

## Seminar on Interest Group Politics Spring 2022

### Outline

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Classes on Tuesday, M.106 from 10.30 till 12.30

Office Hours: Monday from 9.00-12.00 (except for holidays), in SM287.

Language of instruction: English

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Interest groups play a major role in national and European policymaking. A variety of organizations, such as labor unions, trade associations, NGOs and citizen groups advances their specific interests, and the interests of represented constituencies, by seeking access to the policymaking process. Examining the mechanisms of interest representation is thus a key ingredient of modern political science. The purpose of this seminar is to get acquainted with significant themes, research approaches and questions addressed in classic and recent research on interest group. The seminar covers three different core themes. First, who mobilizes for collective action: Why are some interests, like consumers or the unemployed, so hard to mobilize and others, like IT-firms or the fossil fuel industry, more successful in getting organized? A second puzzle concerns power and influence: Under which conditions do interest groups achieve their political objectives? Is this a matter of strategies, resources, experience or networks? Alternatively, is influence predetermined by type of interest that is represented, for instance business versus non-business? A third theme concerns legitimacy and the relation of groups with the broader political environment. This concerns the relation of groups with public opinion and political parties, political legitimacy and responsiveness of interest group politics, transparency and lobbying, and the regulation of interest group politics.

### SEMINAR OUTLINE

Before Easter, most of our time will be devoted to reading and discussing some key theoretical and empirical articles. We have three substantive sections:

#### I. Mobilizing for collective action

Interest group politics can be divided into different stages. The first step is getting organized, which is the topic of the first two sessions. We discuss the logic of collective action. How do groups get mobilized and maintain themselves? Are there any biases towards certain interests, and why? We cover core definitions and look how research on interest groups has evolved during the past decades. A key topic in this area is what fosters or impedes collective action, the establishment and maintenance of groups. This helps us understand better the bias in mobilization and representation.

Class 15/2: introduction and key concepts (JB)

Class 22/2: mobilization bias and group types (JB)

#### II. Power and influence

Political power is a major theme in political science, and in particular in the literature on interest groups and lobbying. In these two sessions we read and discuss, first, some core theoretical writings on political power and influence, and, second, two recent empirical studies on power and influence.

Class 1/3: strategies, access and influence, theoretical perspectives (JB)

Class 8/3: strategies, access and influence, empirical applications (JB)

### III. Legitimacy, relations of groups with their broader political environment

In this section, we seek to deepen our insights on interests groups and discuss how interests groups relate to their broader political environment. Our main aim is to connect the study of interest groups with some actual political debates, namely are interest groups detrimental for democratic governance, how to regulate lobbying, the relation between interest groups and political parties.

Class 15/3: transparency and lobbying regulation (JB/SB)

Class 22/3: interest groups and party politics (JB)

Class 29/3: public opinion and responsiveness (EW)

Easter Holiday 4/4 till 17/4, no classes

There are fewer and less intensive sessions after Easter. So, you will have sufficient time for your written assignments, papers and thesis-work. Two practitioners are invited for section IV:

### IV. Meet-the-practitioners-sessions

Class 19/4: preparing the sessions with practitioners, instructions papers (JB)

Class 26/4: lobbying in the Belgian institutional context (guest speaker: [Karel Joos](#))

3/5 no class

Class 10/5: transparency and lobbying regulation in the EU (guest speaker: [Michiel van Hulst](#))

17/5 no class

Class 24/5: closing session, presentations of the student's work (JB)

## **PRACTICALITIES**

### **Reading materials and reading**

All reading materials, both required and recommended readings, are available via Blackboard. Note that the political science literature on interest groups is enormous; it exploded during the past 20 years. Although the readings provide only a snapshot of the field, for each session we selected some representative readings which allow us to highlight the most important topics in this area. We tried to schedule a very diverse set of readings, including some older and recent works, diverse methodologies (experiments, process-tracing, ethnographic, quantitative), and various cases (EU, international and national politics). The list with required and recommended readings is substantial, sometimes three articles for one session. However, note that several readings are rather short (less than 10 pages) and that the reading work is mostly situated in the first half of the semester (there will be much less reading in the second half). On Blackboard, you will also find several links and notes with tricks and tools on how to become an effective and creative reader (and writer).

