

Final Exam Information

POLS616 Interest Group Politics

Fall 2007

On the final exam. I'll choose 10 from this list.

1. What are the key differences between professional associations, labor unions, and trade associations?
2. How is the theory that LB call "neopluralist" different from the pluralist and transactionist theories?
3. Why is the idea of "free-riding" important in the critique of the pluralist theory? Be careful to define your terms!
4. Suppose I hold a computer tournament and all students are required to enter a strategy for an infinitely repeated PD game. And your grade depends on your total accumulated score. What qualities would your strategy have? Why?
5. I think elections are collective action problems. If someone does not vote because she feels her vote would not be likely to affect the election outcome, what do you think the most persuasive arguments you could use to persuade her that she should vote?
6. Describe the most vital parts of Salisbury's "exchange theory".
7. The Johnson article on environmental interest groups claims there might be a connection between the collective projects that organizations take on and their ability to offer expressive benefits. Recall Olson's by-product said otherwise. What might the connection be? Do you agree?
8. What does Jack Walker want you to believe about selective incentives and nonoccupational groups? Do you agree?
9. Explain this quotation from Salisbury (in Alexander, p. 187) "A central distinction between an institution and an interest group is that institutions have interests that are politically and analytically independent of the interests of particular institutional members."
10. In the chapter by Schattschneider, one finds the claim: "If it is true that the result of political contests is determined by the scope of public involvement in conflicts, much that has been written about politics becomes nonsense, and we are in for a revolution in our thinking about politics. The scope factor overthrows the familiar simplistic calculus based on the model of a tug of war of measurable forces" (p. 64). What the heck is that all about? What is he saying is wrong, and what are you supposed to learn from his idea?
11. Suppose you run an interest organization and you expect the candidates to take positions near the median voter, far from your preference. Describe two logically sound strategies you might take that would cause the candidate to take a non-median position in your favor during the election campaign.
12. After thinking about the 501c3, 501c4 problem during this semester, I've decided that the "default" tax category for interest groups should be 527. Why are so many of them claiming to be 501c3 (or 501c4)?

13. List the stages of the legislative process and explain
  - A. how open to influence each stage is
  - B. reasons why an organized interest might focus on that stage
14. Supposing PAC donations don't affect Congressional roll call votes, why do people give so much money to PACs and why do PACs give it to candidates?
15. List the avenues through which organized interests might try to influence on the courts. What do the studies indicate about the influence of these efforts?
16. Suppose an organized interest's leaders are enthusiastic about pursuing political influence according to this advice: "...it is worth noting that interest groups can change the character of political parties by changing the identity of those who represent the parties in office. This influence then gives them the opportunity to influence the policies that the parties espouse" (RWM, p. 46). RWM offer some hints about where an organization should focus its efforts. What is the best advice you would give?
17. Consider the 3 theories of parties in Skinner's essay. Which party theory is most consistent with the idea that a "soft money ban would likely destroy the parties as we know them today"?
18. Businesses may be significantly affected by some policies, and yet, "Paradoxically, however, these are issues on which business interests actually have the least influence" (LB, p. 175). What are those issues? How do the authors know?
19. Wright calls 2 theories of donations Type I and Type II. What are they and what are the big differences between them?
20. If there is PAC influence on roll call votes, why is it so hard to find?
21. How would you best describe the "issue demands" of organized interests that are observed in agricultural policy (according to Bill Browne)?
22. What evidence about political influence does Browne collect from the members of Congress? Whose input seems to count when it comes time to make a decision?
23. If an organized interest wants to influence a policy that is being enforced by the bureaucracy, what methods are available? Make a list.
24. The theme of Demosclerosis was very widely read and it has a core argument that seems very persuasive. From a political science perspective, however, it seems to leave open some pretty important issues. What do you think are the most significant problems that would have to be worked out in order for us to "really believe" the themes in Demosclerosis.

Essay Questions. On the final exam, I will ask one of these questions.

1. Some organizations focus their attention on the courts. Some on the Presidency. Some on lobbying the Congress. Some focus on elections, rather than lobbying. Create a brief essay that outlines the reasons why organizations might be pursuing some of these targets rather than others. Provide some examples and whatever evidence you can marshal from the readings.

2. Wright's conclusion is that PACs don't matter much, but Hall and Wayman claim they matter a great deal. Evaluate their arguments in light of the work we have done this semester and do your best to reach a conclusion about group influence on Congressional decision making. Don't forget that the LB and RMW textbooks, along with other readings, have plenty of advice about this.

3. Olson claims that rational, self-interested people will not spontaneously join together as a group to advocate for their collective good. I believe that the element "self-interested" is not a required component in this argument. Remember why? Explain! If you disagree, OK, but give your reasons.

4. Some political scientists emphasize the importance of interest group coalitions in formulating overall public policy and presenting a "united front" to Congress. Two (possibly more) of the articles we have read attack that thesis. What were their arguments and evidence? What do you conclude about organizational participation in the "big-picture" debate?