



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

**POLI 065**  
**Pressure and Power: Organized Interests in American Politics**  
**M, W, 3:30–4:45pm, Hanes 112**

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This class focuses on the roots of political power in American society and government. Readings will focus on political science classics on the topic of power as well as recent works focusing on Washington policymaking, with a book on business interests and one on the environmental movement. Students will learn about lobbying, Presidential and congressional influence on the policy process, social movements, and corporate power. We will discuss what social groups mobilize for political influence and why some do a better job of this than others. Of particular interest will be why some social groups, such as students, are chronically *under-mobilized* in politics, whereas others, such as bankers, are highly active. Students will write many short papers on various policy topics throughout the term, always focusing on who is mobilized to express their voices in government and who is not. Assignments will also involve frequent class discussion based on your research on a particular actor in the health-care debate.

Considering that we are in the midst of a possible movement toward health-care reform, and this is going to mobilize enormous lobbying campaigns on all sides, we'll take advantage of this to test whether what we are reading in the books is true. Each of you will be assigned a particular group or political actor and you should always be prepared to explain that actor's viewpoint and actions on the health-care debate. This means following the issue in the newspapers and on the blogs. I'd recommend the *Washington Post* (<http://wpost.com/>) and the *New York Times* (<http://nytimes.com/>) as the best two sources. Call me old fashioned.

As a first-year seminar, part of the goal for the class is to introduce you to the type of work expected here at UNC, and to introduce you to the resources available to help you perform at that level. Further, you should consider this class a good opportunity to discuss such things as study habits, how to pick courses, how to get to know your professors, and how to find your way in the big U; we can talk about such matters a little bit each week, so come with those questions and prepared to discuss them as well. We'll discuss plagiarism as well; it's important to know right at the beginning of your experience here what that is and where the gray areas are so that you know what you are doing in terms of citing your sources properly, including web-based sources. I'll also pay some attention to library skills and using electronic resources, both through the library web site as well as generally over the web, for example distinguishing between the kinds of sites and references professors like to see from those which make us think badly of the quality of research presented. These should be useful skills for you in the next 4 years.

The main thing, however, is that I'll try to teach by example. Courses at Carolina require a lot of preparation by the students, ahead of class, so I'll insist that you come to class having done the readings. I have not "dumbed-down" these readings from what I might assign upper-class students, so you'll be getting a representative sample here of what classes might be like in the Political Science Department. Further, a lot of what you'll do in our Department is write, so I'm going to make you write four papers. Each will be relatively short, just 3–4 pages double-spaced, but by doing a lot of them I'll be able to give you some feedback on both the substance and the form of how to write a good paper.

Readings and topics are laid out in the weekly assignments at the end of this syllabus. The main idea is that you'll read first one of my favorite books in political science, even though it was published way back almost 50 years ago. While the examples are totally outdated, you'll be surprised at how much of what the author wrote still is relevant. So push through the examples about President Truman, and things that happened in 1947 and such, and focus on the ideas; you'll find those ideas are well explained and still extremely relevant. (Some of the history is interesting, too!) Then you'll read a book about the influence of business, and one about the growth and development of what the author calls "Environment, Inc.," the big environmental interest groups. We'll want to take a critical look at whether the mobilization of the environmental movement is surprisingly large, surprisingly small, or just right. If people don't mobilize their voices cannot be heard.

So, given all that, you'll have a pretty broad introduction to power in America, who has it, who doesn't, and how political scientists approach such questions.

Books for purchase (please get these as soon as possible):

- Schattschneider, E. E. 1972. *The Semi-Sovereign People*. Wadsworth / Thomson Learning. [isbn 0 03 013366 1] Note: also published in 1960; either edition is fine.
- Smith, Mark A. 2000. *American Business and Political Power: Public Opinion, Elections, and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [isbn 0 226 76467 8]
- Bosso, Christopher J. 2005. *Environment, Inc. From Grassroots to Beltway*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. [isbn 0 7006 1368 4]

Note that I may occasionally assign additional readings. These will be distributed in class or be available on the course web page.

Assignments will be as follows: First, class participation is an absolute must. There are only about 20 of you in the class, so I'll know your names and expect you to be in class each time, having done the readings and ready to participate. You don't have to have understood all the readings; it's fine to come to class with questions or points where you'd like some more clarification of the ideas. But you have to do the readings ahead of time, and come to class ready to ask questions as well as to answer those questions posed by others. Sitting quietly is a very bad habit.

Second, you'll write four short papers, as indicated below. Papers require no extra research beyond the required readings, but will require that you carefully compare the theories explained

in the readings with specific examples from the health-care debate. I want you to learn how to write a good essay, developing a theme, and clearly answering the question you pose, with evidence. So we'll focus a lot on that and I'll give comments so each paper should get better over the semester.

