Government chapter 11 study guide

Vocabulary

- Interest Group: An organization of people with shared policy goals entering the policy process at several points to try to achieve those goals. Interest groups pursue their goals in many arenas.
- Pluralist Theory: A theory of government and politics emphasizing that politics is mainly a competition among groups, each one pressing for its own preferred policies.
- Elite Theory: A theory of government and politics contending that societies are divided along class lines and that an upper-class elite will rule, regardless of the formal niceties of governmental organization.
- Hyper-pluralist Theory: A theory of government and politics contending that groups are so strong that government is weakened. Hyper-pluralism is an extreme, exaggerated, or perverted form of pluralism.
- Sub-governments: A network of groups within the American political system that exercise a great deal of control over specific policy areas. Also known as iron triangles, sub-governments are composed of interest group leaders interested in a particular policy, the government agency in charge of administering that policy, and the members of congressional committees and subcommittees handling that policy.
- Potential Group: All the people who might be interest group members because they share some common interest. A potential group is almost always larger than an actual group.
- Actual Group: That part of the potential group consisting of members who actually join.
- Collective Good: Something of value (money, a tax write-off, prestige, clear air, and so on) that cannot be withheld from a group member.
- Free-Rider Problem: The problem faced by unions and other groups when people do not join because they can benefit from the group's activities without officially joining. The bigger the group, the more serious the problem.
- Olson's Law of Large Group: Advanced by Mancur Olson, a principle stating that the, "larger the group, the further it will fall short of providing an optimal amount of a collective good."
- Selective Benefits: Goods (such as publications, travel discounts, and group insurance rates) that a group can restrict to those who pay their annual dues.
- Single Issue Groups: Groups that have a narrow interest, end to dislike compromise, and often draw membership from people new to politics. These features distinguish them from traditional interest groups.
- Lobbying: According to Lester Mibraith a, "communication, by someone other than a citizen acting on his own behalf, directed to a governmental decision maker with the hope of influencing his decision."

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Electioneering: Direct group involvement in the electoral process. Groups can hold fund campaigns, provide testimony, and get members to work for candidate, and some form political action committees (PACs).

Political Action Committees (PACs): Political funding vehicles created by the 1974 campaign finance reforms. A corporation, union or some other interest group can create a political action committee (PAC) and register it with the Federal Election Commission, which will meticulously monitor the PAC's expenditures.

Amicus Curiae Briefs: Legal briefs submitted by a "friend of the court" for the purpose of raising additional points of view and presenting information not contained in the briefs of the formal parties these briefs attempt to influence a court's decision.

Class Action Suits: Lawsuits permitting a small number of people to sue on behalf of all other people similarly situated.

Union Shop: A provision found in some collective bargaining agreements requiring all employees of a business to join the union within a short period, usually 30 days, and to remain members as a condition of employment.

Right-to-Work Law: A state law forbidding requirements that workers must join a union to hold their jobs. State right-to-work laws were specifically permitted by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.

Public Interest Lobbies: According the Jeffery Berry, organizations that seek, "a collective good, the achievement of which will not selectively and materially benefit the membership or activities of the organization."

Notes and things

Roles of interest groups and the difference form a party
- Parties fight by electoral process (run a candidate)
- Interest groups are policy specialists
- Parties are policy generalists
- Interest groups have a handful of key policies to push, they don’t need to appeal to everyone
- Interest groups peruse interest, every branch of government is fair game, on every level (local/federal) it is all a possible target

Theories behind interest groups
- Pluralist: policies are mainly a competition among groups pushing for their own preferences on policies
  - Consider extensive organization of competing groups, evidence that influence is widely dispersed among them.
  - Groups win some and lose some, but no group wins/loses all of the time
  - Group theory of politics
✓ Groups provide a key link between people and government, all legitimate interests in the political system can get a hearing from the government once they are organized
✓ Groups compete
✓ No one group is likely to become too dominant
✓ Groups usually play by the “rules of the game”
✓ Groups weak in one resource will use another

- Elite: societies are divided among class lines and an upper class elite will rule regardless of formal niceties of governmental organization
  - Few people with lots of power, lots of groups means nothing because they are really unequal in power
  - Awesome power held by largest corporations
  - Power of few fortified by extensive system of interlocking directorates
  - Other groups may win minor policy battles, but corporate elites prevail with big decisions

- Hyper-pluralism: groups are so strong that the government is awoken by them extreme, exaggerated, perverted form of pluralism
  - Pluralists are out of control
  - In effort to appease every interest agencies proliferate (increase in rapid numbers/multiply (you’re welcome I looked it up for you)) programs multiply the budget goes up and there are conflicting regulations