**Blackboard**

The course is supported by Blackboard site that contains all the details about the course, the assigned readings, guidelines for the assignments and additional information. Blackboard will also be used to communicate changes in the timetable or locations. So check the site regularly!

**Writing and plagiarism**

The course includes a lot of writing. On Blackboard you find some writing tips as well as a file with more instructions on how to cite other people's work. Academic standards apply; plagiarism is strictly forbidden. Plagiarism is the presenting of the writings and ideas of someone else without making any reference to that person or institution (quotes/footnotes). In a world where we move around data and texts so easily, people might – intentionally or unintentionally – use someone else's words or ideas without paying credit to the original author. So, please be careful with this. Note that the university has a strict policy on plagiarism. It results in a direct failure of the course and will be reported to the faculty authorities which will impose additional sanctions if deemed necessary.

## Reading list and detailed course outline

Before Easter, most of our time will be devoted to reading and discussing some key theoretical and empirical articles. We have three substantive sections:

### V. Mobilizing for collective action

Interest group politics can be divided into different stages. The first step is getting organized, which is the topic of the first two sessions. We discuss the logic of collective action. How do groups get mobilized and maintain themselves? Are there any biases towards certain interests, and why? We cover core definitions and look how research on interest groups has evolved during the past decades. A key topic in this area is what fosters or impedes collective action, the establishment and maintenance of groups. This helps us understand better bias in mobilization and representation.

### Class 15/2: introduction and key concepts (JB)

#### *Required readings:*

Beyers, J., R. Eising and W.A. Maloney (2008) Researching Interest Group Politics in Europe and Elsewhere: Much we Study, Little we Know? *West European Politics* 31(6): 1103-28.

Lowery, D. and H. Brasher (2003) *Organized Interests and American Government*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, Boston (chapter 1, check especially table 1-2 on page 18).

Olson, M. (1971)[1965] *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction (reprint from Richardson, J.J. (1993) *Pressure Groups*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 23-37 (these pages provide a nice summary of Olson's theory).

⇒ During the seminar we will briefly discuss some critiques vis-vis Olson. If you would like to know more about this, you are recommended to read:

Salisbury, R. (1969) An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups. *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 13(1): 1-32.

Jordan, G. and W.A. Maloney (2006) 'Letting George Do It': Does Olson Explain Low Levels of Participation? *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 16(2): 115-39.

#### *Recommended:*

Baumgartner, F.R. and B.L. Leech (1998) *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, Chapter 3.

Halpin, D.R. (2006) The Participatory and Democratic Potential and Practice of Interest Groups: Between Solidarity and Representation. *Public Administration* 84(4): 919-40.

Jordan, G., et al. (2004) Defining Interests: Disambiguation and the Need for New Directions? *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6(2): 195-212.

Beyers, J., et al. (2020) The Comparative Interest Group Survey Project. Project design, practical lessons, and datasets *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 9(3): 272-289.

### Class 22/2: mobilization bias and group types (JB)

#### *Required readings:*

Hanegraaff, M., et al. (2017) *Who is represented? Exploring the demographic structure of interest group membership*. Paper prepared for presentation at the General Conference of the ECPR, Oslo.

⇒ If you find this paper interesting, read also the recommended paper Hanegraaff et al. in *Acta Politica*.

Rasmussen, A. & Carroll, B.J. (2013) Determinants of Upper-Class Dominance in the Heavenly Chorus: Lessons from European Union Online Consultations. *British Journal of Political Science* 44(2): 445-459.

⇒ One example of the wide range of interest group population studies. For more, see the recommended reading.

*Recommended:*

Willems, E., et al. (2020) Interest representation in Belgium. Mapping the size and diversity of an interest group population in a multi-layered neo-corporatist polity. *Politics of the Low Countries* DOI: 10.5553/PLC/.000006.

⇒ Read this article in preparation of the class on 26/4.

