Students’ reports should be able to teach fellow students as well as the instructor about the issue-specific interest group politics. Thus, these reports are different from and much shorter

than full-fledged research papers but resemble journalism more.

## 2 Lecture Delivery

1. The instructor will endeavor to give all lectures synchronously (live) on Zoom. We recommend that students attend the synchronous lectures but will not take attendance; nor is attendance a formal component of course grading.
2. The instructor will record all lectures and upload them onto on the course web page on Canvas. Students can opt to view these recordings asynchronously.

## 3 Required Reading

There is no required textbook. All readings will be posted on the course web page on Canvas.

Note: The course schedule displays readings that students are expected to complete before each lecture.

## 4 Grade Structure

1. Best four of five quizzes ( $10\% \times 4 = 40\%$ )
2. Three research reports ( $20\% \times 3 = 60\%$ )

The teaching assistant Micah Farver will grade these assignments.

## 5 Academic Honesty

It is simple: Students must complete all graded assignments without collaboration with others.

## 6 Learning Disabilities

Students with University-documented learning disabilities should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs.

## 7 Course Schedule

Note: The course schedule may be continually updated as needed. Please check frequently for the latest version.

Date	Content	Reading
June 29	Landscapes of Advocacy	—
July 1	Processes and Issues; <b>Policy Areas Assigned</b>	Baumgartner and Leech (2001)
July 6	Avenues of Influence; <b>Prompt for Research Report 1 Released</b>	Kalla and Broockman (2016); Lipton and Williams (2016)
July 8	Influencing Elections	Lessig (2011); Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo and Snyder Jr. (2003)
July 13	Lobbying the Legislature; <b>Research Report 1 Due</b>	Hall and Deardorff (2006); Richter, Samphantharak and Timmons (2009)
July 15	Lobbying the Executive; <b>Prompt for Research Report 2 Released</b>	Potter (2017); Nelson and Yackee (2012)
July 20	Lobbying the Judiciary	Caldeira and Wright (1988); Epstein and Rowland (1991)
July 22	Foreign Lobbying; <b>Research Report 2 Due</b>	Lehren and De Luce (2020)
July 27	Organizational Issues; <b>Prompt for Research Report 3 Released</b>	Salisbury (1969); Lowery and Marchetti (2012)
July 29	Interest Group Pluralism	Kollman (1997); Gilens and Page (2014)
August 1	<b>Research Report 3 Due</b>	—

## List of Readings

Ansolabehere, Stephen, John M. De Figueiredo and James M. Snyder Jr. 2003. “Why Is There So Little Money in US Politics?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17(1):105–130.

- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Beth L. Leech. 2001. "Interest Niches and Policy Bandwagons: Patterns of Interest Group Involvement in National Politics." *The Journal of Politics* 63(4):1191–1213.
- Caldeira, Gregory A. and John R. Wright. 1988. "Organized Interests and Agenda Setting in the US Supreme Court." *American Political Science Review* 82(4):1109–1127.
- Epstein, Lee and Claude K. Rowland. 1991. "Debunking the Myth of Interest Group Invincibility in the Courts." *American Political Science Review* 85(1):205–217.
- Gilens, Martin and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3):564–581.
- Hall, Richard L. and Alan V. Deardorff. 2006. "Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy." *American Political Science Review* 100(1):69–84.
- Kalla, Joshua L. and David E. Broockman. 2016. "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(3):545–558.
- Kollman, Ken. 1997. "Inviting Friends to Lobby: Interest Groups, Ideological Bias, and Congressional Committees." *American Journal of Political Science* pp. 519–544.
- Lehren, Andrew W. and Dan De Luce. 2020. "Foreign Governments use U.S. Lobbyists to Promote Their Efforts Fighting the Coronavirus Outbreak." *NBC News* . April 2.
- Lessig, Lawrence. 2011. Chapter 9 - Why So Damn Much Money. In *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress - and a Plan to Stop It*. Hachette UK.
- Lipton, Eric and Brooke Williams. 2016. "How Think Tanks Amplify Corporate America's Influence." *New York Times* . August 7.
- Lowery, David and Kathleen Marchetti. 2012. "You Don't Know Jack: Principals, Agents and Lobbying." *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 1(2):139–170.
- Nelson, David and Susan Webb Yackee. 2012. "Lobbying Coalitions and Government Policy Change: An Analysis of Federal Agency Rulemaking." *The Journal of Politics* 74(2):339–353.
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2017. "More than spam? Lobbying the EPA through public comment campaigns." *Brookings* . November 29.
- Richter, Brian Kelleher, Krislert Samphantharak and Jeffrey F. Timmons. 2009. "Lobbying and Taxes." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4):893–909.
- Salisbury, Robert H. 1969. "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups." *Midwest Journal of Political Science* pp. 1–32.