

Political Parties, Interest Groups and Mass Media

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media:

What are the solidary incentives to join interest groups

Solidary incentives are the pleasures, sense of status, and companionship that arise out of meeting in small groups. Such rewards are extremely important, but they tend to be available only from face-to-face contact, so national interest groups must have local chapters to lure members and obtain funds from these new members.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media:

What laws regulate congressional lobbying?

The Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act of 1946 required lobbyists to register and file quarterly financial reports, but few complied. With the 1995 Lobbying Disclosure Act, lobbyists are required to register with the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate, report their clients, and estimate the amount they were paid by each client.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media:

What are the different types of interest groups?

Over 500 corporate firms have lobbyists, public-relations experts, and lawyers in Washington, most of them opening offices since 1970. Other institutions represented are universities, foundations, and governments. Individual interest groups are those that most Americans tend to be associated with, such as Sierra Club or the National Organization of Women.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media:

What are the electioneering activities of interest groups?

Electioneering includes endorsing candidates, rating candidates or office holders based on their voting record, creating political parties, promoting campaigns and registration drives, and fundraising.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the material incentives of joining an interest group?

Material incentives include money or services that groups offer only to their members. For example, members of the American Association of Retired Persons receive travel, hotel and restaurant discounts, as well as low-cost life insurance and free tax advice.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What were the reforms instituted by the McGovern-Fraser Commission?

In 1969, the commission determined that minorities, women, youth, and the poor were not adequately represented at the Democratic Party national convention. The party adopted guidelines that increased representation of these groups. The number of super-delegates (governors, members of Congress and other top party leaders) was reduced substantially.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are critical realigning elections and when have they occurred?

Critical realigning elections make a significant change in the way large groups of citizens vote, shifting their political allegiance from one political party to the other. Political scientists identify the elections of 1860, 1896 and 1932 as definite realignments.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the advantages of incumbency?

A political leader running for reelection benefits from name recognition, the ability to claim credit for projects and money brought to the district or state, casework for constituents, visibility to constituents, free media exposure, better fundraising abilities, more campaigning experience and an established voting record.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the primary functions of political parties in the US?

The primary functions of political parties include running candidates for office, connecting citizens to their government, informing the public, and organizing the government.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the principal types of third parties?

They include ideological parties, which are based on social, political or economic beliefs; splinter parties, such as the Bull Moose Party, which are rogue factions of major parties; single-issue parties, such as the Free Soil Party and the Prohibition Party; and protest parties, which are usually motivated by economic discontent.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Who can form a Political Action Committee (PAC)?

Any kind of organization can form a PAC, including individual candidates for office. However, over half of PACs are sponsored by corporations, about one-tenth by labor unions, and the rest by various organizations, including religious groups. Conservative PACs outnumber liberal PACs two to one.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are think tanks?

Think tanks are public interest organizations that research policy questions and disseminate their findings in books, articles, conferences, opinion essays for newspapers, and (occasionally) testimony before Congress. Some are non-partisan and ideologically neutral, and others, especially the most influential ones, are aligned with liberal or conservative causes.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are at least three results of the national party conventions held at the end of the primary process?

At the national party conventions, the nominee of the party is chosen by the majority of the delegates, the nominee names a running mate, the political party platform is unveiled to the public, the public has a chance to get to know the nominees, and party stars and future party leaders are given a chance to make prime time speeches.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the outsider strategy used by interest groups to achieve their goals?

Radio, fax machines and the Internet allow for the immediate dissemination of news. The outsider strategy is the overnight mobilization of the segment of the population interested in a specific issue using these means of communication and is meant to bring about immediate political pressure. This pressure mostly originates from citizens outside of the formal political world.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Why do so many contemporary voters not register with either major party?

People see the Democrats and Republicans as lacking vision for the country, not representing the voters' views, as being too similar to one another, and as only caring about defeating or humiliating the other party. As a result, many people don't want to associate themselves definitively with either party.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are super-delegates?

Super-delegates are Democratic Party leaders guaranteed a seat at the Democratic National Convention. In 1968 the McGovern-Fraser Commission supported affirmative action guidelines for choosing delegates. As a result, many party leaders were not chosen as delegates to attend the convention. So the Hunt Commission in 1981 set aside some delegate seats (about 15-20%) for party leaders to ensure that they would be able to attend.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are at least three differences between interest groups and political parties?