Hanegraaff, M., et al. (2020) Exploring the proportionality of representation in interest group mobilization and political access: the case of the Netherlands. *Acta Politica* DOI: 10.1057/s41269-020-00185-1.

Berkhout, J., et al. (2018) Making Inference across Mobilization and Influence Research: Comparing Top-Down and Bottom-Up Mapping of Interest Systems. *Political Studies* 66(1): 43-62.

Lowery, D., et al. (2015) Images of an Unbiased Interest System. *Journal of European Public Policy* 22(8): 1212-1231.

⇒ An interesting theoretical discussion on biased representation.

## VI. Power and influence

Political power is a major theme in political science, and in particular in the literature on interest groups and lobbying. In these two sessions we read and discuss, first, some core theoretical writings on political power and influence, and, second, two recent empirical studies on power and influence.

### Class 1/3: strategies, access and influence, theoretical perspectives (JB)

#### *Required readings:*

Bachrach, P. and M. S. Baratz (1962) The two faces of power. *American Political Science Review* 56(4): 942-952.

Dür, A. (2008) Interest Groups in the European Union: How Powerful Are They? *West European Politics* 31(6): 1212-1130.

⇒ A classic article on power and a more recent piece summarizing different ways to measure influence. As always, there is much, much more.

#### *Recommended:*

Lukes, S. (1974) *Power. A Radical View*. London, Macmillan (chapter 1).

Beyers, J. (2020). Influence. In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Interest Groups, Lobbying and Public Affairs*. Harris, P. et al. (Eds) Cham: Palgrave Macmillan DOI:10.1007/978-3-030-13895-0\_43-1

Thomsen J.P.F. (2020) Power. In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Interest Groups, Lobbying and Public Affairs*. Harris, P. et al. (Eds) Cham: Palgrave Macmillan DOI:10.1007/978-3-030-13895-0\_52-1

Lowery, D. (2013) Lobbying influence: Meaning, measurement and missing. *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 2(1): 1-26.

### Class 8/3: strategies, access and influence, empirical applications (JB)

#### *Required:*

Fairfield, T. (2015) Structural power in comparative political economy: perspectives from policy formulation in Latin America. *Business and Politics* 17(3): 411-441.

De Bruycker, I. and J. Beyers (2019) Lobbying Strategies and Success. Inside and Outside Lobbying in European Union Legislative Politics. *European Political Science Review* 11(1): 57-74.

⇒ One qualitative process-tracing study (on structural power) and one quantitative on preference attainment and strategies.

#### *Recommended:*

Mahoney, C. (2007) Lobbying success in the United States and the European Union. *Journal of Public Policy* 27(1): 35-56.

Pedersen, H.H. (2013) Is measuring interest group influence a mission impossible? The case of interest group influence in the Danish parliament. *Interest groups & Advocacy* 2(1): 27-47.

Dür, A., et al. (2015) Interest Group Success in the European Union. When (and Why) Does Business Lose? *Comparative Political Studies* 48(8): 951-983.

Busemeyer, M.R. and K. Thelen (2020) Institutional Sources of Business Power. *World Politics* 72(3):448-480.

Hacker, J.S. and P. Pierson (2010) Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States. *Politics & Society* 38(2): 152-204.

### VII. Legitimacy, relations of groups with their broader political environment

In this section, we seek to deepen our insights on interests groups and discuss how interests groups relate to their broader political environment. Our main aim is to connect the study of interest groups with some actual political debates and discussion, namely are interest groups detrimental for democratic governance, how to regulate lobbying, the relation between interest groups and political parties.

### Class 15/3: transparency and lobbying regulation (JB/SB)

#### *Required:*

Chari, R., et al. (2007) Regulating Lobbyists: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, Canada, Germany and the European Union. *The Political Quarterly* 73(3): 422-439.

Vymětal, P. (2015) *Comparison of Models of Lobbying Regulation in EU countries*. 13th International Scientific Conference “Economic Policy in the European Union Member Countries”, Karolinska, Czech Republic.

