

POLS 4540: Lobbying and Lobby Influence  
Tuesday & Thursdays 8:15-9:35  
Baldwin 301

Spring 2026

Professor Scott H. Ainsworth

### **Office Hours**

W: 2:00-3:00

Contact me at [sainswor@uga.edu](mailto:sainswor@uga.edu) to make office appointments.

**Course Purpose:** This course introduces a broad scope of literature on lobbying in the United States. The course has two main goals. Our first goal is to become familiar with, discuss, and criticize theories about lobbying and lobbying influence. Our second goal is to understand the changing role of lobbying in the American political system. This course is also project oriented, which means that there will be considerable writing and some data collection and analysis. By the end of the semester, you should have a clear understanding of lobbying and the policymaking process in the federal government. Every student will also have produced a research paper exploring an aspect of the Washington, D.C. lobbying environment.

**Course Design:** This course includes discussions and lectures. To facilitate discussions and promote active learning, you will be assigned to small cohorts from time to time. Presentations and research projects will be oriented around these cohorts.

**Grading:** This course is writing intensive. Assignments include short reaction pieces that tease apart theoretical arguments, assess empirical claims, or connect a newspaper article to material that we have read in class. Prompts for reaction pieces are placed throughout the syllabus. Additional prompts will be shared. For instance, I might ask you to analyze and critique a newspaper column, addressing how it relates to material that we have read for class. Reaction pieces are to be 2 pages long double spaced. Your term paper is your final assignment, which allows you to explore an issue in more depth. You will be expected to collect and analyze data for the term paper, which should be 7-8 pages long double spaced. More info will be distributed. Consider sharing prompts, newspaper articles, and ideas and comments.

Reaction Pieces: 10% each for 20%  
1<sup>st</sup> Midterm: 15%  
Final Midterm: 20%  
Term Paper: 35%  
Participation: 10%

To pass this course, all assignments must be completed and any other requirements must be met. All assignments will be individually assessed and graded. Late assignments are docked half grade a day. You may discuss the course or your work with me at any time. Formal grade appeals must be made in writing.

### **Additional Notes in no Particular Order**

- 1) Education requires that one fully engage challenging material. Come to class prepared and on time, ready to contribute to a thriving learning environment. This is your time to shine.
- 2) Much learning is cooperative and interactive in nature. Strive to participate. I will feel free to call on students.
- 3) Artificial Intelligence-Based Software: Students are allowed to use generative AI software for academic work in this course, provided they document its use. This includes specifying the software used, the extent of its use, and how it contributed to the final product. AI-generated content must be cited appropriately, and students should include a brief reflection on how the AI tool helped them and what they learned from using it. The work must remain original, with AI not replacing critical thinking or personal effort. Instructors will evaluate both the content and the documentation of AI use, considering proper documentation in grading. Failure to document AI use may result in penalties, including reduced grades or academic disciplinary actions. Misuse of AI tools will be downgraded severely. (This paragraph was generated with the assistance of Microsoft Copilot).

### **A Couple of Final Notes:**

- 1) This course presumes that you are comfortable with basic introductory material related to political science and American politics. For a refresher, I recommend Kernell and Jacobson's *The Logic of American Politics*. Review the chapters on interests groups, elections, and public policy. Now is the time to employ the methods and technologies that you have learned in ECON, POLS 2000, POLS 4150, POLS 4070-1-2-3, STATS, and other related classes.
- 2) Learning is cooperative and interactive in nature. Dig deeply into the assigned materials and strive to participate in class.

**Primary Books:** We will read these two books in their entirety.

*Lobbying and Policymaking* by Godwin, Ainsworth, and Godwin (CQ Press ISBN-10:1604264691). Used copies are widely available.

*The Business of America is Lobbying: How Corporations Became Politicized and Politics Became More Corporate* by Drutman (Oxford 2015; ISBN=978-0-19-021551-4). Used copies are rare.

\*\* Some of the most important reading assignments are available from the library – either on the shelves or through the electronic journal systems (e.g., EBSCO and JSTOR). \*\*

\*\* Some readings will be distributed on eLC as pdfs. \*\*

\*\* Please remember that a course syllabus is a general plan for the course, so deviations announced to the class might be necessary. \*\*

## **0. Introductions and Preliminaries**

### **I. Factions, interest groups, pressure groups, organized interests, political interest groups (What are groups? Where do they come from and what do they do? What are interests? Where do they come from and what do they do?)**

Ainsworth. 2002. *Analyzing Interest Groups*, chapters 1 and 2. A pdf will be distributed.  
Madison's Federalist #10. Why is Madison relevant for a class on lobbying? What assumption does Madison use to build his argument? What are Madison's concerns about self-interest? What are his prescriptions?  
Latham, Earl. 1952. The Group Basis of Politics: Notes for a Theory. *American Political Science Review* 46:376-79. What is Latham's group basis? What are its implications?