Third, I'll often have *very* simple assignments or quizzes in class; these will be graded on a scale of 2 (full credit); 1 (half credit); 0 (unacceptable or not handed in). I'm an easy grader so if you do the assignment with any care at all you'll get a perfect grade. Then again if I have a quiz in class and you skip that day, oops, you lost two points. Such things can add up and if you note the equation below, the combination of class participation and these short assignments will make up 40 percent of your total grade. This is a seminar, so you need to be here, ready to participate, period. These quizzes will be unannounced and we'll have as many of them as I feel like we need, fewer if everyone seems well prepared all the time, more if there seem to be free-riders.

Finally, there will be four one-page assignments relating to your assigned actor in the health-care debate. You'll research their background, campaign contributions, position, and activities on the debate. On days when these assignments are due, and you each have your papers in your hands, I'll call on students or take volunteers to have a discussion about what all these groups are up to, who they are, and what they want. This will allow us to have a structured discussion and to learn a lot about the major protagonists in the debate, with each of you researching one actor. After the discussion you'll hand in your assignment.

Summary of grading and assignments:

Class participation including attendance	20%
Four short papers (10 points each):	40
Short homework assignments or quizzes on the readings in class	20
Four assignments about developments in the health-care debate	20
Total:	100%

**Attendance and class participation:** I may or may not take attendance on any given day, though I usually will, I will do it a lot at the beginning of the semester in order to learn your names, and I always will if attendance is low. Coming to class so you can participate in the discussions is an important element of class participation and learning. The final grade in this course will incorporate a substantial weight for class participation, and you cannot do well in that portion of the course if your attendance is poor. Note that sitting quietly in class never with a question, never with an answer, never participating in the discussion will not get you a good grade either, even if your attendance is excellent. So attendance is a necessary condition for a good participation grade, but not a sufficient one.

### **A Note on Academic Honesty**

As you know the UNC Honor Code prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing. As regards this course the particular element of concern is academic honesty, especially plagiarism. Here, it is especially important that you understand exactly what plagiarism is, because many cases of plagiarism are due to carelessness or ignorance of the norms of attribution for academic work, not intentional cheating. So familiarize yourself with the Honor Code by reviewing this web site

(<http://honor.unc.edu/>) and the “instrument” that is included there. Any work you hand in for this course will be assumed to be your own, in accordance with the Honor Pledge. In addition, the library has an excellent web site that includes a tutorial about citations, plagiarism, and related matters. Use this link to familiarize yourself in detail with these rules, as they will be necessary in all your courses: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/introduction/>.

### **Students with Disabilities**

I am happy to make reasonable accommodation for any disability. I only ask that you let me know of your disability status in the first week of the semester before accommodation is needed so that we can agree on a plan. Please use this web site for information about disabilities and accommodation: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html>. Contact the Office of Learning Disabilities and bring a letter from them indicating the type of accommodation needed. I'll be more than happy to comply. (It is very important that you get in the habit of letting professors know right up front about any disability status. If you do not let us know until there is a problem that requires accommodation, we may not be able to make adjustments once the semester starts.)

## **Following the Health-care Debate: A Semester Project**

As usual, this year features some pretty significant interest-group action playing out in real time on the national stage as we go through the semester. We will follow the progress (or lack thereof) of health-care reform through Congress during the entire semester. Each student will pick or be assigned a major interest group or political actor and follow their actions through major news sources and web sites, including the unfiltered web sites of the organizations themselves, so you can compare what the groups are saying with what the media and other groups are saying they are saying. I'll give a series of assignments throughout the semester where you'll need to research who speaks for this sector, what their positions on the reform are, and what they are doing. I will coordinate assignments so that each student gets one of the following groups:

### Groups:

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|--|---|
| 1. doctors   | 12. Moveon.org                                  |
| 2. nurses  | 13. Conservative social movements<br>(pick one) |
| 3. other medical specialists such as<br>anesthesiologists (pick any major<br>group you like) | 14. Conservative talk radio (pick one)          |
| 4. insurance companies   | 15. President Obama and his<br>administration   |
| 5. hospitals   | 16. House Dem leadership                        |
| 6. mental health professionals   | 17. Senate Dem leadership                       |
| 7. drug companies (PhRMA)  | 18. House Dem liberals                          |
| 8. unions (AFL-CIO)  | 19. House Blue Dog Democrats                    |
| 9. small businesses (pick a<br>representative organization)                                  | 20. House Rep leadership                        |
| 10. big business (Business Roundtable)   | 21. Senate Rep leadership                       |
| 11. civil rights groups (pick one)   | 22. Senate Republican moderates                 |

## Weekly schedule and discussion topics

Note: Readings should all be done *before the Monday class*.

Week 1, Aug 26, Introduction and overview

Week 2, Aug 31, Sep 2, A theory of “conflict expansion”

- Schattschneider Ch 1, 2

Week 3 Sep 9 (No class on Labor Day Sep 7), Health-care Overview

**Health-care assignment 1 due on Wed Sep 9.** Go to your group’s own web site and other sources and come to class with a one-page description of your group, its membership, characteristics, background, etc. Describe the group’s general background, size, number of staff, budget, etc. Is it a rich or a poor group? If you are assigned to a government official, explain their background and institutional position. (Note: no need yet to explain their position on the health-care debate.)