≈ interest group liberalism and a little bit of hyper-pluralism mixed in

- Interest group liberalism promoted by network sub-governments that exercise a great deal of control of specific policy areas.
  - Also known as iron triangles
- They are composed of key interest group leaders invested in one policy and the government agency in charge of administering this policy and the members of congressional committees and subcommittees handling this policy
- Same goal: protect their self interest
- Hyper-pluralist criticism: the relations are too cozy and when it comes to hard decisions on national policy, the government acts as if there is no decision to be made instead of choosing between one policy or the other they try to compromise and make everyone happy 😊
- Hyper-pluralist position on group policies
  - Groups too powerful, political of government tries to appease all interests
  - Interest group liberalism aggravated by many sub-governments
  - Trying to appease every group means contradicting and confusing policy
- However with so many interest groups to please and many competing against each other this “cozy” relationship between groups and government is hard to sustain
Successful interest groups
- Intensity: care really deeply about an issue, politicians listen, more people do things, meaning a larger reaction sort of like single issue groups
- Financial resources: interest groups are biased to the wealthy (big interests do not always win) money cannot get everything
- Larger interest groups DO NOT HELP
  - Small group: people get a larger share in policy gains than large ones
  - Smaller groups are more organized
  - Larger groups are less likely to have potential members contribute
  - Harder for large groups to get together

Single issue groups
- Not limited to means of conventional participation
- Focus on one thing they don’t have to think about anything else, clear on views and intensity, only focusing on one thing over and over gets a reaction and attention
  - Think; if you only want thing isn’t it easier to get one thing than say 5? It is easier because they just are fighting for a single thing that they will not compromise

Large interest groups
- Collective good: something of value (money or clean air) that cannot be withheld from a group member
  - Members of potential group share benefits that the actual group work to secure slowly so if the potential members get the benefit of this without working for it, it causes the free rider problem
- Overcome Olsen’s laws: provide attractive benefits only for those who have joined the organization
  - Selective benefits: goods (like discounts) that a group can restrict to those who pay their annual fees

Tactics of interest groups
- Lobbying: political persuaders who represent organized groups. Usually work in Washington handling group’s legislature business (often former legislatures). There are 2 types
  - Regular paid employee of corporation union of association
  - Available for hire on a temporary basis, group may be too small to be able to afford full time lobbyist, another may have a unique but temporary need for access to congress/executive branch
  - Help politicians with political strategy for getting litigation through
  - Help formulate campaign strategy and get group members behind politicians reelection campaign
  - Source of ideas and innovation
• Electioneering: aiding candidates financially and getting group members to support them
  o PAC’s provide means for groups to participate in this
  o No major interest group seeking to exert influence on political campaign can pass up the opportunity to give money campaign and its supporters
  o Campaign cost has gone up, and PAC’s help with the bill

• Litigation: if an interest group fails in congress then they go to the courts in the hope of passing it off
  o More recently consumer groups used suits against businesses and federal agencies as means of enforcing consumer regulations = amicus curiae briefs
    = can be filled with emotionally charged cases
  o Class action lawsuits enable s group of people in a similar situation to combine common grievances into one suit

• Interest groups use public views to their advantage when they can,
  o They market not only on their stand on an issue, but also on their reputation

• Other notes on this
  o University of California vs. Bakke
    ✓ Challenged affirmative action programs as reverse discrimination, over 100 different groups filed amicus briefs
  o Public image goes to policy makers eventually
  o How (overall)interest groups may participate in elections
    ✓ Finance a campaign
    ✓ Recruit interest group members to run for office
    ✓ Issue official group endorsement
    ✓ Volunteer labor
    ✓ Send delegates to influence party platform
  o It is important to interest groups to get the right people in office and then keep them there
  o Lobbying disclosure act of 1995 establishes criteria for determining whether an organization or firm should register employees as lobbyists
    ✓ If so register with secretary of US senate and file report for each client and how much they are paid
      – This information is made public by senates offices of public records

~ PAC’s contributions

• PAC’s contribute more to incumbents. Why?
  o Already ran, have reputation, they also have an idea of what they will do
  o PAC contributions are really an investment…incumbents are more likely to repay them
  o Candidate is important to their interests
  o Very supportive of issues important to them

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- From distinct area/region/state where they have facilities
- Helping them with executive or regulatory agencies
- In leadership position that could enable them to influence issues affecting the PAC

