Course Manual: Collective Action and Interest Groups

Course Catalogue Number
7324A1191Y

Credits
9

Entry requirements
Admission to the master Political Science, tracks Bestuur en Beleid, Politieke Theorie en Politiek Gedrag, Internationale Betrekkingen or International Relations.

Instruction language
English

Time Period
2015-2016, semester 1, block 2 and 3

Location
See: https://www.roosters.uva.nl/
Monday, 13-15h, REC B3.03
Thursday 13.15h, REC B3.03

Lecturer(s)
Joost Berkhout, room B10.10
For contact information, see: http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/organisatie/medewerkers/content/b/e/d.j.berkhout/d.j.berkhout.html

Course Objectives
After this course, students:

• are familiar with the classic theories and contemporary research in the field of social movement studies and interest group politics.
• are aware of the various contextual factors that shape collective action and explain differences in interest representation between interests, countries, issues and organisational types.
• have practised their argumentative, research design and other academic skills in writing and through in-class participation.

Course Content
An important part of politics occurs ‘at the gates of’ but outside formal decision-making arena’s: business lobbying on transatlantic trade arrangements (TTIP), student protests for better academic education, international aid provision in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake or ad-hoc, collective support actions for undocumented migrants. These are examples of social movement action and interest group politics. Social movements or interest groups thrive better under some circumstances than under others: we know that some interests do not get organized at all, some collective action organizations do not manage to produce any meaningful political voice and some political campaigns are ‘like a tree falling unheard in a forest’. These differences potentially create inequalities in the political voice of groups in society and in the interests represented before government, as famously stated by Schattschneider (1960), ‘organization is the mobilization of bias’. In this course, we assess several explanations for such differences in the mobilization of social movements, the organization of civil society and the representation of interests before government.

Students will become familiar with the classic theories and contemporary research in the field of social movement studies and interest group politics. They will be able to recognize the important conceptual and empirical differences and similarities between these sub-fields of political science. The change-oriented collective social movement mobilization of citizens is commonly studied separately from the organized
representation of business, professional or citizen interests in interest groups. The integrated treatment in this course allows us to evaluate how social movements (sometimes) become institutionalized, how collective action problems affect both types of organizations and how counter-mobilization or collaboration shapes the number and types of actors involved on a given issue. We attend to the political scientific study of a broad range of organizational types: social movements, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, interest groups, think tanks, business interest associations, lobby groups, individual companies and so on. These organizations are studied in diverse contexts: in local, national, and international arenas, on multiple issues or domains, and in comparative perspective.

Each participant will select one social movement organization or interest group, and track its activity throughout the time period of the course. This case is used in written assignments about the literature. The course is of interest to students of political behavior, public policy and international relations. The final paper assignment allows students to choose a subject that matches their specialized interests.

This course focusses on mobilization, organization and strategic choices of interest groups and social movements rather than the relationships with government or the policy influence of such groups. The latter is the focus of the course ‘Lobbying in Europe and beyond’ by Rosa Sanchez-Salgado. These two courses complement each other and together provide students with in-depth knowledge of the full range interest groups politics. Therefore, the combined study of these two master electives is a perfect combination for students with academic or career-oriented interest in this field.

Teaching methods/learning formats
Bi-weekly meetings with in-class assignments and several written assignments.

Course Evaluations & Adjustments of the Course
The content and form of the course has been substantially revised on the basis of the student evaluations of 2014-2015. This concerns form of assessment, more specifically: the assessment of presentations, QARC-assignment and book review essay has been replace by the response and review essays. Substantially, the attention in the course on internal and population-level organisational issues has been replaced by attention to group strategies and influence. Themes are now identified by week rather than per meeting, and more explicitly refer to normative concerns in the literature on the topic.

Manner & Form of Assessment and Assessment Requirements & Criteria

- Students are expected to participate in accordance to Teaching and Examination Regulations of the Graduate School of Social Sciences for 2014-2015, article B3.3.
  - Students prepare and present specific in-class (group)assignments.
- Literature response assignment (25%)
  - Deadline: Mondays 18h of the week mentioned. Please select weeks according to last name:
    - A to H: weeks 2, 4, 6.
    - I to Z: weeks 3, 5, 7.
  - Three times 500 (min) to 1000 (max) words
- Literature review of required and additional readings and on the topic of the final paper (25%)
  - 1500 to 2000 words, including research question
  - Deadline: 7 December
- Final paper (50%)
  - Paper-idea: 14 November.
  - Deadline: A week prior to the end of block 3.
  - Deadline of rewrite in case of grade lower than 5,4: one week after receiving feedback.

