Private Influence in Public Policy
POL-UA 341
Spring 2013
Professor Sanford Clark Gordon

I. Introduction
In this course, we will examine the role of private influence in public policy from a variety of
theoretical and empirical perspectives. Course topics will include in-depth analysis of
mechanisms of influence (e.g., selection of sympathetic incumbents, the provision of incentives
for public officials, and the provision of information), objects of influence (voter choices,
legislative behavior, bureaucratic decisions), collective action, and organizational maintenance.
Special attention will be paid to the overcoming the challenges associated with
demonstrating influence empirically.

II. Contact and Meeting Information
Professor Sanford Clark Gordon
19 W. 4th St., Room 311
Phone: (212) 998-3708
E-mail: sanford.gordon@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4pm, or by appointment

Class meetings
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:45am, GCASL 383

III. Required Readings
The following books are available for purchase at the University bookstore:

- Berry, Jeffrey M., and Clyde Wilcox, The Interest Group Society, 5th edition (BW)
- Cigler, Allan J., and Burdett A. Loomis, eds. Interest Group Politics, 8th edition (CL)
- Godwin, Ken, Scott H. Ainsworth, and Erik Godwin, Lobbying and Policymaking (GAG)

Additional reading material will be made available on NYUClasses (NYUC)

IV. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading

Formal Course Requirements

Class Participation 10%
During our discussions, students will be expected to demonstrate successful mastery of the
assigned readings. To get a sense of the likely direction of class discussion in a particular
module, consult the thought questions that accompany the listing of assignments in the schedule
below. If you feel that shyness is preventing you from participating as fully as you would like, I
would be happy to meet with you to discuss strategies for improving your performance in class discussions.

**Three Short Response Pieces**

To facilitate topical discussions, on each of the twelve occasions listed below a quarter of the students will be asked each to prepare a 750-1000 word response piece on the assigned readings for that day. The response should not be a summary; rather, it should (a) relate a theoretical or analytical perspective to the substantive topic of the discussion; (b) address a perceived deficiency in an author’s own interpretation of the facts covered in a reading; or (c) advance and argue for the importance of a question unaddressed in the reading(s) but pertinent to the general topic of that particular class. If more than one reading is associated with a given discussion, it may be perfectly acceptable to cover just one of them in a response piece, though it may help to compare the perspectives offered in two.

Students will be divided into four groups – A, B, C, and D – at the beginning of the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Discussion occurring on …</th>
<th>Members of Group …</th>
<th>Should upload response piece to NYU Classes by …</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>February 14</td>
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<td>April 18</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>5pm on May 7</td>
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To upload your assignment, go to the “Assignments” tab in NYU Classes, select the applicable assignment, and upload your assignment.

Feedback on response pieces will include evaluation of the student's argument and the extent to which the student's conclusion flows from this or her premises; the student's ability to address and respond to anticipated counterarguments; and the clarity of exposition.

**Midterm Examination:**

The midterm examination will be held on Thursday, March 14. A combination of short answers and essays, the exam will cover the preceding lectures and readings.

**Final Examination:**

According to the Registrar’s most recent schedule, the final examination will be held on Thursday, May 16, from 8-9:50am. Roughly 2/3 of the exam will cover material not covered on the midterm.
Policy on missed exams and late papers

Exams: Exceptions in emergency situations are inevitable, but in general, students missing an exam will receive a grade of zero. If you must miss an exam, please contact Professor Gordon before the scheduled test time, and if the excuse is justified (such as in cases of illness or family/personal emergencies), we will schedule a make-up.

Response pieces: Response papers that are not uploaded by their associated deadlines will be penalized by one point (out of ten) if submitted by 9:30am on the following day, and two points if submitted less than 24 hours before the associated discussion in class. If you miss a deadline, please e-mail the paper directly to me. Response pieces will not be accepted after the associated discussion in class.

V. Academic Integrity
All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper attribution) will be tolerated. All ideas not your own must be properly cited. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to university policy. For more information on university policy, see http://bulletin.cas.nyu.edu/page/academic.policies-STANDARDS.

VI. Weekly Schedule

Introduction
What are “special interests?” What are the components of a systematic inquiry into their nature and consequences? Are interest groups a harmful byproduct or necessary component of democracy? Why have we seen a proliferation of groups in Washington?

Tuesday, January 29 Introduction: The Object of Study

Module 1. Pluralism and its Critics
What are the necessary components of a pluralist theory of interest group formation and influence? Is pluralism “testable” in the (social) scientific sense? How should we evaluate pluralist assumptions about the distribution of resources in democracy? Why have social scientists largely abandoned pluralism as a workable positive theory?