Interest groups are policy maximizers, while political parties are vote maximizers. Interest groups are not mutually exclusive, while political parties are. Interest groups do not staff political offices, whereas political parties do. Interest groups may cost money to join, while political parties are usually free. Political parties nominate candidates for office, while interest groups do not.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the Revolving Door?

The phrase refers to the phenomenon of people leaving important jobs in federal agencies to take more lucrative jobs in private industry, taking their knowledge of federal agencies and their inner workings with them, including key personnel. Conversely, when people leave private industry and work for the federal agency that regulates that industry, they bring the contacts with them as well.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is spin?

Spin is the attempt on the part of politicians or groups to recast media coverage of their activities in a more flattering light.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the adversarial press?

The adversarial press refers to the notion that the media is inherently suspicious, cynical and distrustful of officials and of the information that comes directly from government in the form of press releases and news leaks. This has led to attack journalism, wherein reporters seize upon any little bit of information or rumor in order to present politicians in a negative light.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the phenomenon of narrowcasting, and how has it affected campaigns?

In recent years there has been a proliferation of television, radio, and internet sites that target highly segmented listening and viewing audiences. There is no longer the old-style print and broadcast media that reached heterogeneous populations. Narrowcasting refers to people viewing only a small slice of the opinion spectrum, given by highly opinionated commentators.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are inside (or “insider”) stories?

Inside stories are those in which politicians reward friendly reporters by giving them exclusive information. Reporters cultivate their politician sources, as the politicians cultivate their media allies. Both sides have a great deal to gain.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are trial balloons?

The president and the executive branch will leak information to the press through anonymous sources so that the administration may test out an idea or a policy on the public and gauge public reaction.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the free-rider problem as it pertains to public interest groups?

Some interest groups have difficulty attracting membership because individuals who are not members of the group can share in the group's successes without cost. Students, for example, do not have to be members of the United States Student Association to benefit from its lobbying efforts.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the equal time rule?

The equal time rule requires broadcasters who permit one candidate to campaign on television stations to allow equal time at identical rates to all candidates for the same office.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What factors influence party identification among voters?

The most important factors influencing party identification are ideology, education, income, occupation, race or ethnicity, gender, religion, family tradition, regional residence, and marital status.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Why is the system of elections in the U.S. biased against the success of third party candidates?

The single-member plurality does not allow third party candidates to get enough votes to be represented at the state or national level. Under this system, a third party candidate would have to get more votes than any of the major party candidates to win the seat, which is highly unlikely.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the public perception of the effects of special interests on the democratic system?

A recent survey found that 72% of respondents think that special interests are the greatest threat to the nation's future. Eighty-three percent of people think that big special interest money has too much influence on the political system, and 71% believe political lobbyists have too much power and influence in Washington.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

How is the initiative process used?

The initiative is a procedure by which voters may propose a law or a state constitutional amendment. Citizens obtain a sufficient number of signatures on a petition calling for a new law or amendment. In a direct initiative, the proposition is presented to voters in a general election. In an indirect initiative, the proposition goes first to the state legislature. If the proposition passes the legislature, it becomes a law.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is Duverger's Law?

Duverger's Law states that a two-party system is created when, in a single-member district, the candidate who reaches a plurality of votes first captures the single seat. In a proportional election, where parties are allotted seats based on the percentage of votes that their party wins in the electorate, a multi-party system is generally the result.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the general differences between political parties in the U.S. and in Europe?

In the U.S. political parties are regulated by state and federal laws, weakening the parties overall. In Europe, the situation is usually reversed: the parties control the government. They make policy and act as the executive branch. The only way a candidate can be nominated is by party leaders.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is lobbying, and what are the most common techniques employed by interest groups.

Lobbying is seeking to influence and persuade others to support your group's position. The most popular ways to lobby include providing expert information to policy makers, testifying at legislative hearings, talking directly to officials, helping to draft legislation, alerting state legislators of a bill's effects on their districts, mounting grassroots campaigns, donating money and endorsing candidates.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What was the significance of the *New York Times v. U.S.* decision?