All written assignments should conform to the formatting as outlined in the Thesis Manual (see: http://student.uva.nl/mpolsc/az/content2/thesis/thesis-crg-pol.html)
Specification of assignments:

Bi-weekly literature response assignments
Focus on the literature of the previous two weeks. Choose one or two questions, arguments, findings or normative positions from the literature studied – this may be a very central point or something that surprised you or attracted your interest. It must be something that reoccurs in more than a single study. Explain the point selected and explain the differences and similarities among the authors studied. You may add your own perspective or question or refer to the class discussions.

Literature review
Think of this as the first part of a research paper on a specific research question, and more specifically, the first part of your final paper for this course. Start with an introduction of around 400 words in which you provide a clear statement of the ‘Why’ question motivating your research and justify the question: Why should we be interested theoretically, normatively or substantively? Subsequently, identify the literatures bearing on answering the ‘why’ question you have posed, summarize and critique each in terms of method and major findings and identify why there is a gap in the literature necessitating your paper. This totals between 1500 and 2000 words. You may add a brief note in which you provide a brief section outline of the final paper. This part is not graded but can be discussed in the individual feedback meeting early December.

Final paper
Students are expected to write an academic paper of around 5000 words (text body) on one of the central topics of the course. More detailed instructions are provided on Blackboard / in class. The deadline is Friday the 22 January 2016, 17h. In case of a grade lower than 5,4, students are allowed to rewrite their paper based on the feedback. The maximum grade of the rewritten version is 6,5.

Inspection of exams/assignments, feedback
Student receive written feedback on the literature assignments and final paper. There are individual feedback meetings on the literature review and, on request, on the final paper.

Rules regarding Fraud and Plagiarism
The provisions of the Regulations Governing Fraud and Plagiarism for UvA Students apply in full. Access this regulation at http://www.student.uva.nl/preventfraud-plagiarism

Literature/materials
See references in the programme. All articles are available online (through the UvA network). Please refer to Blackboard for further availability

Date Final Grade
Simultaneous with the final paper grade.
Programme description per week

Mobilisation bias: The logic of collective action (week 1 and 2):

In week 1, we evaluate a crucial phase in the development of political science, more specifically the clash between the pluralists of the Fifties and their critics in the Sixties, and the pivotal place of the study of collective action (groups and movements) in that clash. The pluralist ‘group approach’ is dominant in American political science in the Fifties, but is seriously challenged on normative, empirical and conceptual grounds (Baumgartner and Leech, 1998, 44-63). Central in this respect is the publication of Olson’s Logic of Collective Action (1965) which fundamentally changed the study of groups and movements. As noted by Oliver (1993, 273-274. Also see Baumgartner and Leech, 1998, 63-82), prior to 1965 social scientists assumed mobilisation to be ‘natural’ and studied the implications of group behavior, whereas post-1965, ‘they assume that collective inaction is natural even in the face of common interests, and that it is collective action that needs to be explained’. And this, in turn, produced a new generation of researchers challenging Olson’s Logic. We read excerpts from Olson’s original book and, in Baumgartner and Leech (1998) a description of the debates between pluralists and critics, and Olson and critics.

In the additional readings, we study a class-oriented reinterpretation of Olson (Offe and Wiesenthal, 1980) popular in studies of industrial relations in the Eighties, an outline of formal sociological theories of collective action with specific formal critique (Oliver, 1993) and a modest ‘classic’ contemporaneous ‘addition’ to the exclusive ‘material incentive’ structure of Olson (Wilson, 1974). After this week you are able to take a thoughtful position on the following proposition:

Collective action only occurs in small groups with concentrated interests

In week 2 we look at studies ‘in the shadow’ of Olson’s Logic. To start, Walker (1983), Hansen et al (2005) and Jordan and Maloney (2006) explicitly challenge Olson on specific empirical grounds. In a much-cited research article, Walker (1983) points at the critical role of patronage in collective action. Hansen et al (2005) examine collective and individual political action on the part of firms and point out that firms seek from government very specific benefits such as contracts or regulatory exemptions. This motivates them to lobby and, not foreseen by Olson, their particular interests spills over into collective action. Jordan and Maloney (2006) examine whether ‘non-joiners’ have ‘rationally’ chosen to free ride, or whether they are just sceptical about the likely success of collective action. Furthermore, recent studies, most notably Bennett and Segerberg (2012) have revived some of Olson’s notions in order to assess collective action through social media. Traditional ‘organized’ collective action presumably has higher barriers than the ‘connective’ action coordinated through various new media (Twitter, Facebook, sms, and so).

