POL-UA 395: Money and Politics  
SPRING 2019

Professor: Hye Young You, Wilf Family Department of Politics  
Time and Location: Friday 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm, 12 Waverly Place L113  
Email: hyou@nyu.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm or by appointment. 19 West 4th Street, Office 224

Course Description

What do Apple Inc., the National Rifle Association, New York University, and the American Farm Bureau Federation share in common? The answer is that they are all special interest groups. Interest group politics lie at the heart of American politics and American democracy. Understanding why groups are organized and how they influence various public policies is critical to our understanding of political representation. This course examines the ways that firms, institutions, and citizens attempt to make their voices heard in elections and public policy making processes in the United States. Specifically, we will cover the following topics: (1) How are interest groups organized and how they are sustained? (2) How do groups influence electoral politics, and how do lobbying strategies differ from campaign contribution strategies? (3) Whom among legislators, congressional aides, executive agency bureaucrats, and courts do interest groups target, and why? (4) Do interest groups really affect public policy, and how might we discover if they do? (5) Do different groups - corporations, universities, and foreign countries, for example - have different political strategies? (6) What is the value of political connections and officeholding in the world of interest group politics?

Requirements:

Your grade for the course will be based on:

(1) Class Participation (30% of the grade): Class participation is critical in this class. Students are expected to read materials before the class and you will be graded based on your participation in discussion of the assigned readings. Two students will be designated as discussion leaders each week. Each student is expected to write one page response memo (attach in a pdf format) that includes at least one critical question on each assigned reading by Thursday 6pm. Submit your memo on the course website. When you lead a discussion, you don’t need to submit a memo. All the assigned readings are uploaded here: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/886k6ruoem35v0l/AAD-xWw6JeuXldIj1BT6dWY8sza?dl=0.

(2) Two Short Essays (30% of the grade): Students are expected to complete 2 short writing assignments, no more than 1,500 words.
• Assignment #1: Select an interest group of your own choice. Then (1) write a brief history of the organization; (2) explain whether it is membership based on an institution; (3) explore and discuss its strategy of campaign contributions for the 2018 election cycle. **Due: 3/8 (Friday) 5pm.**

• Assignment #2: Select two organizations in a similar sector (e.g., two firms in the same sector, two universities, or two local governments). Then (1) write a brief description of each group; (2) compare their lobbying expenditures in 2018; (3) discuss the similarities and the differences in their lobbying activities in 2018. **Due: 4/26 (Friday) 5pm.**

(3) A Final Paper (40% of the grade): A 4000 words paper. **Due: May 17th (Friday), 5pm.**

• A. Choose one big piece of legislation (such as the Dodd-Frank or the American Health Care Act) or one big issue (such as gun control or immigration). Then dig deeply into campaign contributions and lobbying strategy by different stakeholders for the topic that you choose. Who are the big and small players in this issue area? How much money do they have/spend in campaign contributions and which members of Congress do groups donate to? How much do groups spend in lobbying? Which lobbying firms represent them? Which agencies do they target in their lobbying? Then, in the student’s opinion, which organizations are doing the best and worst jobs influencing policy in this area? What could the various players be doing differently to gain or wield more influence than they currently have?

• B. Go to visit a lobbyist who represents either your home town/ state/ country, New York University, New York City, or an issue that you care about, either at the local/state or federal level. Do an interview and write describing this person’s work, issue priority, their campaign and lobbying strategy, how much influence this person thinks they have etc. Evaluate the lobbyist or the institution’s political activity based on the theories and frames we cover during the course.

**Students are required to discuss their final paper topic with the instructor no later than Spring break**

Late assignment will be penalized 1/2 letter grade per day, with the first penalty applied immediately after the assignment is due. When submitting by email, make sure to attach the file.

**Laptop/Tablet Policy**

When used in the class for non-class purpose, laptops/tablets (and, likewise, any other electronic device) can be distracting to other students and to the course instructor. Consequently, the policy for this course is that laptops/tablets are not allowed unless you request my permission to use the equipment for the sole purpose of taking notes. Permission must be requested in person, in my office hours or by email. Lack of compliance with this policy will result in a failing participation grade.
Collaboration Policy Statement and the Honor Code

I encourage discussion outside the classroom of readings and topics, but the essays and the paper you submit should be entirely your own. If you use sources outside the syllabus you must adhere to standard citation practices and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work.

Useful Data Sources

Below are the useful webpages that provide various data for interest group activities, including campaign contributions, campaign expenditures, and lobbying activity.


Topics:

1. Introduction and Overview (2/1)

2. Basic Survey of Interest Groups (2/8)

   Madison, James. The Federalist #10.


3. Special Topic: Introduction to Regression and Data (2/15)

** Angirst, Joshua, and Jorn-Steffen Pischke. 2015. *Mastering Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch.2 (pp. 47-68) ** (no need to write a memo)


4. Campaign Contributions I: Motivations (2/22)


5. Campaign Contributions II: Gender Inequality (3/1)


6. Research Mentoring Session I (3/8)

Students are expected to meet with the instructor in this week to discuss their first memo assignment and the final paper. **No class on 3/8.**

7. Effects of Money on Policy Outcomes (3/15)


** No Class on March 22th: Spring Break **

8. Campaign Finance Regulation and Candidate Selection (3/29)


9. Lobbying (4/5)


10. Revolving Door Lobbyists (4/12)


11. Universities and Local Governments as Lobbyists (4/19)


12. Research Mentoring Session II (4/26)
Students are expected to meet with the instructor in this week to discuss their second memo assignment and the final paper. **No class on 4/26.**

13. Lobbying on Foreign Policy (5/3)
** Date of the class is subject to change **


14. Special Interests and Knowledge Production (5/10)

