

**PSC 312**  
**Political Parties and Interest Groups**  
**Spring 2007**

Instructor: Dr. David Damore  
Location: WRI C237  
Time: MW 11:30 – 12:45

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Office Hours: MW 10:00 – 11:30

**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. 2003. *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America, 5<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 multiple choice and essay quizzes.

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

**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.
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 (<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 11:30 and ends at 12:45. 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 Service (DS) for coordination of your academic accommodations (the DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in the Student Services Complex, Room 137, 895-0866, [www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les](http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les)).
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
January 17		Course Overview
<b>Part I: Interest Groups and American Politics</b>		
January 22	Pluralism	Berry and Wilcox: chapters 1 and 2
January 24	Pluralism and Its Critics	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 3 Herrnson et al.: chapter 1
January 29		<b>Quiz 1</b>
January 29, 31	Interest Groups and the Elections Process	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 4 Herrnson et al.: chapters 2 and 4
February 5, 7,	Interest Groups and Campaign Finance	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 5 Herrnson et al.: chapter 3
February 12	Interest Groups and Voters	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 7 Herrnson et al.: chapters 5 and 6
February 14		<b>Quiz 2</b>
February 14	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”
February 21	Informal Lobbying of Congress and Corruption	Herrnson et al.: chapters 9 - 11 Reader: “K Street” and “A Lobbyist in Full”
February 26	Lobbying the Executive and Judiciary	Herrnson et al.: chapters 13, 14, 16, and 17
February 28	Lobbying the Public	Berry and Wilcox: chapter 7
March 5	Interest Groups and the Policy Process	Berry and Wilcox: chapters 9 and 10 Herrnson et al.: chapter 20 Reader: “Deal Sweeteners”
March 7		<b>Exam 1</b>

March 12, 14

**Spring Break**

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

March 19

Why Parties?

Bibby: chapters 1 and 2  
Riordan: Introduction

March 21, 26

Parties and Party  
Systems

Bibby: chapter 3  
Reader: "A Party Inverted"  
Riordan: chapters 1 – 10  
Royko: Introduction, chapters 1 and 2

March 28

Party Organization and  
Activists

Bibby: chapter 4  
Reader: "Lost Horizons" and "The  
Insider Agitator"  
Riordan: chapters 11 – 17  
Royko: chapters 3 and 4

March 30

**Drop Deadline**

April 2

**Quiz 3**

April 2, 4

Parties and Voters

Bibby: chapter 8  
Reader: "The Center No Longer Holds"  
Riordan: chapters 18 – 23  
Royko: chapter 5

April 9, 11

Party Nominations

Bibby: chapters 5 and 6  
Royko: chapter 6

April 16

Parties and Campaigns

Bibby: chapter 7  
Royko: chapter 8

April 18

**Quiz 4**

April 18, 23

Parties and Congress

Bibby: pages 406 – 433  
Royko: chapter 9

April 25, 30

Parties, the President,  
and the Judiciary

Bibby: pages 377 - 405, chapter 10  
Royko: chapter 10 and Epilogue

May 2

Catch up and Review

May 9

**Exam 2, 10:10 – 12:10**

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