GENERAL DISCUSSION: Truman is discussed at length in the Ainsworth chapters. Considering Latham and Truman, are we in groups or are groups in us? What is the basis for that question? According to Truman, what structures our interactions with groups?

## **II. Collective Action Problems**

Ainsworth. 2002. *Analyzing Interest Groups*, chapter 2.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: Why do collective action problems exist? What are their implications for the types of groups that do form?

## **III. Entrepreneurs and Their Interactions with Government Officials**

Ainsworth. 2002. *Analyzing Interest Groups*, chapter 3.  
Hansen, John Mark. 1987. Choosing Sides. *Studies in American Pol Development* 2:183-229. With whom do groups compete? What advantages do groups have over their competitors?

## **IV. Historical Origins and Development of Groups and Lobbying**

Skocpol, Theda, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson. 2000. A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Volunteerism in the United States. *American Political Science Review* 94:527-546. How does Skocpol structure her work? What is meant by top down or bottom up arguments? Where else do they occur in political science debates? Where in Skocpol?  
Crowley, Jocelyn Elise Crowley, and Theda Skocpol. 2001. The Rush to Organize: Explaining Associational Formation in the United States, 1860s-1920s. *American Journal of Political Science* 45:813-829. What prompted the explosion in associational formations? How does the occurrence of grand, sweeping events affect the roles of collective action problems and entrepreneurs?

GENERAL DISCUSSION: What obstacles limit group formation and survival? What prompts the emergence of groups? How do political institutions gain legitimacy? How do groups gain legitimacy? Keep Latham and Truman in mind.

## V. The Lobbying Scene in Washington

### 1) Types of Interests in Washington

Godwin, Ainsworth, and Godwin. Chapters 1 and 2

Salisbury. 1984. Interest Representation: The Dominance of Institutions. *American Political Science Review* 78:64-76. What is an institution? What is a group without members, per se? Why do institutions dominate and how do they dominate?

Strolovitch, Dara Z. 2006. Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender *Journal of Politics* 68:xxx. What are the implications of Strolovitch's central findings?

Schlozman, Jones, You, Burch, Verba, and Brady. 2015. Organizations and the Democratic Representation of Interests: What Does It Mean When Those Organizations Have No Members? *Perspectives on Politics* 13:1017-1029.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: Which disparate interests are organized and how are interests communicated to government officials? That is, who's represented in DC? Explore the Center for Responsive Politics website and their Influence and Lobbying data in particular.

### 2) Business Structures and Representation

Hertel-Fernandez. 2018. *Politics at Work*, pp 1-42 and 203-228. A pdf will be distributed.

How does Hertel-Fernandez relate to Salisbury's work on institutions? Latham's work on the group basis of politics?

Drutman. chapters 1-4. Make sure you can understand the graphs throughout Drutman. Drutman relies on both data and interviews. Which do you find more reliable? Why?

GENERAL DISCUSSION: How do businesses mobilize interests? What trends in mobilization have we seen? Consider the OpenSecrets Influence and Lobbying data. What data structures would you need to create a credible argument about lobbying and lobby influence?

### 3) Business Structures and Business Strategies

Baron. 2006. *Business and Its Environment*, pp 170-175 and 203-217. Who's represented?

Who's over or under represented? What are nonmarket strategies? In what ways are they unique to businesses?

GENERAL DISCUSSION: How do theoretical arguments help us to explore data and empirical claims?

## VI. Lobbying and Congress

### 1) The Interplay of Structures and Strategies

Schlozman and Tierney. 1983. More of the Same: Washington Pressure Group Activity in a Decade of Change *Journal of Politics* 45:xx-xx. Is there simply more and more lobbying every decade? Why might older lobbyists envision an explosion? What do the data at OpenSecrets say

about growth patterns? What congressional reforms were tied to the lobbying explosion? Congress scholars, do they remain relevant today?