The famous Pentagon Papers case established the principle of no prior restraint. The government sought a court order to prevent a newspaper from publishing papers containing secrets of national interest, citing the right of prior restraint, or the freedom to prevent people from breaking the law in the future. In a landmark decision, the Court held that the government cannot exercise prior restraint (censorship), but can sue or prosecute afterward.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

To Political Action Committees (PACs) buy influence?

During the 2004 election cycle, Political Action Committees contributed millions of dollars to Senate, House, gubernatorial, state and local races. Evidence suggests, however, that there is no guarantee that contributions will change the vote by any legislator on any issue.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What makes an interest group
successful?

To be successful, interest groups need strong leadership, solid funding and an active membership base. They also profit from interest group or client politics.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the functions of interest
groups?

Interest groups strive to educate their membership and the public about their issue(s), to serve as a link between the public and the government, to provide information to the government that would be useful in making policy, and to provide a channel for public participation and public discontent.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the most effective
commodities at the command of an
interest group?

The information they provide to legislators and the access to legislators that they provide to members.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is a dealignment?

Rather than shifting loyalties from one party to another, voters today seem less inclined to affiliate with any of the major parties. Instead they are registering as independents, which results in dealignment of political parties.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the campaign finance limits
that apply to Political Action
Committees?

There are over 4,000 PACs registered with the FEC. They gave over \$179 million to congressional candidates in 1994, and in 1996 gave \$201M. PACs are limited by the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 to only donate \$5,000 per candidate and may give only \$15,000 to the party per calendar year.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is a social movement?

A social movement is a widely shared demand for political change, often triggered by a scandal or the coming of age of a new generation that takes up a cause advocated by eloquent writers, teachers or evangelists.

Social movements include the feminist movement, the civil rights movement and the environmental movement

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is a test case brought by an interest group?

A test case is one of the most effective techniques interest groups use to alter public policy through judicial interpretation. A lawsuit will arise over an issue, and an interest group will offer to defend the person in court so that the law can be tested and thus reinterpreted according to the ideology of the interest group.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

How are political parties organized?

Parties are made up of three types of members. Governmental members are the office holders and candidates; organizational members are the workers and activists; and electorate members are those who vote for the party or consider themselves to be associated with it. Parties are structured in a hierarchy, with the national party committee at the top, then the fifty state committees, and then local county committees.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is selective perception and selection retention?

Selective perception refers to the notion that people tend to only see what they want to see.

Selection retention is the idea that people remember what they agree with. People do not seek out media sources that intentionally give views that challenge their own ideology, or that showcase people or images they find distasteful.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Which medium is more closely regulated, broadcast or print?

Newspapers and magazines are not really regulated by the federal government, but broadcasting is regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. No one may operate a radio or television station without a license.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Does the mass media have a liberal bias?

Global media conglomeration has reduced the ownership of broadcast, print, and cable media to seven major corporations, with a conservative, pro-business editorial slant. Balancing this are the reporters who cover Washington, who generally hold more liberal views. The net result is a balance between the political leanings of the media.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the theory of iron triangles?

The iron triangles theory assumes that policy making is contained within a triangle created by the sub-committee members responsible for the policy in Congress, the interest group trying to influence the policy from outside, and the bureaucratic agency in charge of implementing the policy. Today, however, that simplistic theory has been replaced with the theory of "issue networks."

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is political patronage?

Political parties still dispense patronage, or favors given to reward party loyalty, to their members who work the hardest or who contribute the most. These favors include government or private sector jobs, contracts, and appointments to government positions.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the difference between hard and soft money in campaign finance?

The 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) limits individual donations to politicians to \$1,000 and PAC donations to \$5,000 (these figures were amended by the BCRA of 2002). These types of donations are known as hard money because candidates disclose donors to the Federal Election Commission. Parties can also contribute money to candidates specifically to help them in election efforts, called soft money because the donors are not disclosed.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is a party caucus, held during the nomination phase of elections?

During the nominating phase of the election process a few states still hold caucuses. Most hold primary elections. Iowa is the first caucus in the nation. Party members in a precinct show up at a central location and literally stand in groups to show support (caucus) for various candidates who are running.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is meant by the free-rider
problem?