De Francesco, F. and P. Trein (2020) How Does Corruption Affect the Adoption of Lobby Registers? A Comparative Analysis. *Politics and Governance* 8(2): 116-127.

⇒ Note that these readings are also relevant in preparing the class of May 10.

⇒ For a more descriptive account of lobbying regulations across European countries see this [link](#)

#### *Recommended:*

Bloodgood, E. A., et al. (2014) National Styles of NGO Regulation. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43(4): 716-736.

Vymětal, P. (2016) *Lobby registers as the main measure of lobbying regulation?* 14th International Scientific Conference “Economic Policy in the European Union Member Countries”, Karolinska, Czech Republic.

Năstase, A. and C. Muurmans (2020) Regulating lobbying activities in the European Union: A voluntary club perspective. *Regulation & Governance* 14(2): 238-255.

Bunea, A. and V. Gross (2019) Regulating lobbying through voluntary transparency clubs: The connoisseurs’ assessment. Evidence from the European Union. *Public Administration* 97(4): 797-813.

Crepaz, M. (2020) To inform, strategise, collaborate, or compete: what use do lobbyists make of lobby registers? *European Political Science Review* 12(3): 347-369.

### Class 22/3: interest groups and party politics (JB)

#### *Required:*

Allern, E. H., et al. (2021) Competition and interaction: Party ties to interest groups in a multidimensional policy space. *European Journal of Political Research* 60(2): 275-294.

Berkhout, J., et al. (2021) Explaining the patterns of contacts between interest groups and political parties: Revising the standard model for populist times. *Party Politics* 27(3): 418-429.

#### *Recommended:*

Halpin, D.R. and B. Fraussen (2019) Laying the groundwork: linking internal agenda-setting processes of interest groups to their role in policy making. *Administration & Society* 51(8): 1337–1359.

Marshall, D. (2015) Explaining Interest Group Interactions with Party Group Members in the European Parliament: Dominant Party Groups and Coalition Formation. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53(2): 311-329.

Heaney, M.T. (2010) Linking Political Parties and Interest Groups. In *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*. Maisel L.S. and J.M. Berry (Eds) Oxford: Oxford University Press: 568-587.

Beyers, J., et al. (2015) The alignment of parties and interest groups in EU legislative politics. A tale of two different worlds? *Journal of European Public Policy* 22(4): 534-551.

Otjes, S. and A. Rasmussen (2017) The collaboration between interest groups and political parties in multi-party democracies: party system dynamics and the effect of power and ideology. *Party Politics* 23(2): 96–109.

Klüver, H. (2020) Setting the party agenda: interest groups, voters and issue attention. *British Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 979–1000.

⇒ Note that some of these readings (for instance, Klüver) make a nice link with the next session on legitimacy and policy responsiveness

### Class 29/3: public opinion and responsiveness (EW)

*Required:*

Lax, J.R. and J.H. Phillips (2012) The Democratic Deficit in the States. *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1): 148-166.

Dür, A. (2019) How interest groups influence public opinion: Arguments matter more than the sources. *European Journal of Political Research* 58(2): 514-535.

*Recommended:*

Lax, J.R. and J.H. Phillips (2009) Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness. *American Political Science Review* 103(3): 367-386.

De Bruycker, I. and A. Rasmussen (2021) Blessing or Curse for Congruence? How Interest Mobilization Affects Congruence between Citizens and Elected Representatives. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 59(4): 909-928.

Giger, N., & Klüver, H. (2016). Voting Against Your Constituents? How Lobbying Affects Representation. *American Journal of Political Science* 60(1): 190-205.

Jungherr, A., et al. (2021) A Source Like Any Other? Field and Survey Experiment Evidence on How Interest Groups Shape Public Opinion. *Journal of Communication* 71(2): 276-304.

Rasmussen, A., et al. (2018) With a little help from the people? The role of public opinion in advocacy success. *Comparative Political Studies* 51(2): 139-164.

Gilens, M. and B.I. Page (2014) Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens. *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 564-581.