~ Interest groups and public policy
- Economic interests: wages prices profits. More commonly public policy in America has economic effects through regulations: tax advantages, subsidies and contracts and international trade policy
  - Labor:
    - Most members (except for retired persons) their interest is to press policies to ensure better working conditions and more wages.
    - Also consider people won’t join budget benefit = union ship which requires you to join union (as a new employee) before you can work there
    - The business groups, support the right to work = law outlawing union membership for employment.
    - people may not join unions because they suck at convincing people that being in a union has benefits
      - therefore the labor unions ability to shape public policy has gone down
  - business
    - better organized for political action
    - the business PAC growth has been the largest out of all the PAC’s
      - more towards republican
    - interests generally unified for promoting greater profits but fragmented for policy choices

- environmental interests
  - newest political campaign groups
  - US ranks very high for % of adults in group with main aim protecting the environment
  - Want no pollution
  - Protect environment
  - Animal rights
  - Population control
  - No oil mining
  - No nuclear power plants
  - No supersonic aircrafts
  - Has really influenced congress and the public policy

- Equality interests
  - Minorities and women
  - African Americans want equal education pay etc.
Brown vs. Board of education ruled that it was unconstitutional to have segregated schools 😊
- Women want to end gender discrimination
- Equal pay

Never really gone in interest groups once and for all, rather the focus shifts to something different

~ Are PAC’s good or bad?

- 😊
  - Help fund candidates
    - ½ (about) reelection candidates for house of representatives got help from PACs
  - Most members bot affected by PAC because they already agree with the PAC so they aren’t changing anything
  - Cause an increase in political participation

- 😞
  - PAC help mainly goes to incumbents causing a disadvantage to the others
  - Are candidates too dependent on them?
  - Critics say it distorts democracy to those who can raise money
  - Accused of buying votes in the legislatures

~ Interest groups and collective goods

- Consumers and public interest lobbies want collective goods, more specifically,
  - Public interest lobbies
    - Seek collective good, the achievement of which will not selectively and materially benefit the membership/activists of the organization
      - If products made safer it will benefit everyone so everyone will be better off
  - Consumer groups have won many legislative victories
  - Groups speaking for those who cannot, animals, ill people (mentally), children and religious claim to be public interest groups

~ Labor groups expanding?

- No
  - Unions bad at convincing people that being in a union is beneficial
  - If they don’t have to actually join and still get the benefits, what is the point? Added bonus, they wouldn’t have to pay anything to be in there
  - Low wages in other countries have diminished American job market in many key manufacturing areas

~ James Madison and interest groups

- Federalist paper #10
  - Factions and interest groups are people with view contrary to the rights of others or the community,
- Should be guarded against these by a strong big republic and also expand participation so groups with opposing interests would counterbalance each other
- Elite theorists say:
  × Democracy should be a free exchange of ideas PAC’s distort process
  × Wealthier are disadvantages by PACs
- Hyperpluralists say:
  × Whenever a major interest group objects strongly to proposed legislation policy makers do a lot to try to accommodate it
  × So many groups, so little have influence on Washington
  × Argue that it is harder to accomplish major policy change in Washington

~ Interest groups in the scope of the government
- Multiplicity of American interest groups structure and the openness of American politics to inputs form interest groups allow individuals many channels for political participation and facilitates the representation of individual interest
- Individual interest groups fight to sustain government programs that are important to them thereby making it hard for politicians to reduce the scope of the government
- Special interest groups strive to maintain established programs that benefit them
- Increase in the scope of the government accounts for large amount participation of interest groups
  o The more that the federal government becomes involved means the more interest groups are formed to try and influence policy

More notes :(  

~ Role of interest groups
- Interest group
  o An organization of people with shared policy goals entering the policy process at several points to try to achieve these goals
  o Interest groups peruse their goals in MANY arenas
- Interest groups are distinct from parties
  o Political parties fight election battles, interest groups do not field candidates for office but may choose sides
  o Interest groups are policy specialists, political parties are party generalists

~ Theories of interest group politics: hyperpluralism
- Sub-governments
  o Networks of groups that exercise a great deal of control over specific policy arenas
o Consist of interest groups, government agency, and congressional committees that handle particular policies
o Also known as iron triangles

- Hyper-pluralist critique
  o Groups have become too powerful as the government tries to appease every interest.
  o Many sub-governments/iron triangles aggravate the process
  o Trying to appease every groups results in contradictory policies

- Iron triangles work together to input and reinforce policy

What makes an interest group successful
- Ineffectiveness of large groups
  o Potential groups: all the people who might be interest group members because they share a common interest
  o Actual group: the part of the potential groups consisting members who actually join
  o Collective good: something of value that cannot be withheld from a group member
• Free rider problem
  o Some people don’t join interest groups because they benefit from the group’s activities without officially joining
  o The bigger the group the larger the problem
  o Large groups are difficult to organize