- Ainsworth. 1997. The Role of Legislators in the Determination of Interest Group Influence. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22: 517-533. What are transaction costs? Why would legislators or lobbyists worry about them? How are transaction costs minimized?
- Hall and Deardorff. 2006. Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy. *American Political Science Review* 100:69-84. If you lobby allies, what sort of slippage could occur regarding your subsidy? With which legislators is the least slippage smallest? Could the lobbying of allies be due to an equilibrium effect? Are lobbying signals cheaper with allies? More credible with allies? Explain.
- Changes in the Value of Majority Party Status. Pdf

## 2) The Interplay between Information and Signaling

- Ainsworth. 2002. *Analyzing Interest Groups*, chapter 6. A pdf will be distributed.
- Anthony J. Nownes, 1999. Solicited Advice and Lobbyist Power, *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 24:113-124.
- Ainsworth, Gallagher, and Moss. 2019. Women at Work: Bias in Lobbying Firms and Issue Area. A pdf will be distributed. How are firm ideologies measured? Why do the authors distinguish between firm biases and issue area biases?
- Drutman, chapters 5-7
- Continuity or Instability among K Street Lobbying Firms. Pdf
- Ainsworth. 2020. Hedging Bets: Lobbying as Insurance for Business in *Interest Group Politics*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed.s Loomis and Nownes. Rowman Littlefield. Lanham MD. A pdf will be distributed.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: What are the roles for information in the D.C. lobbying environment? Recall Hansen's work. Can information be released in a strategic fashion?

## 3) Lobbying and Revolving Doors

- LaPira and Thomas. 2014. Revolving Door Lobbyists and Interest Representation. *Interest Groups and Advocacy* 3:4-29.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Timothy\\_Lapira/publication/263222815\\_Revolving\\_door\\_lobbyists\\_and\\_interest\\_representation/links/545252c30cf2cf5164797e33/R/revolving-door-lobbyists-and-interest-representation.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Timothy_Lapira/publication/263222815_Revolving_door_lobbyists_and_interest_representation/links/545252c30cf2cf5164797e33/R/revolving-door-lobbyists-and-interest-representation.pdf)
- Lazarus, McKay, and Herbel. 2016 Who Walks through the Revolving Door? *Interest Groups and Advocacy* 5:82-100.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: How does influence "travel?" Which revolvers are best suited for lobbying? What do lobbyists do to enhance their influence?

## VII. Lobbying and the Policy Process

- Godwin, Ainsworth, Godwin. *Lobbying and Policymaking*. Chapters 3-6
- Godwin, Ainsworth, Godwin. *Lobbying and Policymaking*. Chapters 7-10
- Gause and Lorenze. 2024. *Interest Groups & Advocacy* xx:xxx.
- Drucker and Tankersley. 2019. How Big Corporations Won New Tax Breaks from the

Trump Administration. *New York Times*, December 30.

DISCUSSION: How do lobbying and policymaking dovetail? At what stage in the policy process are interests least visible? What else is going on in the nation these days?

### **VIII. Direct Lobbying before the Executive Branch**

Yackee. and Yackee. 2006. "A Bias toward Business? Assessing Interest Group Influence on the Bureaucracy." *Journal of Politics* 68:128-139.

McKay and Yackee. 2007. "Interest Group Competition on Federal Agency Rules." *American Politics Research* 35:336-357.

Golden. 1998. "Interest Groups in the Rule-Making Process: Who Participates? Whose Voices Get Heard?" *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 2:245-270.

DISCUSSION: In the words of Marvin Gaye, what's going on? What just happened? Regarding the readings, who's represented? How are they represented? At what stage in the policy process are interests least visible? How varied are rules? What is a significant rule? Should all rules be combined for analysis? Why or why not? How can we reconcile Yackee's works and Golden's?

### **IX. Lobbying, the Law, and the Judicial Branch**

Zemans. 1983. Legal Mobilization: The Neglected Role of Law in the Political System. *American Political Science Review* 77:690-703. What does it mean to leverage the law? Can't everyone do that?

Rich. 2016. The Lawyer Who Became DuPont's Worst Nightmare. *New York Times Magazine*, January 6<sup>th</sup>. Suppose lobbyists worked on a contingency basis. How might they behave in Washington?

Caldeira, Gregory A., and John R. Wright. 1988. Organized Interests and Agenda-Setting in the U. S. Supreme Court. *American Political Science Review* 82:1109-1128.

Collins. 2007. Lobbyists before the U.S. Supreme Court: Investigating the Influence of Amicus Curiae Briefs. *Political Research Quarterly* 60:55-70.

DISCUSSION: Who is represented? Where? How? How do ideologies affect interpretations of issues and representation?