Easter Holiday 4/4 till 17/4, no classes

There are fewer and less intensive sessions after Easter. So, you will have sufficient time for your written assignments, papers and thesis-work. Two practitioners are invited for section IV:

VIII. Meet-the-practitioners-sessions

Class 19/4: preparing the sessions with practitioners, instructions papers (JB)

Before Easter, we learned that interest groups mobilize and lobby to protect the interests of the constituencies they represent. In this class, we will read some articles that challenge this assumption and point at other goals of interest groups. This broader perspective is discussed in preparing our meeting with some practitioners later this semester.

*Required:*

Lowery, D. (2007) Why Do Organized Interests Lobby? A Multi-Goal, Multi-Context Theory of Lobbying. *Polity* 39(1): 29-54.

Hanegraaff, M., et al. (2016) Balancing inside and outside lobbying: The political strategies of lobbyists at global diplomatic conferences. *European Journal of Political Research* 55(3): 568-588.

*Recommended:*

Tyllström, A. and J. Murray (2021) Lobbying the Client: The role of policy intermediaries in corporate political activity. *Organization Studies* 42(6): 1-23



Heylen, F. and E. Willems (2019) Writing blank checks? How government funding affects interest organisations' advocacy behaviour in a multi-layered context. *Journal of European Public Policy* 26(6): 863-882

Bloodgood, E.A. and J. Tremblay-Boire (2017) Does government funding depoliticize non-governmental organizations? Examining evidence from Europe. *European Political Science Review* 9(3): 401-424.

Neumayr, M., et al. (2015) Public Funding and Its Impact on Nonprofit Advocacy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 44(2): 297-318.

Class 26/4: lobbying in the Belgian institutional context (guest speaker: Karel Joos)

In preparing this class, you read

De Bruycker, I. (2019) Lobbying: An art and a science—Five golden rules for an evidence-based lobbying strategy. *Journal of Public Affairs* 19(4): 1-4.

De Bruycker, I. and A. McLoughlin (2021) The public affairs plan: Seven steps to success rooted in science and practice. *Journal of Public Affairs* 21(3): 1-7.

In addition to this, you are advised to read Willems and colleagues (2020) in order to familiarize yourself with the Belgian interest group system (class on 22/2).

3/5 no class

Class 10/5: transparency and lobbying regulation in the EU (guest speaker: Michiel van Hulten)

In preparing this class, you read

Năstase, A. (2020) An ethics for the lobbying profession? The role of private associations in defining and codifying behavioural standards for lobbyists in the EU. *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 9(4): 495-519.

It is also recommended to re-read some of the papers we discussed on 15/3 (maybe some of the recommended readings).

17/5 no class

Class 24/5: closing session, presentations of the students' work (JB)

## Course requirements

### **Response essays and class attendance – 20% of the overall course grade**

Class participation and attendance are part of your grade's building blocks. Throughout the seminar, we will work as a group through a set of required readings on a scheduled topic. Students are expected to read all the assigned materials. Each seminar you must be prepared to discuss, debate, and raise and respond to questions about the required reading materials and how they relate to the topics we discuss.

To facilitate these discussions, you will be required to prepare short response notes. These notes should help to crystallize your thoughts about the readings and help you formulate critical questions. Notice that you should not summarize or reproduce the readings. Instead, we prefer to see you critically reflect on them, pose questions when you do not understand the main arguments, research methods, or criticize the authors based on a well-grounded argument when you disagree. There is not one single formula or approach to writing the reading responses. Best practices are to summarize the main arguments (briefly, in a few sentences) and discuss what you think is essential about the assigned material. Beyond that, you should formulate some questions, find parallels or incongruences between the individual articles/book chapters, critique the authors' research method, and so on. Basically, you should always come to class with one or two questions.

You submit the response notes on Monday evening (before midnight) via Blackboard. Late responses will receive no grade. In total, you are expected to write response notes for 7 classes: 22/2, 1/3, 8/3, 15/3, 22/3, 29/3, and 19/4. Response notes are one page and no longer than 450 words. The notes are graded at the end of the semester and stand for 20% of the evaluation.

