

**PSC 312**  
**Political Parties and Interest Groups**  
**Fall 2008**

Instructor: Dr. David Damore  
Location: CBC C126  
Time: TuTh 2:30-3:45

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Office Hours: Tu 1-2:30- Th 4-5:30

**Scope and Purpose:**

Whereas some critics lament that “partisan bickering” and “special interests” have a negative influence on American democracy, others argue that political parties and interest groups are invaluable for linking citizens to the electoral and policy processes. The purpose of this course is to provide students with an in-depth understanding of interest groups and political parties in the United States so that they may think critically about the proper role that these institutions should play in the American political system. The course is divided into two parts. Part one focuses on interest groups with particular attention given to the origins and formation of groups and assessing group influence on the electoral and policy making processes. Part two examines political parties by assessing the party system and party organizations in the United States, as well as the role of parties in elections and governmental decision making.

**Course Material:**

Berry, Jeffrey M. and Clyde Wilcox. 2007. *The Interest Group Society*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Longman.

Bibby, John F. and Brian F. Schaffner 2007. *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Samford, CT: Wadsworth.

Herrnson, Paul S., Ronald G. Shaiko, and Clude Wilcox, eds. 2005. *The Interest Group Connection*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly.

Riordon, William L. 2004. *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.

Royko, Mike. 1971 *Boss, Richard J. Daley of Chicago*. New York: Plume.

Course readings (available via WebCampus, along with course lecture notes).

**Course Requirements:**

1. Exams (70%): Two in class essay exams. Higher exam score counts for 40% of course total and lower exam counts for 30% of course total.
2. Quizzes (4 x 5% each = 20%): Four in class multiple choice and essay quizzes.

3. Classroom Contribution (10%): Determined by students' attendance, attentiveness, and contribution to class discussions.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Increase substantive understanding of the political process.
2. Motivate participation in the political process.
3. Increase newspaper readership.
4. Sharpen critical thinking and information gathering skills.
5. Improve critical writing skills.

**Policies and Miscellaneous:**

1. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred for investigation. For additional information, please see the UNLV Student Academic Misconduct Policy available at <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>
2. UNLV requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit the UNLV copyright web page at <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/>.
3. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well). If the assignments for this course conflict with other obligations, either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly. If you need to miss class because of observance of a religious holiday or because you represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity you must notify me no later than week three of the semester.
4. Lecture begins at 2:30 and ends at 3:45. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for its duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Repeated interruptions, including ringing cell phones and pagers and text messaging, will adversely affect your final grade. It is your choice to take this course; if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unable to meet its expectations, do not enroll.
5. It is expected that assigned reading will be completed prior to lecture.
6. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of material presented in lecture and readings. Rather, students are expected to synthesize course material in a coherent and succinct manner that demonstrates both

the depth and breadth of their understanding (e.g., you will need to think and apply yourself to do well in this course).

7. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you need to contact Disability Resource Service (DRS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The DRS is located in the Student Services Complex, Room 137 and can be reached at 895-0866 or <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.

8. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93.0	B = 86.9–83.0	C = 76.9–73.0	D = 66.9–63.0
A- = 92.9–90.0	B- = 82.9–80.0	C- = 72.9–70.0	D- = 62.9–60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9– 67.0	F = 59.9-0

### Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
August 26		Course Overview
<b>Part I: Interest Groups and American Politics</b>		
August 28	Pluralism	Berry and Wilcox: chapters 1 and 2
September 2	Pluralism and Its Critics	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 3 Herrnson et al.: chapter 1
September 5		<b>Quiz 1</b>
September 9, 11	Interest Groups and the Elections Process	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 4 Herrnson et al.: chapters 2 and 4
September 16, 18	Interest Groups and Campaign Finance	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 5 Herrnson et al.: chapter 3
September 23	Interest Groups and Voters	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 7 Herrnson et al.: chapters 5 and 6
September 25		<b>Quiz 2</b>
September 30	Direct Lobbying of Congress	Berry and Wilcox: chapters 6 and 8 Herrnson et al.: chapters 7 and 8 Reader: “Drug Lobby Second to None” and “Hiring Federal Lobbyists, Towns Learn Money Talks”

October 2	Informal Lobbying of Congress and Corruption	Herrnson et al.: chapters 9 - 11 Reader: "K Street" and "A Lobbyist in Full"
October 7	Lobbying the Executive and Judiciary	Herrnson et al.: chapters 13, 14, 16, and 17
October 9	Lobbying the Public	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 7
October 14	Interest Groups and the Policy Process	Berry and Wilcox: chapters 9 and 10 Herrnson et al.: chapter 20 Reader: "Deal Sweeteners"
October 16		<b>Exam 1</b>

**Part II: Political Parties and American Politics**

October 21	Why Parties?	Bibby and Schaffner: chapter 1 Riordan: Introduction
October 23, 28	Parties and Party Systems	Bibby and Schaffner: chapters 2 and 3 Reader: "A Party Inverted" Riordan: chapters 1 – 10 Royko: Introduction, chapters 1 and 2
October 30	Party Organization and Activists	Bibby and Schaffner: chapter 4 Riordan: chapters 11 – 17 Royko: chapters 3 and 4
November 3		<b>Drop Deadline</b>
November 4		<b>Quiz 3</b>
November 4		<b><i>Street Fight</i></b>
November 6	Parties and Voters	Bibby and Schaffner: chapter 7 Riordan: chapters 18 – 23 Royko: chapter 5
November 11		<b>Veterans Day Holiday</b>
November 13, 18	Party Nominations	Bibby and Schaffner: chapters 5 and 6 Royko: chapter 6

November 20	Parties and Campaigns	Bibby and Schaffner: chapter 8 Royko: chapter 8
November 25		<b>Quiz 4</b>
November 27		<b>Thanksgiving Holiday</b>
November 25, December 2	Parties and Congress	Bibby and Schaffner: chapter 9 Royko: chapter 9
December 4	Parties, the President, and the Judiciary	Bibby and Schaffner: chapter 10 Royko: chapter 10 and Epilgoue
December 9		<b>Exam 2, 3:10 – 5:10</b>

**This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.**