Thursday, January 31 Canonical Pluralist Political Thought
  • BW, pp. 9-11
  • GAG, ch. 2 (“Models of Influence”)
  • Madison, James. 1787. Federalist #10 (NYUC)
  • Dahl, Robert. 1961. Who Governs, chapters 19 and 24 (NYUC)
  • Schattschneider, E.E. 1960. The Semi-Sovereign People, Chapter 2 (“The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System”) (NYUC)
Tuesday, February 5  
Novel Perspectives (Group A Response Pieces Due at 5pm on Sunday, February 3)
- GAG, ch. 7 (“The Case for Neopluralism”)

Thursday, February 7  
CLASS WILL NOT MEET

Module 2. Capture and its Critics
*What assumptions are required to sustain the capture account of influence in policy design and implementation? Are they too stark? How do we evaluate the evidence for capture? What are the mechanisms by which certain groups or individuals may exercise disproportionate influence in the policy making process? Are they immutable, or contingent on other factors?*

Tuesday, February 12  
Capture and Rent-Seeking 1
- Carpenter, Daniel P. “Detecting and Measuring Capture.” Forthcoming in Carpenter and Moss, eds., *Preventing Capture: Special Interest Influence and How to Limit It* (NYUC)

Thursday, February 14  
Capture and Rent-Seeking 2 (Group B Response Pieces Due at 5pm on Tuesday, February 12)
- Carrigan, Christopher. “Captured by Disaster? Reinterpreting Regulatory Behavior in the Shadow of the Gulf Oil Spill.” Forthcoming Carpenter and Moss, eds., *Preventing Capture: Special Interest Influence and How to Limit It* (NYUC)
- U.S. Department of Interior, Outer Continental Shelf Safety Oversight Board, “Report to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.” September 1, 2010 (SKIM) (NYUC)

Module 3. Collective Action, Recruitment, and Organizational Maintenance
*What is the process by which groups form to influence public policy? How do elites mobilize support among the rank-and-file? Does the internal governance of organizations tend toward oligarchy, or are some groups more democratic than others?*

Tuesday, February 19  
The Olson Problem
- BW, ch. 3 (“Mobilization and Organization”)

Thursday, February 21  
Maintaining and Governing Groups (Group C Response Pieces Due at 5pm on Tuesday, February 19)
- Barakso, Maryann, “Dissenting Doctors: The Internal Politics of the AMA during the Health Care Reform Debate.” (CL, ch. 5)

Module 4. Issue Networks and Policy Coalitions
Why are some periods of U.S. history punctuated by rapid growth in the size of interest group communities? Are interest groups best conceived of as organisms that live and die? By what mechanisms do disparate groups combine into viable policy coalitions and/or networks?

Tuesday, February 26  
**Policy Networks**
- Drutman, Lee, “Trade Associations, the Collective Action Dilemma, and the Problem of Cohesion.” (CL, ch. 4)
- Heaney, Michael T. “Bridging the Gap between Political Parties and Interest Groups.” (CL, ch. 9)

Thursday, February 28  
**Building and Maintaining Coalitions of Interest (Group D Response Pieces Due at 5pm on Tuesday, February 26)**
- GAG, ch. 6 (“Lobbying Alone or Cooperatively”)

**Module 5. Money and Policy-making**
*Why does the amount of political spending seem so small relative to the stakes? Why does so little evidence exist suggesting a relationship between campaign contribution behavior and roll call voting in Congress? Who spends money in the policy process, and why? What are the likely Consequences of Campaign Finance Reform on Interest Group Influence?*

Tuesday, March 5  
**What Does Money Buy in the Policy-making Process?**

Thursday, March 7  
**Money and Policy Continued (Group A Response Pieces Due at 5pm on Tuesday, March 5)**
- Caro, Robert. 2002. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate*, pp. 403-413; 658-673 (NYUC)

Tuesday, March 12  
**Catch-up and Review**

Thursday, March 14  
**MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

| Tuesday, March 19 and Thursday, March 21 | SPRING BREAK |

**Module 6. Money and Elections**
*Why would voters elect candidates perceived to be in the pocket of special interests? Do political action committees spend money to influence voters or officials? What would be the consequence of*
various proposals for campaign finance reform be? Are they unambiguously good, or do they often reflect tradeoffs? What are those tradeoffs?