When assessing the response notes, the following criteria are used:

- you provide a concise summary of the work (25% or less);
- identify the research question, key hypotheses, or central theme and whether these are rejected/accepted;
- this synthesis shows an understanding of the readings and identifies the author's main arguments;
- you make appropriate connections with other readings (or other courses);
- you raise meaningful questions and points of critique regarding methods and/or theory;
- you formulate some question(s) for the class discussion;
- it should be properly written.

### **Two exercises**

There are two exercises for which you apply the course material to a concrete case.

#### ***Exercise 1: Develop a lobbying plan – 15% of the overall course grade***

On 26/4, [Karel Joos](#) (Interrel Group), a professional lobbyist, will share his experience with advocacy and lobbying in the Belgian political context. In preparation for this session, we read some pieces on designing a lobbying plan.

For Exercise 1, you develop a lobbying plan concerning the following problem.

K137 is a global multinational with a production plant in a critical and centrally located industrial area. It produces a chemical TOPS; for which it received an operating license many years ago. H137 is a major employer in the region. One year ago, severe pollution was detected

in the production plant area. Most pollution was observed at a site with major public and infrastructural works. These works involved the reconstruction of a vital motorway junction and aims to address a severe mobility problem that has plagued the region for many decades. The observed pollution is due to the discharge of toxic waste, related to the production of TOPS, by K137. This toxic is persistent and entails significant health risks. For various reasons, the event has caused a profound political upheaval. For instance, it is unclear who was responsible for the operating license and the inspection of the production plant. A risk is that the government might need to cancel the infrastructure works, as continuing them may cause additional health risks. However, the government has already invested millions of euros in this project and the ongoing contracts with major construction firms are endangered.

Situation I: You are contacted by H137 in order to develop a lobbying strategy. H137 is in trouble. The firm's reputation is threatened and it faces multiple lawsuits. Some politicians threaten to withdraw its operating license, which would lead to a considerable loss of profit. The firm risks to close its production plant, which would entail additional costs as it needs to fire 350 employees. Labor unions question the safety of the workers; they do not trust how the firm deals with health issues. Although this seems to be a local event, the production plant is located close to the border with a neighboring country (there is a risk of cross-border pollution). The scandal may also trigger investigations for production plants in other countries and could lead to EU regulations banning the production of TOPS. Moreover, the firm disputes that TOPS is toxic or that it might cause serious health problems because, according to the firm's experts, the discharged amount is limited. Although the firm can invest a massive budget in lobbying, it has virtually no experience in handling the complex threats it is facing. The firm is urgently seeking advice from experts in lobbying and advocacy.

Situation II: You are contacted by a local group representing citizens living in the area. People living in the affected area are shocked because of the potential health consequences, especially for their children. Farmers face severe losses as they cannot sell their products. Residents in the area are advised not to consume vegetables from their garden or eggs from their chickens. Many people who recently bought a property in the area see their property loses its value, which also prevents from relocating. Citizens have lost their confidence in local and national policymakers, as there are rumors of a cover-up and mismanagement. Some political parties, who were in government when the operation license was granted, have close ties with the chemical industry in the area. These same parties have a large stake in the ongoing infrastructure works needed to tackle a mobility problem that has plagued the area for decades. Moreover, these works are supported by several environmental NGOs who campaigned many years in favor of the motorway reconstruction. They do not want to discontinue these infrastructure works as it solves the mobility issue and significantly decreases air pollution for the 500.000 people living in the area. Air pollution is a major cause of fatal respiratory diseases in this highly urbanized area. The local citizen groups do not have many resources, but they are highly motivated to address the TOPS-scandal. They are desperately seeking advice from experts in lobbying and advocacy.

You are such an expert working for a consultancy firm. You are contacted by either the citizen group or H137. They ask you to develop a lobbying plan. Think about:

- goals and policy positions;
- how to communicate with the public;
- how to use the media;
- how to build alliances and with whom;
- which experts are you going to involve;

- which politicians, civil servants, and political parties, to address when and how.