In the additional readings Bimber et al (2005) also theoretically revive the logic of collective action and specify how new technology can sometimes overcome collective action problems. Lowery et al (2005) situate the Logic within the context of studies of communities of interest groups and highlight that systems
of interest groups must be understood as shaped by both societal ‘bottom-up’ factors, such as those indicated by Olson, and ‘top-down’ factors related to politics and inter-organizational dynamics. Heckelman (2007) discusses the ‘other’ book by Olson: ‘The Rise and Decline of Nations’ (1982) in which Olson stipulates the implications of his Logic. Olson’s point is that narrowly interested businesses pressure governments in such a manner that it produces deadlock in policymaking at the expense of the general interest, which eventually lead to economic decline. His concern is about economic inefficiency rather than political equality. After this week you are able to take a thoughtful position on the following proposition:

Collective action potentially occurs on any interest shared by more than one person or organization

Participation bias: social movement participation (week 3) and the professionalization and institutionalisation of movements (week 4)

In week 3 and 4 we continue to focus on the relationship between citizens and groups or movements. We focus on personal, participatory resources, organizational resources and maintenance of organizations as groups professionalise over time. We no longer explicitly employ the Olsonian terminology.

In week 3 Brady et al (1995) and Marien et al (2010) depart from an individual participation perspective. Both groups of researchers try to find out which citizens are more likely to participate politically, especially in a ‘non-institutional’ manner, such as through social movement participation or interest group membership. Both highlight that richer, more educated persons are more likely to participate politically, but also point at several additional characteristics such as civic skills and gender. Edwards and McCarthy (2004) review the field of study into the ways in which these ‘inequalities’ translate into actual patterns of social movement organizations. In their words, ‘middle-class groups remain privileged in their access to many kinds of resources, and, therefore, not surprisingly social movements that resonate with the concerns of relatively privileged social groups predominate (…) Resource mobilization theory is at root aimed at better understanding how groups are able to overcome prevailing patterns of resource inequality in their efforts to pursue social change goals.’

The additional readings study individual participation in social movements (Walgrave and Klandermans, 2010), in voluntary organization and interest groups (Schlozman et al 2012) and local initiatives related to local community policies (Tonkens and Verhoeven, 2011). After this week you are able to take a thoughtful position on the following proposition:

Social movements tend to voice the concerns of the socio-economically privileged

In week 4 we focus on the form of participation offered by social movements and civil society groups more broadly. The central concern here is that as social movements institutionalise and professionalise they become increasingly ‘bureaucratic’ and distant from their supporters-base. And consequently ‘drift’ away from actual representation of the causes and interests on which they mobilised in the first place, and with only ‘check-book’ participation rather than offering opportunities for the development of civic skills. The
required reading report findings of empirical research. Kriesi (1996) presents an elegant typology of the organisational context and organisational adaptation of social movements. He assesses the circumstances under which certain types of social movement change (radicalisation, institutionalisation, devolution, commercialisation) occur. Walker et al (2011) empirically assess the ‘the decline of traditional membership organizations and their replacement by professional advocates’, motivated by the concern that this is ‘related to the decline in civic capacity’. They optimistically conclude that traditional membership organizations and non-membership professional advocates co-exist in a largely mutually beneficial manner. Jordan and Maloney (1998) point out that individuals have a broad range of interests and preferences, some of which they may not even be aware of, and consequently are potentially willing to support various causes. This produces the situation that citizens eventually end up supporting causes on which professional organizations put forward sophisticated political marketing strategies. In other words, the ‘supply’ of groups matters more than the actual ‘demand’ on the part of citizens. Rucht (1999) examines the so-called ‘Iron law of oligarchy’, the notion that every political organization over time tends to moderate politically and develop stronger hierarchy.

