

11. Political Parties & Interest Groups

Breakout Sessions

POLS 1101

12:40pm-1:30pm Park Hall 145

& 1:50pm-2:40pm Leconte Hall 135

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Exam Hand Back

- **Add points wrong**
 - **WITHIN TODAY (Friday) , or right after class**
- **Questions on why I lost points in short-answers**
 - **WITHIN TODAY (Friday), or right after class**
- **Appeal your grade**
 - **WITHIN 24 hours (Friday & Saturday)**
 - **Do as told by the syllabus**
 - You must write a statement to have the assignment regraded saying why you believe you should have received more credit and you will need to give me your blue book.
 - If you appeal your grade, I (your TA) will need to regrade which could result in a higher grade, a lower grade, or no change at all.
 - Only submit an appeal if you are sure that you can make a strong case for a higher score!
 - If you are still unsatisfied with your grade after that, you can repeat the process with Professor Nicholson.

Mid term 2 Feedback

- Pay attention to basic ideas / details that can be covered in MC questions.
- Try to use **bullet points**.
 - Make your ideas easy to identify — graders can quickly locate your key points and give credit.
- Use **enough space — don't squeeze your writing at the bottom of the page**.
 - It's totally fine to turn the page. Make your answers clear and easy to read!
- When your answer isn't included in textbook / slides but makes sense, I give you credits that I think appropriate.
 - I'm happy to see your own thinking, since we cannot remember everything.
 - However, still try to review carefully, since some of your own ideas can overlap with each other – in essence they refer to the same “key concept”. In this case, maybe you don't get a full credit.

Political Parties & Interest Groups

Dimension	Political Parties	Interest Groups
Definition	An organization that sponsors candidates for political office under the organization's name	Organized associations that seek to influence public policy without running candidates for office.
Core Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Nominate candidates for public office- Organize election campaigns- Propose alternative government programs- Coordinate the actions of government officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Representation- Participation- Education (political socialization)- Agenda building- Program monitoring
Membership Base	Broad and diverse, representing wide social segments (e.g., multiple classes, regions, ideologies).	(Often) Narrow and specialized, often representing particular occupations, industries, or causes.
Organizational Structure	Hierarchical, with national, state, and local branches; formal leadership and membership.	May be highly professionalized (e.g., trade associations) or loosely organized (e.g., grassroots movements).
Relationship to Government	More direct. Actively nominate and run candidates.	More indirect. Do not run candidates; may endorse or fund them indirectly.

Political Parties & Interest Groups (cont'd)

Dimension	Political Parties	Interest Groups
Main Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Electoral competition- Coalition-building (in multi-party systems / parliamentary systems)- Legislative and executive action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lobbying- Campaign contributions (PACs/Super PACs)- Litigation- Grassroots mobilization- Media and public campaigns
Source of Legitimacy	Popular mandate through democratic elections.	Expertise, resources, and member support.
Role for Citizens	Provides choices in elections; connects voters to governing institutions.	Channels citizen interests into policy advocacy (often biased toward the benefits of the upper-class); gives voice to specific concerns.
Theoretical Foundation	Reflects majoritarian democracy and responsible party government.	Embodies pluralist democracy , where multiple organized interests compete for influence.

- **Can a large interest group ever become similar to a political party? Why or why not?**
- **Why might politicians rely on interest groups even when they belong to strong parties?**

The American Two-Party System

- ***The Preparty Period***
 - Why did political parties emerge in the early history of the U.S., despite George Washington's warning against "factions"?
 - Could democracy function effectively **without** political parties?
- ***The Evolution of the Party System***
 - Why do parties operate differently in parliamentary systems (e.g., the U.K. or Canada) than in the U.S.?
 - Is the current two-party system still capable of representing America's diversity?
 - or, Are the minor parties essential to the U.S. politics?

The American Two-Party System (cont'd)