Week 4 Sep 14, 16, How conflicts “socialize” and what difference that makes

- Schattschneider Ch 3, 4, 5

**Health-care assignment 2 due on Monday Sep 14.** Explain in one page: a) your group’s position on the health-care reform; b) how prominent / active it has been; c) some of its most recent and visible actions. Finally, give one paragraph on d) its motivation: what is it trying to accomplish and why?

**First paper due on Wednesday Sep 16.** Take the group or political actor you have been assigned to follow through the health-care debate and explain whether they are following a strategy that makes sense given what Schattscheider’s theory would lead you to expect. Are they expanding the conflict or restricting it? Clearly explain what the theory means and what you would need to observe if it were true. Then describe what you do observe, and whether it corresponds to the theoretical expectations. If not, discuss why.

Week 5 Sep 21, 23, Evaluations of our democratic system

- Schattschneider Ch 6, 7, 8

**Second paper due Wed Sep 23.** What is more important, Schattscheider’s idea that debates can be socialized, and therefore a political loser has the chance to win, or his other idea that there is so much bias in the pressure system that certain actors in American society are systematically shut out? Discuss both aspects of the theory, make reference to specific examples from the health-care debate that back up your point, and then justify a conclusion with evidence. Be as systematic as you can and make sure your conclusion is backed up by your evidence based on examples from the health-care debate.

Week 6 Sep 28, 30, The Collective Action Dilemma and Its Solutions

- Read the Wikipedia entries on:

1. Tragedy of the Commons  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy\\_of\\_the\\_Commons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy_of_the_Commons))
2. Free Rider Problem ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_rider\\_problem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_rider_problem))
3. *The Logic of Collective Action*  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Logic\\_of\\_Collective\\_Action](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Logic_of_Collective_Action))

Week 7 Oct 5, 7, The overall structure of the environmental movement

- Bosso Ch 1, 2

**Health-care assignment 3 due Wed Oct 7.** Go to Opensecrets.org and find out as much as you can about the political contributions of your group. Also look at other groups that are similar to yours, using the industry codes available there. For example if your group is the AFL-CIO, look at all unions as well. If your group is a government official rather than an interest group, look at their receipts from various interests concerned with health care. One page.

Week 8 Oct 12, 14, Niche players, capstone groups, and others

- Bosso Ch 3

Week 9 Oct 19, 21, How environmental groups raise money and support themselves

- Bosso Ch 4, 5, 6

**Third paper due Wednesday Oct 21.** Compare what you learned in Week 6 about the collective action dilemma to the contents of Bosso's book, showing the resources and size of the environmental movement. Does Bosso confirm or disconfirm Olson's theory of collective action? That is, is it surprising that the environmental movement is as large as it is, or rather is it surprising that it is not, say, 100 times larger, considering that so many Americans agree with its general goals. Be careful here not simply to state your opinion but rather to relate specific facts from Bosso to specific theoretical ideas from the other readings. Consider both sides of the argument and reach a conclusion supported by evidence.

Week 10 Oct 26, 28, Business unity? Why we might not expect it all so often.

- Smith Ch 1, 2

Week 11 Nov 2, 4, Business unity? When that does and does not happen.

- Smith Ch 3, 4

Week 12 Nov 9, 11, Public Opinion v. Business interests

- Smith Ch 5

Week 13 Nov 16, 18, Measuring Business Power

- Smith Ch 6, 7

Week 14 Nov 23 (No class on Nov 25, Happy Thanksgiving!)

**Health-care assignment 4 due Mon Nov 23.** Review the lobbying activities that your group has engaged in. Are they very active, or relatively quiet? Are they often in the media, or are

they more “behind the scenes”? What arguments do they emphasize? Do they seem to be winning or losing? One page.

Week 15 Nov 30, Dec 2, Business Influence on Public Opinion

- Smith Ch 8, 9

Week 16 Dec 7, 9, Review, Overview, Discussion, Complaints about the Professor (optional)

**Fourth paper due Monday Dec 7.** Does what Smith wrote about business interests apply to the health-care debate? His basic argument is that business wins less often than you might imagine because a) it is typically not unified and b) on those cases where it is unified, so are many other powerful players who are diametrically opposed to business, so the net result is that business interests are either on the sidelines on many issues or else involved in huge political battles, where they win some and lose some. Now, apply this to what has developed over the semester with the health-care debate. Has business won? How do you define “business”? Have some particular interests clearly come out ahead? What has been the relative role of business lobbyists, consumer / public advocates, and elected officials themselves? As always, I do not want your general opinions and personal reactions, but rather a clear statement of the theory and what it would lead one to expect, then a specific illustration of the facts as they have been laid out, and finally a comparison of the facts and the theoretical expectations in order to reach a logical conclusion.

Note: No final exam in this class; have a great break!