In the additional readings, Sanchez-Salgado (2014), Klüver and Saurugger (2013) and Kohler-Koch and Buth (2013) assess the relationship between professionalism and ‘grass-roots’-membership in the EU case. Maloney (2015) discusses recent literature on this topic and relates it to ‘democratic delivery’. Van der Heijden (1997) adds a case to the Kriesi (1996) framework. After this week you are able to take a thoughtful position on the following proposition: *Professionalization diversifies the ‘supply’ of movements and interest groups*

**Organization bias: is interest representation ‘skewed, loaded and unbalanced in favor of a fraction of a minority’? (week 5)**

This week, we depart from another ‘classic’ text in this field of study: Schattschneider’s *The Semisovereign People*. Similar to Olson, his work is a response to the pluralist group approach of the Fifties but in contrast to Olson, his study is less formal and more normative. His key point is that the interests represented through the ‘pressure system’, compared to party system, are very narrow in scope and biased in favour of the ‘upper-class’. ‘Public’ or general interests are not represented, nor do disadvantaged interests, ie those without ‘resources’, gain voice through interest groups. This argument has resonated strongly in subsequent empirical studies in the field, of which Schlozman et al (2012) is a recent example. More conceptually, as outlined in Lowery et al (2015), Schattschneider’s work also raised the question what an ‘unbiased interest community’ would look like. In the discussion note by Lowery et al (2015), several scholars suggest distinct criteria that potentially indicate the extent to which interest communities are ‘biased’. Strolovitch (2006) focusses on sub-groups within organizations advocating on behalf of the disadvantaged. While Schattschneider argues that interests of the disadvantaged are underrepresented in general, Strolovitch further problematizes this, when she finds that in cases where disadvantaged have organized a voice such as
in the National Organization for Women, these mainly focus on issues of concern to relatively privileged constituents of the group.

As regards the additional readings, Rasmussen and Carroll (2013) and Berkhout et al (2015) study the EU case. Rasmussen and Carrol (2013) deal with bias towards business interest representation, both in terms of actual numbers and lobby activities. They find ‘very obvious’ aggregate numerical business dominance, with even stronger dominance when looking at the lobby on EU consultations. Especially regulatory proposals in which the costs are concentrated lead to a ‘biased’ pro-business mobilization of interests. Berkhout et al (2015) examine the contours of the business lobby in Brussels and find that economic, structural factors explain the variation in the numbers of lobbyists per economic sector, rather than the nature or impact of EU policy making (also see LSE weblog). The two articles by Lowery and co-authors review the arguments on bias (2004) and point to empirical mechanisms underlying bias in interest representation (2005). After this week you are able to take a thoughtful position on the following proposition:

The distribution of interests in society is unrelated to the distribution of interests in before government

Access bias: do public, lobby and mobilisation strategies add up or exclude each other? (week 6)

One of the central assumptions in interest group studies is that business interests tend to choose an ‘inside’ lobby strategy aimed at policy makers and that ‘public’ interest groups and social movements tend to ‘go public’ to promote their cause. This is studied from various angles in the required readings of this week. Dur and Mateo (2013) present a country comparative study and find systematic evidence that ‘group type’ explains strategies. Binderkrantz et al (2015) focus on Denmark and look at a more aggregate level when they compare arenas rather than groups. They find support for the idea that there is ‘cumulative inequality’ in the access of groups to different arenas; those who have a dominant position ‘inside’ government, also have that in the media. Mahoney and Baumgartner (2015) look at the US case and point to the importance of the structure of the policy conflict in explaining favourable treatment by government officials. Beyers and Kerremans (2007) highlight the organizational constraints of interest organizations when ‘shopping’ at different levels of government, in their case of ‘domestic’ groups becoming active at the European level.