It is irrational for a small number of people to work for a public benefit, such as clean air, because all people benefit, not just those who work for the legislation to pass. Thus, free riders get benefits they did not work to achieve.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are some general traits of
libertarians?

Libertarians are conservative on economic matters and liberal on social issues. They want a small, weak government that has little control over the economy or the personal lives of citizens. Libertarians, with some notable exceptions, tend to be young, college-educated, white, with high incomes, and live in the West.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

How do the media fulfill the function of
agenda setting?

By deciding which stories to cover and which stories to print or broadcast, the media somewhat control the topics of national debate, and thus the content of political agendas.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is divided government?

Divided government is where one political party controls the presidency and the other political party controls one or both houses of Congress. This division creates the potential for gridlock.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Why do the media have difficulty in
covering the Supreme Court?

The complex nature of Supreme Court decisions, the wording contained in the written opinions, and the specialized knowledge needed to interpret the decisions make it difficult for the public to understand, and for reporters to accurately report, what the Court is doing on a daily basis.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Why have political parties declined in influence?

The government has gradually taken over many of the functions that were performed by the party-based political machines. The government now prints ballots, provides social welfare monies, conducts elections and so on, so party organizations have fewer functions and less ability to enforce party-line votes and strict discipline. Also, many people think that the major parties do not represent the interests of the populace.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What does it mean that interest groups have an upper-class bias?

Those citizens involved in interest groups tend to be better educated, wealthier, and more aware of political issues. Therefore, some individuals and some interests are better represented by lobbyists than are others.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

How do strong partisan feelings in the electorate affect voter turnout in both primary and general elections?

People who tend to strongly identify themselves with a political party are most likely to vote in general election contests. Weak partisans, people who do not strongly identify with a political party, are more likely to vote only in the general election.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is a referendum?

A procedure where voters approve or disapprove a measure the state legislature has already passed. An optional referendum allows the legislature to voluntarily submit a bill to the voters for approval. A mandatory referendum requires certain kinds of bills, such as tax legislation, to be submitted to the voters before becoming law.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

Does the mass media change people's opinions about issues?

Usually not. However, television news presentations are particularly effective in shaping the public's attribution of responsibility for scandalous activities. The continuous, repeated presentations encourage the public to blame the individuals involved, while thematic coverage leads the viewers to attribute responsibility to societal forces.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the difference between closed, open and blanket primaries?

In a closed primary, only voters registered in the political party may vote. In an open primary, all voters may vote, but voters may participate in only one party's primary. A blanket primary has candidates from all parties on one ballot, so voters may choose one party's candidate for one office and another party's candidate for another office.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is grassroots lobbying?

Grassroots lobbying refers to the lobbying of everyday people in an attempt to rally them to support a cause or join interest groups. The goal is to get constituents to argue your case for you. Grassroots lobbying is often quite effective.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What are the historic eras in American political parties?

There are five eras: the first party system that lasted until 1824; the second party system 1824-1865, that witnessed the democratization of elections and the origin of the true two-party system; the third, after the Civil War saw Republicans rise to power, the 4th after 1896 saw Republican solidify power, and the 5th was in 1932 after the election of FDR that lasted until 1968. Debate on a new era is ongoing.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is meant by media conglomeration?

About 80 percent of all daily newspapers are owned by seven corporations. Only 2 percent of American cities have more than one major newspaper. About 85% of television stations in the U.S. are affiliated with one of the four major networks, which themselves are owned by huge conglomerates. Therefore, few viewpoints on news and entertainment are being presented.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

In what ways do people participate in the political process in the U.S.?

According to University of Michigan studies of the campaign of 2000, 82% of people watched the campaign on TV, 73% voted in the election (an unlikely number), 34% tried to influence others how to vote, 10% put a sticker on their car or wore a button, 9% gave money to a campaign, 5% attended a political meeting, and 3% worked for a party or candidate.

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and
Mass Media:

What is the most important and the least important resource at the disposal of an interest group?

One recent survey found that the resource considered most important was a reputation for being credible and trustworthy. Members of Congress must feel comfortable with interest group lobbyists in order to talk to them at length about their issues. The resource considered least important was the size of an interest group's budget.