• Olsen’s law of large groups
  o The larger the group the further it will fall short of providing an optimal amount of a collective good
  o Overcome Olsen’s law by providing selective benefits: goods that a group can restrict to those who pay their annual dues

• Small groups are better organized and more focused on that group’s goals
  o Multinational corporations are successful because there are few of them and therefore have an easier time organizing political action
  o Consumer groups have a difficult time getting significant policy gains because the benefits are spread over an entire population
  o Public interest lobbies seek a collective good the achievement which will not selectively and materially benefit the membership activities of the organization

• Intensity
  o Single interest groups: groups that focus on a narrow interest, dislike compromise and often draw membership from people new to policies
  o Groups may focus on an emotional issue providing them with psychological advantage
  o Intensity encourages non-conventional means of participation
    ✓ PROTEST NO HOMEWORK FOREVER!!!

• Financial resources
  o Not all groups have equal amounts of money
  o Monetary donations usually translate into access to the politicians such as a phone call meeting or support for the policy
  o Wealthier groups have more resources and presumably more access but they do not always win policy

~ How groups try to shape policy

• Lobbying
  o Communication by someone other than a citizen acting on his own behalf directed to a governmental decision maker with the hope of influencing his decision
  o Two basic types of lobbyists
    ✓ Regular, paid employees of the group
    ✓ Temporary hires

• Electioneering
  o Direct group involvement in elections process

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Groups can help fund campaigns provide testimony and get members to work for candidates some form PACs

- Political action committee: political funding vehicles created by 1974 campaign finance reforms PACs are used by interest groups to donate money to candidates
- PACs help pay the bill for increasing campaign costs
- Most PAC money goes to incumbents

- Litigation
  - if an interest group fails in one area the courts may be able to provide a remedy
  - Interest groups can file amicus curiae briefs to influence a court’s decision
    - Amicus curiae: briefs submitted to the courts by a friend of the court to raise additional points of view and present information not contained in the briefs of the formal parties
  - Class action lawsuits permit a small number of people to sue on behalf of all other people similarly situated

- Going public
  - Because popular opinion makes its way to policy makers interest groups try to
    - Cultivate a good public image that will build a reservoir of goodwill with the public
    - Use marketing strategies to influence public opinion of the group and its issues
    - Advise to motivate and inform the public about the issue

~ How interest groups influence the government

- Direct lobbying
- Testifying before congress
- Socializing
- Political donations
- Endorsements
- Court action
- Rallying their membership
- Propaganda

~ Types of interest groups

- Economic interests
  - Labor
  - Agriculture
  - Business
- Environmental interests
- Equality interests
- Consumer and public interest lobbies
~ Labor interests
  ● Goal
    ○ Create laws that ensure better working conditions and higher wages
  ● Union shop
    ○ Employees must join a union
      ✓ No choice not to join

~ Anti-labor interests
  ● Right to work laws
    ○ Response to unions by employers
    ○ Outlaws union membership as a condition to employment
    ○ Taft-Hartley act of 1974: states were allowed to adopt the right to work laws
      ✓ Most are in the south
      ✓ Arizona is a right to work state

~ Environmental interests
  ● 10,000 total
  ● $2.9 billion in combines revenue
  ● Specific groups
  ● Achievements
    ○ Pollution control policies, wilderness protection, and population control
  ● Oppose
    ○ Oil drilling in the Alaska Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
    ○ Nuclear power plants
    ○ Strip mining
    ○ Supersonic aircraft

~ Equality interests
  ● 14th amendment
    ○ Equal protection clause
    ○ No state shall make or enforce any laws which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States not shall any state deprive a person of life, liberty, property without due process of law
    ○ NAACP
    ○ NOW (Nation Organization for Women)
      ✓ 19th amendment: women can vote!
    ○ Equal rights amendment
      ✓ Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridges on account of sex
      ✓ Passed by congress in 1972 fails to be ratified by the states
      ✓ Phyllis Schlafly

~ Consumer and public interests
  ● Seek a collective good for all
o If products are made safer by lobbying all people will benefit no matter if they are members of the group
o Ralph Nader
o Consumer product safety commission
  ✓ Created in 1973
  ✓ Congress gave them the authority to make/regulate laws all consumer products
  ✓ Can ban goods they deem “dangerous”
  ✓ Lead free toys act (2007)
    - Regulates amount of lead in children's toys