**Tuesday, March 26**  
**Money and Elections: Theory and Evidence**
- BW, ch. 5 (“Interest Groups in Campaigns”)

**Thursday, March 28**  
**Money and Elections: Policy and Reform (Group B Response Pieces Due at 5pm on March 26)**
- *Caperton v. A.T. Massey Coal Co.*, 2009. Read the majority opinion and Roberts’ Dissent (NYUC)
- Summary of *Citizens United v. FEC* (NYUC)
- *Western Tradition Partnership v. Montana*, 2011 (Supreme Court of Montana). Read the majority opinion (through p. 28) and skim the dissents (NYUC). *N.B.* The U.S. Supreme Court reversed the Montana Supreme Court in June of 2012.

**Module 7. Information I: Cheap Talk and Access**
*Interest groups and their lobbyists may be asymmetrically well informed with respect to politics and policy: what are the strategic consequences of this? What does a good lobbyist know, and how does he/she put this knowledge to good effect? Under what conditions is information more or less likely to lead to influence?*

**Tuesday, April 2**  
**The Value of Expertise**
- BW, ch. 6 (“Lobbyists”)
- Wright, John R. 1996. *Interest Groups and Congress: Lobbying Contributions, and Influence*, chapter 4 (NYUC)

**Thursday, April 4**  
**Cheap Talk and Influence (Group C Response Pieces Due at 5pm on April 2)**
- Kwak, James. “Cultural Capture and the Financial Crisis.” Forthcoming in Carpenter and Moss, eds., *Preventing Capture: Special Interest Influence and How to Limit It* (NYUC)

**Module 8. Information II: Alternative Mechanisms**
*Can political principals rely on interest groups to police bureaucratic agencies on their behalf? Or does reliance on “fire alarms” alter the incentives of agents? How can interest groups exploit distortions in the transmission of information to influence policy outcomes? If talk is cheap, how can private parties signal how intensely they feel about a policy to the officials making it? Can executive review reduce the information asymmetries that facilitate interest group dominance in bureaucratic agencies?*
Tuesday, April 9  
**Fire Alarm Oversight and Costly Signaling**
- Gordon, Sanford C., and Catherine Hafer. 2005. “Flexing Muscle: Corporate Political Expenditures as Signals to the Bureaucracy.” *American Political Science Review* 99(2): 245-261 (NYUC). Skim the technical/formal part – the basic idea is that the political activity of a firm can be informative to bureaucrats regarding how intransigent the firm is likely to be in the regulatory process.

Thursday, April 11  
**Executive Review (Group D Response Pieces Due at 5pm on April 9)**

**Module 9. Agenda Control and Direct Democracy**
*Do institutions of direct democracy like the initiative and referendum increase or decrease the power of special interests as compared to the traditional legislative process? How can interest groups affect the conduct of referenda and initiatives? Does the threat of policy by referendum result in changes in the behavior of elected officials? How? Why?*

Tuesday, April 16  
**Shaping the Agenda**

Thursday, April 18  
**Is Direct Democracy Democratic? (Group A Response Pieces Due at 5pm on April 16)**

**Module 10. Interest Groups and the Regulatory Process**
*Are there substantively meaningful differences in the way interest groups seek to influence the elected and unelected branches of government? What channels does the regulatory process offer for private influence? Do these channels exist by design or have they evolved over time? Why should unelected officials cater to the preferences of interest groups when they face no threat of electoral sanction?*

Tuesday, April 23  
**The Rulemaking Process**
Thursday, April 25  
Avenues of Influence in Regulatory Proceedings (Group B Response Pieces Due at 5pm on April 23)
- GAG, chs. 3, 4, and 5

**Module 11. Private Politics**
*Why, and under what conditions, do some groups and firms endeavor to change public opinion on an issue of concern rather than the minds of officials? What do “private politics” strategies of persuasion look like, and how do they differ from the more commonly-observed “public politics?”*

Tuesday, April 30  
Shaping the Sentiments of Consumers and Citizens
- BW, ch. 7 (“Public Opinion and Grassroots Lobbying”)

Thursday, May 2  
Private Politics; Case Studies (Group C Response Pieces Due at 5pm on April 30)
- Baron, David. “Private Politics.” (ch. 4 of *Business and its Environment*) (NYUC)

**Module 12. Polarization and Constituency Mobilization**
*When can groups count on broad-based constituencies or sympathetic audiences and/or the power of public opinion to advance their interests? How are we to understand the relationship between the polarization of American politics and the efficacy of interest groups? Does a more ideological politics leave room for logrolling and backroom deals?*

Tuesday, May 7  
How Does Polarization Affect Interest Group Politics?

Thursday, May 9  
Guns (Group D Response Pieces Due at 5pm on May 7)

Thursday, May 16  
Final Examination  8-9:50am