- **Why a two-party system? The electoral system**

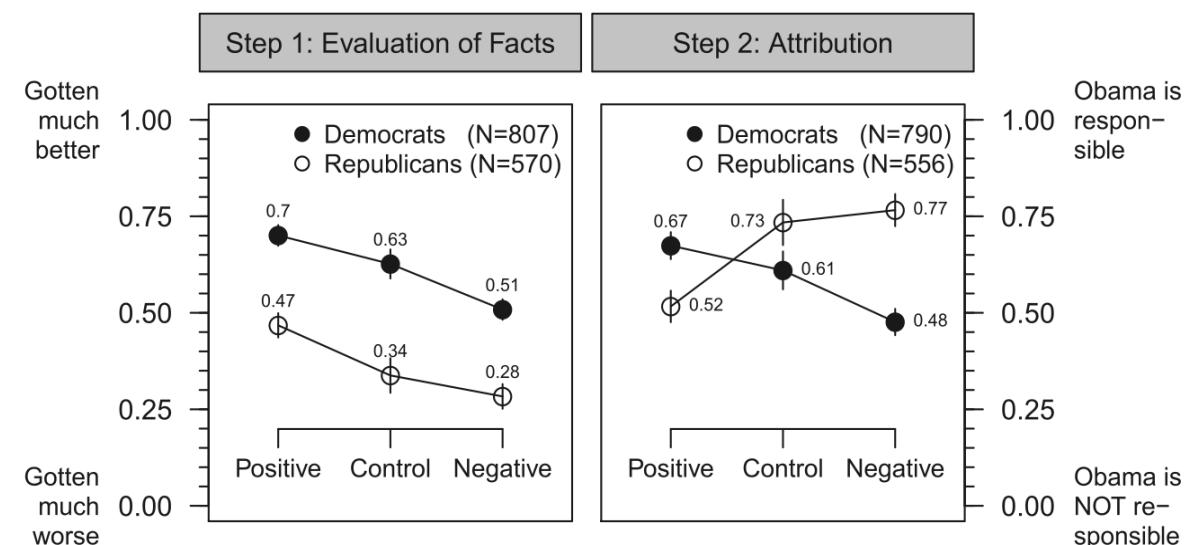
- **Majority representation:** one office is won by the single candidate who collects the most votes (**simple plurality**, tending to produce two competing powers)
- **Proportional representation:** legislative seats are awarded to a party in proportion to the vote that party wins in an election. (tending to produce several parties)

Term	Definition	Example	Common Use Cases
Relative Majority (Simple Plurality)	A candidate/option wins if it has more votes than any other, but not necessarily more than half of all votes.	Candidate A: 40 votes, Candidate B: 35, Candidate C: 25 → A wins with 40 (not >50%).	U.S. congressional elections, U.K. House of Commons elections (first-past-the-post).
Absolute Majority	A candidate/option must receive more than half (>50%) of all votes cast to win.	Total votes = 100 → a candidate needs at least 51 to achieve absolute majority.	Presidential elections in France (two-round system), parliamentary votes requiring >50%.

The American Two-Party System (cont'd)

- **Why always the two parties?**
 - Shaped by the president election – as many votes as possible!
 - **The historical pattern of political socialization**
 - The two parties persist simply because they have persisted.
 - **Party identification**, shaped by income, education, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, region, parents...
- **How important is party identification?**
 - An example: **Bisgaard (2019) AJPS**
 - “The acknowledgement of new facts can lead citizens to reason about the question of responsibility in a highly partisan-motivated fashion.”

FIGURE 2 Partisans Update Their Economic Perceptions in a Parallel Fashion, but Polarize in the Attribution of Responsibility (United States)



Party Organizations

- **National Party Organizations**
 - **National convention:** nominate a presidential candidate; supreme governing body
 - **National committee:** RNC, DNC
 - They do NOT direct or control the crucial presidential campaigns.
 - **Congressional party conferences:** select party leaders; decide committee assignments (only within the Congress)
 - **Congressional campaign committee**
 - Despite the weakness of national party committees, both party organizations were strong in Congress. -> **Why?**
- **State and Local Party Organizations**
 - American political parties are characterized by **decentralization**, despite the **party machine** (a centralized organization that **dominated local politics by controlling elections**). The individual state and local party organizations vary widely in strength.

The Model of Responsible Party Government

- **Remember: Ideal Type!**
 - Parties should present clear and coherent programs to voters.
 - Voters should choose candidates on the basis of party programs.
 - The winning party should carry out its program once in office.
 - Voters should hold the governing party responsible at the next election for executing its program.
- **Discussion Questions**
 - Why is the responsible party model often considered a **majoritarian** model of democracy?
 - In what ways does the U.S. party system **fail** to meet the standards of responsible party government? To what extent are they detrimental to American democracy?
 - Would adopting a more responsible party model make American politics **more effective** or **more polarized**?

