

# POLS 230: Elections, Political Parties and Interest Groups

Fall 2013

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45

Classroom: Hamilton Hall 133

Offices hours: MW 1:00-2:00, TR 10:30-11:30, or by appointment

Jonathan A. Jackson

Office: Oldfather 517

Email: jonathan.jackson@huskers.unl.edu

## Required texts

Burbank, et al: *Parties, Interest Groups, and Political Parties*

Herrnson, et al: *Interest Groups Unleashed*

(other readings as assigned)

## Overview and Purpose

Bulletin Description: Roles of political parties and interest groups in government and politics, focusing on their efforts of elections and lobbying.

This course examines the changing impact of political parties and interest groups on American politics. While we will look at the direct lobbying efforts of parties (or more often, factions within parties) and interested groups, our primary focus will be on the work of parties in elections and the evolution of interest group influence on elections in the wake of the Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United v. FEC* decision.

Among the questions we will seek to answer are:

- How have political parties evolved in the American democratic system?
- How do parties function today?
- What are the fundamental rules under which American political parties and interest groups operate?
- How are parties and interest groups financed and how do they finance elections?
- What is the relationship between parties, interest groups and election campaigns?
- How do interest groups impact public policy through lobbying?
- How do parties and interest groups harness the energy of political movements like tea party movement?
- How did *Citizens United v. FEC* change the political playing field?

## Course Requirements

All students are expected to do the assigned reading and work, attend class, and participate. Exams and quizzes will be based on both the readings and lectures, and the themes of those assignments will be a major part of our in-class discussions. Therefore attendance and class participation are vital.

There will be a total of 1000 points for the course. Grades will be made up of a short writing assignment, four quizzes, and a final exam.

They will be weighted as follows:

- Attendance and Participation: 100 points
- Two Quizzes: 200 points (100 points each)
- Midterm Exam: 200 points
- Short Essay: 200 points

- Final Exam: 300 points

The points for each assignment will added together and the decimal point shifted one to the left to get the final grade. For example, a total of 756 points for all assignments represents a final grade of 75.6; a C.

The quizzes will be a mixture of multiple-choice, true-false and short answer questions. Each quiz will cover the prior section's materials (in other words, not comprehensive). The midterm exam will be comprehensive of the material covered up to that point, as will the final exam. However, both exams will slightly emphasize the material not covered by prior testing (that is the material covered in the few weeks before the exam).

The goal of the exams and quizzes is to gauge the level of understanding the student has of the material covered. They are designed to encourage proper study skills, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning.

The essay will be a maximum of four concise, well-written pages, written in 10-point Times New Roman font with unmodified margins, single spaced except between paragraphs. An additional page will be allowed for notes and a bibliography (no Wikipedia). There is no need for a cover page; place paper title and student information in the header. The ideal paper starts as a seven-page first draft and is trimmed down to four by cutting fluff. You may choose any topic in contemporary politics or political science, with the approval of your instructor. The paper should propose and support a policy proposal or explain some aspect of the impact of political parties or interest groups on elections. The writing must be the original work of the student except for properly credited quotes.

The essay will be graded holistically: There is no "counting off" of mistakes, although persistent or distractingly glaring errors will affect the score. Instead, the essay will be judged on the student's ability to research, analyze and make arguments about major developments or issues. The best papers identify a question or thesis and use research to develop a logical conclusion. This is the same way writing is graded in the GRE and judged in the work world, so you should become accustomed to it.

You should submit your topic for approval before the midterm exam. Your instructor will be happy to provide guidance and assistance for the paper. It is due before Thanksgiving.

### Grade Scale

The grade scale for this course will be:

A = 94-100	B- = 80-83	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-93	C+ = 77-79	D = 64-66
B+ = 87-89	C = 74-76	D- = 60-63
B = 84-86	C- = 70-73	F = 0-59

As noted previously, the points for each assignment will added together and the decimal point shifted one to the left to get the final grade. For example, a total of 756 points for all assignments represents a final grade of 75.6: a C.

### Class Policies

**Make-up assignments:** Should you miss a quiz or the exam, you can schedule a make-up exam with the instructor if you can provide evidence that you missed the class for a valid reason. This would include a doctor's note/bill or a cast on a newly broken arm. Non-valid reasons include, but are not limited to, what you did the night before and how it kept you from waking up the next day.

**Incompletes and Withdrawals:** Students will only be given an “I” (incomplete) for valid reasons, such as verified military deployment or illness, and only if the student has made substantial satisfactory progress in the course. To withdraw from a course, follow UNL procedures; your instructor will not do it for you.

**Laptops and other electronic devices:** Please put away all electronic devices at the beginning of class except those being used for the class. Turn your phone off or put it on silent (not vibrate) mode. The inappropriate use of electronic devices is distracting to you and rude to the instructor and other students.

We will start with allowing the use of laptops, but the instructor reserves the right to later ban their use except for those students with a documented disability. Even when laptops are used exclusively to take class notes, they virtually eliminate eye contact and the other types of non-verbal communication that allow for meaningful conversations to take-place. You are a student, not a stenographer.

**Disability Policy:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism and cheating, as defined by the UNL Student Code of Conduct, are not allowed. The in-class punishment schedule for such acts may include a zero for the assignment and failure of the entire course. Major violations will also be reported to the student’s department chairperson or head and to the Judicial Office.

**Respect:** Please show respect for the opinions of your fellow students. Students should feel free to express their views without fear of condemnation or harassment inside or outside the classroom. Likewise, students should not seek to use the free and open exchange of ideas as a license to provoke or denigrate others. Clearly, there is a balancing act involved, but it can be achieved if students engage each other in a spirit of goodwill.

### Schedule

Week	Subject	Reading
Aug 27, 29	Introduction	Burbank, Chapter 1 Herrnson, Preface (pp. x-xiii)
Sep 3, 5	The Political Landscape	Burbank, Chapters 4 and 5
Sep 10, 12	Parties in America	Burbank, Chapter 2 Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don’t
Sep 17, 19	How Parties Work	Burbank, Chapter 3 Nebraska: A place where Republicans and Democrats still play nice
Sep 24, 26	Financing Campaigns	Burbank, Chapter 6

		How Our Political Parties Beat Campaign Finance Reform Strengthening the political party system
Oct 1, 3	Parties and Campaigns	Burbank, Chapter 7 Why Can't We All Get Along?
Oct 8, 10	Review/Midterm	
Oct 15, 17	Modern Interest Group Campaigns	Burbank, Chapter 9 Herrnson, Introduction, Chapter 1 Herrnson Appendix, pp. 243-274
Oct 24	Why Interest Groups?	Burbank, Chapter 8 (Tuesday is Fall Break.)
Oct 29, 31	Interest Groups Case Study 1	Herrnson, Chapters 3 Video: Obama's Deal
Nov 5, 7	Interest Groups Case Studies 2&3	Herrnson, Chapters 2 and 6
Nov 12, 14	Interest Groups Case Studies 4&5	Herrnson, Chapters 5 and 7
Nov 19, 21	Interest Groups Case Studies 6&7	Herrnson, Chapters 4 and 8
Nov 26	How Interest Groups Lobby	Burbank, Chapter 10 (Thursday is Thanksgiving.)
Dec 3, 5	Interest Groups Case Studies 8&9	Herrnson, Chapters 9 and 10
Dec 10, 12	Conclusion/Review	Burbank, Conclusion, pp. 230-233 Herrnson, Chapters 11