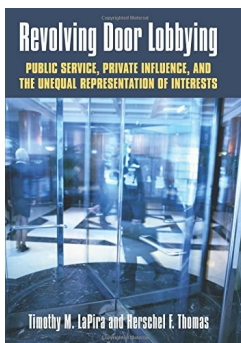


Prof. Suzanne M. Robbins
205 Anderson Hall
Suzanne.Robbins@ufl.edu
Office Hours: MW 100-230

POS 4463-680

Meets: MWF 1145-1235

Location: Anderson 101



Course Goals

- Distinguish between myths and reality of interest group representation and influence in American politics.
- Distinguish between assumptions and evidence in evaluating arguments.
- Synthesize a diverse literature to make conclusions about interest group politics.
- Improve oral and written presentation skills.
- Develop research skills.

Interest Group Politics

The University of Florida

Spring 2018

Course Overview

Interest groups are a critical link between citizens and the institutions of government. To understand American politics – how it really works – you must understand where groups come from, what they do, and how they influence public policy. This semester we will survey the role of interest groups in American politics, including representation, lobbying, and electioneering.

The first part of the semester, we investigate the role of groups in the American polity, why and how groups form, who joins groups and why, and how groups survive. That is, we will primarily learn about group aggregation and representation. In the second half of the semester, we will investigate questions of influence, or what groups do and to what end. Our look at group activities will lead us through topics such as lobbying, political action committees (PACs), campaign contributions, protest, and the like. We will consider normative questions about

the role of groups – e.g., do they undermine democracy or enhance it? We will also consider empirical questions – e.g., what influence do groups really have? Can we know?

Students are expected to have basic knowledge of American politics before taking this course. Since this is an upper division course, you will learn to explain theories, models, hypotheses and data to one another. Thus, we will read a great deal of literature and discuss it in detail. I reserve some time for lectures to clarify particularly difficult ideas, introduce key questions and concepts and help stimulate discussion. Neither the lectures nor discussion is a substitute for reading the material, nor will we simply restate or summarize the readings in class. Students should leave the course with a two main accomplishments: a greater understanding of the role of interest groups in American politics *and* better research, writing, and reasoning skills.

Reading

Reading before class is absolutely critical. I've assigned two texts and many readings (on Canvas) to kick-start our discussion this semester. The textbooks, pictured left are:

- Cigler, A. J. , Loomis, B. A., & A. J. Nownes. 2015. *Interest Group Politics, 9th Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- LaPira, T. M. & H. E. Thomas. 2017. *Revolving Door Lobbying*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

The readings on Canvas include many classics, including works from Madison, Bentley, Dahl, Schattschneider, Truman, and Olson. You will also read many contemporary scholars such as Berry, Hojnacki, Yackee, Merry, and Strolovich. The required reading is listed in detail in the appropriate modules on Canvas. The overall module schedule is on the reverse.

How to Succeed in this Class

Go to class. The class is organized as a advanced seminar. I will mix lectures with discussion and workshops. Pay attention when I lecture and ask questions. Participate during workshops. You can't do well if you skip class.

Move beyond parroting talking points to using **critical thinking skills**. Ask yourself, "why", "if this is true, what else must be true," and "what is this an example of?" Think about implications and **make connections across the readings**.

Read. Read the books, articles, and major newspapers. You'll be able to follow the material more easily, participate meaningfully, and learn more.

Complete all the assignments on time and don't miss exams.

Schedule

For specific readings, please visit the appropriate module in Canvas.