“Biased Representation” in Interest Groups

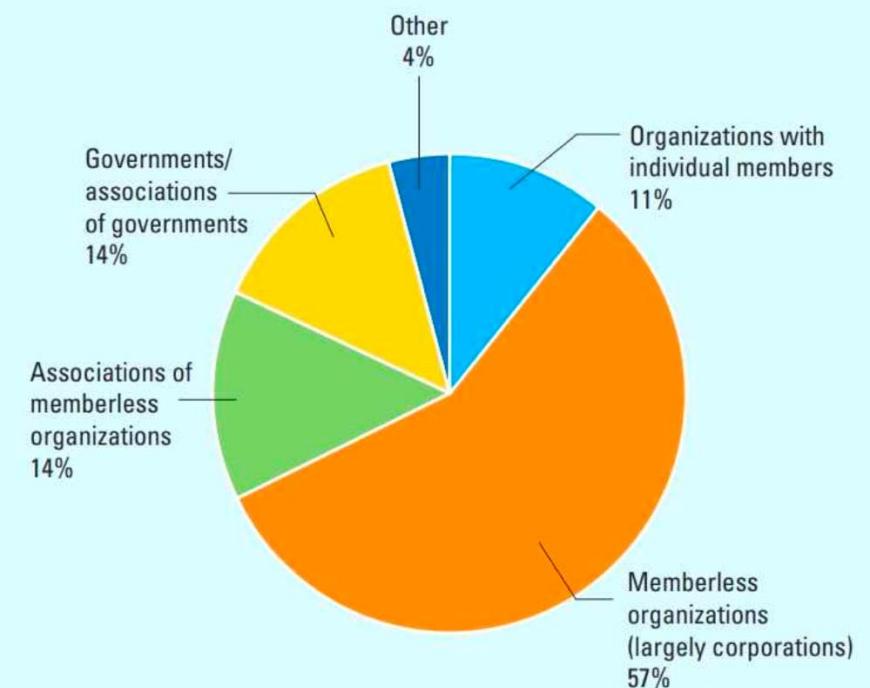
- **Facts**

- Not all interest groups consist of individuals. (membership, memberless, government)
- Business organizations are overrepresented.
 - **Trade associations:** An organization that represents corporations within an industry.
- Some business interests are better represented than others.
- When citizen interests are organized, the more advantaged are better represented than the less advantaged.

Figure 10.3 Not Many Interest Groups Have Individuals as Members

Although we call them interest “groups,” most lobbies are not membership groups consisting of individuals but, rather, are institutions of one type or another. Corporations and associations of corporations (also known as trade associations) dominate the interest group universe.

Source: Kay Lehman Schlozman, Philip Edward Jones, Hye Young You, Traci Burch, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, “Organizations and the Democratic Representation of Interests,” *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (December 2015): 1019.



- **Coordination costs**
- **Bargaining power**

How do Interests Get Organized?

- **Awareness**
 - Growing awareness may result from an adverse change in circumstances or **changing definitions of a problem**. (Note: “constructed reality”)
- **Leadership**
 - The leader is called “**interest group entrepreneur**”.
- **Socio-economic status**
 - Upper-status groups are more likely to participate in politics. (Only **minimal resources** and **limited channels** to contact and recruit people from lower SES groups that contribute to lower levels of participation)
 - BUT it doesn't mean they can hardly be represented – **citizen groups** (lobbying organization built around policy concerns unrelated to members' vocational interests)
 - **Can ordinary people rely on those “kind elites”?**
 - Actually, most of them did... - **the free-rider problem** in collective actions!
 - **How to solve the free-rider problem?**

Actors of Interest Groups: Key Examples

- Members & Volunteers (non-membership)
 - Lobbyists (full-time or part-time; experience, knowledge, and connections)
 - “Revolving door” between the government and the private sector
 - ➔ Agree / disagree? Advantages / problems?
 - Political Action Committees (PAC)
 - Pooling campaign contributions from group members, and donating the money to candidates for political office (\$ 5,000 at most to a candidate for Congress)
 - Super PACs: They do not give money directly to candidates or parties, but there's no restriction on their expenditures.
- ➔ Should limits on PAC contributions be increased, decreased, or abolished?
- ➔ Is money in politics a form of free speech or a source of inequality?

How do Interest Groups Exert Influence?

- **Direct lobbying (personal contact with policy makers)**
 - **Grassroots lobbying:** to affect public policy by using citizen contacts or pressure, by letter writing, protest or demonstration
 - **Astroturfing:** “Mimic” grassroots support using paid consulting firms
- **Information campaigns**
 - An organized effort to gain public backing by bringing a group’s views to public attention. -> **“public relations”** (Note: Both an art and a science)
- **Coalition building**
 - The banding together of several interest groups for the purpose of lobbying
 - Coalitions often extend beyond organizations with similar constituencies and similar outlooks. (consolidate those who share the same goal)
 - **Recall: “bureaucratic network” -> Similarities & Differences?**

Are Interest Groups Effective?

- **Legislative**
 - Providing valuable, “local” information for policy makers
 - **No clear evidence** that interest groups influence members of Congress’s decisions
- **Executive**
 - Rule making can be both very technical and complicated. Few citizens know how and when to participate.
 - Therefore, interest groups can exert **a great deal of influence**.
- **Judicial**
 - Identifying potential cases, sponsoring litigation, and crafting legal arguments for judges to consider

- **Why can interest groups exert more influence in the rule-making process than in Congress?**
- **Should courts limit the role of interest groups in identifying or sponsoring cases?**

Next week...

- We have **NO CLASS** for next week (Fall Break 10.31 - Halloween!)
- For the next next Week's class, please read materials on **Public Opinion & Media**, and that will be helpful to participate in peer discussions.
- Feel free to email me if you have any questions!
- ENJOY YOUR WEEKEND!