In the additional readings, Keck and Sikkink (1999), in a hypothesis similar to the arena-shifting argument by Binderkrantz et al (2015) open up the possibility of ‘losers’ of national conflicts to seek redress at the international level, therewith creating ‘boomrang’ effect. Both Fraussen and Wouter (2015 and Weiler and Brandlei’s (2015) take up a similar question as Dur and Mateo. Hanegraaff et al extend the work of Beyers and Kerremans (2007) in the context of lobbying at the WTO conferences. After this week you are able to take a thoughtful position on the following proposition:

Groups with limited access to policy-makers may gain easier access to the news media than others

Influence bias: Are business interest organizations more successful than others? (week 7)
As noted in week 5, Schattschneider (1960) assumes that bias in the pattern of interest representation largely resembles bias in the political agenda and in political decisions. In this week we focus on the ‘dirty little secret’ of interest group studies: the systematic research finding that lobbying tends to be ineffective in influencing public policy. In his well-argued literature review, Lowery (2013) lists the reasons why this may be the case – ranging from the research challenges of defining and measuring influence to the idea that interest groups most of the time are not aiming at influencing policy makers, but pursue other goals. The empirical studies of Dür et al (2015) and Woll (2007) assess the success of business actors in the EU and in international trade negotiations, respectively. Dür et al (2015) note that ‘business routinely faces a defensive battle’ in the EU and tend to be unsuccessful in pushing the European Commission in the direction they prefer, especially on relatively conflictual issues on which also the EP is involved. Woll (2007) develops the relational dimension of power and consequently focusses more specifically on the interests, preferences and power of government actors – which sometimes structurally favors business actors. This is important, and noted in a simplifying manner by Lowery, (2013, 5): ‘If I am hungry and a colleague asks me to go to lunch, my colleague’s influence on me is only of a very trivial sort’.

In the additional readings, Amenta and Caren (2004) discuss the ‘influence’ or ‘outcomes’ of social movement activities. Klüver (2013) and Rasmussen (2015) assess influence in the EU case, in a quantitative and qualitative manner, respectively. Gilens and Page (2014) US study explicitly links influence to affluence, and received popular attention in the Daily Show. After this week you are able to take a thoughtful position on the following proposition:

*Interest groups lobby for other purposes than influencing public policy*
Programme: readings per week

Please read all required literature prior to Thursday meeting. You are expected to read all required literature and at least one of the recommended readings.

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<td>• Tonkens, E. en I. Verhoeven (2011) Bewonersinitiatieven: proeftuin voor partnerschap tussen burgers en overheid. Een onderzoek naar bewonersinitiatieven in de Amsterdamse wijkaanpak, Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam/Stichting Actief burgerschap. See PDF</td>
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<td>19-11 &amp; 23-11</td>
<td>Institutionalisation and professionalization</td>
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<td>• Maloney, William A. (2015) Organizational Populations: Professionalization, Maintenance and Democratic Delivery, Lowery, D., V. Gray and D. Halpin (eds) <em>The Organization Ecology of Interest Communities: An Assessment and an Agenda</em>, Palgrave. PDF (will be available in the library as ebook)</td>
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<td>• Van der Heijden, H. A. (1997). Political opportunity structure and the institutionalisation of the environmental</td>
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<td>17-12</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Wrap-up and pitch of paper proposals</td>
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<td>January</td>
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- Confirmed guests: Volkskrant journalists 7-12, Hilde van der Pas (TNI) 30-11 or 14-12
Additional readings: books:
Student may want to use any of these books for their final paper.

  - According to Perspectives on Politics ‘the most important book on lobbying and interest group influence in at least a generation’. Focus on US Congress cases between 1998-2002. Especially of interest to (public policy) students interested in the ‘status-quo bias’ of political institutions. More info on: http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/books/lobby/lobbying.htm

  - The central thesis of this book is that attention and ‘Western’ support goes to the ‘savviest and not the neediest’ Third World political movements. Includes case studies of the ‘marketing strategies’ of Mexico’s Zapatista rebels and Nigeria’s Ogoni ethnic group. These case may be of special interest to International Relations students but last year the book proofed to be popular among students of all tracks.

  - This book documents the data collection of the authors throughout their careers on interest group participation and lobbying. The authors focus on individual participation and interest group activity. Considering the length of the book, the review may disregard section II on individual participation. When it comes to lobbying, the authors note that ‘interest group politics facilitates the conversion of market resources into political advocacy’. Especially of interest to students of the Political Theory and Political Behavior track.

Further consider:

- Gilens, Martin, Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America, Princeton University Press See e-book
  - The book focusses on economic inequality and political responsiveness. The US government is dominantly responsive to the well-off and interest group representation seem to exacerbate this effect. Especially of interest to students of the Political Theory and Political Behavior track.


- Sanchez Salgado, R. (2014) Europeanizing Civil Society: How the EU Shapes Civil Society Organizations, Palgrave Macmillan. PDF