MODULE 1

January 8 Introduction

MODULE 2 Group Formation

January 10-12 Pluralism
January 15 NO CLASS: MLK Day
January 17 Pluralism
January 19 Guest Speaker: Rep. Altmire
January 22 Pluralism
January 24-26 First Critiques of Pluralism
Jan. 29– Feb. 2 Collective Action Theory
February 5-12 Neo-Pluralism
February 14-19 Maintenance/Internal Politics

MODULE 3 Representation

February 21-23 Identity Politics
February 26-28 Assessing Representation

Midterm

March 2-5 NO CLASSES-UF SPRING BREAK

MODULE 4 Lobbying & Influence

March 12 Influence
March 14-19 Policy Making
March 21-23 Strategy
March 26-30 The Revolving Door
April 2-4 Influence & Representation

Module 5 Elections & Influence

April 6 NO CLASS— MPSA
April 9-16 Campaign Activity
April 18-25 Campaign Finance Law

Final Exam 1000-1200

Writing Assignments

Feb. 2 Essay 1 (Benefits)
Feb. 23 Essay 2 (Identity)
Mar. 30 Essay 3 (Revolving Door)
Apr. 25 Comparative Paper

Exam Dates

March 2 Midterm
May 3 Final (1000-1200)



How Students are Evaluated and Graded

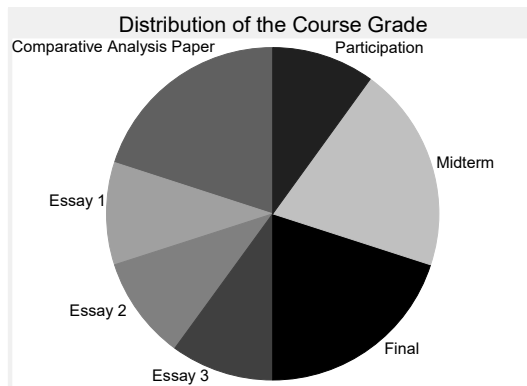
Exams: Two exams will test your mastery of the material covered throughout the course in the readings, lectures, and discussions. Questions will require that you think critically and use analytical skills (don't just memorize). Exams will be in class, closed note and be of mixed format (some combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay). The exams are comprehensive in nature. (20% each).

Short Essays: Three short essays have been designed to help you draw connections across the literature within a module. (10% each)

Participation/Attendance: Read the assigned readings before class – this is absolutely critical to your success. Raise questions about what you do not understand, question assumptions, demonstrate a firm grasp of the material. **You must attend class to participate.** (10%)

Comparative Analysis Paper: Each student will write a comparative analysis essay of 12-15 pages on a pair of organizations I assign. (20%)

More details assignments & grading are on Canvas.



Grading Scale

Lower boundaries for grades:

| | | | |
|----|-------|----|-------|
| A | 94.0% | C | 73.0% |
| A- | 90.0% | C | 70.0% |
| B+ | 87.0% | D+ | 67.0% |
| B | 83.0% | D | 63.0% |
| B- | 80.0% | D- | 60% |
| C+ | 77.0% | | |

Note that 86.97% is less than 87.0%, and is therefore a "B". I only round the final course grade, and only to the nearest 10th.

Have a question? More information is on Canvas!

Policies and Other Requirements

Office hours: To protect your federally-protected privacy rights, I cannot discuss your grade(s) over the phone, via email, or in front of class. Please make an appointment.

Attendance: Attendance is required. Students failing to attend class during the first week may be dropped from the course; excessive absences could result in a failing grade. The Undergraduate Catalog Regulations found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>.

Make up Work: Late essays and papers will be heavily penalized. Makeup exams will be offered only in documented emergencies. You must notify me in writing in advance or within 24 hours of the exam. Make up exams must be completed within one week of the original.

Use of Personal Devices (laptops, notepads, phones, apple watch): Cell phones should be turned off and stowed. Laptops are strongly discouraged as research suggests they inhibit learning.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> at semester's end.

Disability Services: Please give me your accommodation letter in the first two weeks of the semester. For more information contact DRC at 352-392-8565, or <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

Plagiarism/Cheating: NOT tolerated. If you are caught, you will fail that assignment.

More information regarding course policies are on Canvas. General undergraduate policies are in the Student Catalog: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/Pages/academic-regulations.aspx>.