### **X. Lobbying Regulation and Impact**

Ainsworth. 1996. The Logic and Rationale of Lobbying Regulations. *Congress and the Presidency* 23:1-13.

McKay. 2018. Fundraising for Favors. *Political Research Quarterly* 71:869-880.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: How do information and money interact? How does money affect representation?

## **XI. Systemic Impact: Interest Groups and Public Policy Formulation**

Ainsworth, chapter 10. A pdf will be distributed.

Drutman, chapters 8-10

DISCUSSION: Do groups promote democracy or hinder it? Do groups promote economic efficiency or hinder it? Does lobbying promote democracy or hinder it? Does lobbying promote economic efficiency or hinder it? What should we expect in the future for new regulations and new group tactics? How does a crisis affect the lobbying and interest group communities?

## **SKILLS AND OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS COURSE.**

**Institutional Competencies:** Required competencies include Critical Thinking (CT), Analytical Thinking (AT), and Communication (C)

CT: The ability to pursue and comprehensively evaluate information before accepting or establishing a conclusion, decision, or action.

AT: The ability to reason, interpret, analyze, and solve problems form a wide array of authentic contexts.

C: The ability to effectively develop, express, and exchange ideas in written, oral, or visual form.

These competencies are tied to student learning outcomes (SLOs).

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

SLO #1: Students will learn to articulate theoretical concepts related to decisionmaking in political institutions. (CT, C)

SLO #2: Students will apply advanced theoretical frameworks to American political institutions and procedures. (AT)

SLO #3: Students will examine an array of approaches to political analysis. (AT)

SLO #4: Students will critically assess strategic behaviors by political actors, showing an ability to communicate findings in written, verbal, and graphical formats.  
(CT, AT)

SLO #5: Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in rigorous analysis of American politics without concern of partisanship. (C)

### **Extra Credit:**

There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Put forth your best effort and communicate with me if you're having trouble with the material.

### **Additional Notes:**

1. Education requires that one fully engage challenging material. Come to class prepared and on time, ready to contribute to a thriving learning environment. This is your time to shine.
2. Much learning is cooperative and interactive in nature. Strive to participate. I will feel free to call on students.
3. **UGA Honor Code:** "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at [honesty.uga.edu](https://honesty.uga.edu).
4. If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations, you must register for services with the UGA Accessibility and Testing. If you have documentation for such accommodations from A&T, please present it to me as soon as possible. A&T can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, by calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <https://accessibility.uga.edu/>.

5. By using available student resources, you can enrich your University of Georgia experiences. The Office for Student Success and Achievement provides a range of resources, including study tips, tutoring, and workshops, to help students develop solid learning strategies (<https://ossa.uga.edu/>). The Writing Center (<https://www.libs.uga.edu/mlc/study-research/writing-center>) offer resources to assist students with their research and writing.

6. A course syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced to the class might be necessary.

7. Make-up tests are seldom given. Any make-up work must be scheduled within a week of the initial date of the exam or assignment.

8. Guidelines for your etiquette are straightforward. Treat everyone with respect. As a first step, avoid behaviors that others might find distracting including texting, excessive chatting, surfing, twerking, and knitting with loud needles.

9. Remember that even if you're not interested in politics, politics is interested in you!  
FERPA Notice: The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar's explanation at <https://reg.uga.edu/general-information/ferpa/>.

10. Well-being Resources: UGA Well-Being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community. Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity. UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: <https://well-being.uga.edu>
- Student Care and Outreach: <https://sco.uga.edu>
- University Health Center: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: <https://caps.uga.edu> or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273.
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: <https://healthpromotion.uga.edu>

11. Artificial Intelligence-Based Software: Students are allowed to use generative AI software for academic work in this course, provided they document its use. This includes specifying the software used, the extent of its use, and how it contributed to the final product. AI-generated content must be cited appropriately, and students should include a brief reflection on how the AI tool helped them and what they learned from using it. The work must remain original, with AI not replacing critical thinking or personal effort. Instructors will evaluate both the content and the documentation of AI use, considering proper documentation in grading. Failure to document AI use may result in penalties, including reduced grades or academic disciplinary actions. Cases of suspected misuse will be reviewed by the academic integrity committee. (This paragraph was generated with the assistance of Microsoft Copilot).

12. Here are some resources that might be helpful: **Free tutoring, Academic coaching, Presentation help**, as well as help for students facing **Financial hardships** or **Food insecurity and other challenges**. For quick reference, see this **consolidated list of student resources**.