Companies and citizen groups do not have the time to read long academic papers. So your lobbying plan should be concise, well-written and clear. Based on the knowledge you obtained in this seminar, write a plan no longer than three pages (1500 words).

Prepare a first rough draft of the lobbying plan before the class on 26/4 and submit this on 25/4. Although this draft is not graded, not submitted the first draft results in no grade for this assignment. The deadline for the final lobbying plan (that will be graded) is May 10.

***Exercise 2: Write an opinion piece – 15% of the overall course grade***

On 10/5, [Michiel Hulten](#) (Transparency International EU) will join us and talk about lobbying regulation and transparency in the EU. You will get an overview of how the EU deals with lobbying, which issues are at stake, how things might improve in the future, and the role of advocacy organizations such as Transparency International. In preparation of this class, we will read some papers on the EU's lobbying regulation regime.

You take on the role of a political commentator in your home country. Recently, lobbying and transparency have become an important and contentious debate in your country. You are asked to write an opinion piece of one page (500 words) on what can be learned from the EU (good and/or bad) and whether or how the EU experience applies to the situation in your home country.

Prepare, based on your readings, some questions for the class with Michiel van Hulten and submit these on 9/5. Although this preparation is not graded, not submitted the questions results in no grade for this assignment. The deadline for the opinion piece is May 24.

Both exercises are graded at the end of the semester and stand for 30% of the evaluation (15% each). The following criteria are used:

- you use and rely on what you learned in the course;
- you adopt a crystal clear position on the topic;
- your argument is meaningful and relevant;
- it should be properly written.

**Individual paper and peer review session – 50% of the overall course grade**

You are expected to write a final paper on a topic related to interest group politics. This paper can take two forms:

1. A (mini) empirical analysis: identify a policy proposal debated in the national or the European Parliament. You empirically analyze one aspect of interest group politics related to this policy issue. This (mini) analysis can be quantitative or qualitative; you may use existing data-sources (INTEREURO, CIG-survey, Transparency Register, consultation data...). If you are interested in data-sources, please ask for advice.
2. Critical literature review: a critical and in-depth comparison of two or more approaches, hypothesis, and theories we have discussed in the course. This is largely literature research (at minimum 5 extra scholarly articles) for which you read additional theoretical and empirical work. You also need to justify why you use a particular set of papers in your literature review.

Themes for these two types of papers include: mapping and explaining the density and diversity of the interest group population mobilized on a particular policy issue, comparing the strategies

of two or more interest groups, an analysis of the impact of interest group lobbying, the (problematic or less problematic) legitimacy of interest groups, the debate on transparency and regulation, and so on.

You are free to choose your topic, but you can ask advice to the teaching team for this.

Overall, to write a good paper, you need to draw upon the readings we discussed during the seminar and other academic journal articles, books. Any arguments you make in the paper must be supported by evidence gathered from primary or secondary academic and non-academic sources. It is not sufficient to provide a summary of the literature or present only your own thoughts about the topic. In order to successfully develop the paper, you have to develop a theory-driven argument. Reproduction is very easy, while creative thinking is challenging but more interesting!

The paper should be max 12-15 pages in a font no smaller than 11 points (6500 words max; 4000 minimum; average around 5000-5500 words). You should start thinking about the paper early on (and not postpone it till May 20 or so).

You are expected to distribute a first (rough) draft of your paper to all course participants no later than May 22. On 24/5, we organize a small workshop. Each student comments on two or three papers, and each paper is discussed by two students (details will follow). You do not present your own paper, but your colleagues present and discuss your work. A critical approach is required, but at the same time, we are constructive and helpful. Attending the session on 24/5 is a prerequisite for receiving a grade for the individual paper.

Criteria for assessing participation in peer-review session (on 24/5) are the following (10% of the grade):

- quality of the comments: are the comments relevant? Do they demonstrate an understanding of the literature and theoretical concepts and a careful reading of the papers? These are [guidelines](#) you may follow when discussing other work.

The criteria for assessing individual papers are the following (40% of the grade):

- research question: for an empirical paper, is the research question relevant and falsifiable? For a theoretical paper, does the research question speak to a conflict/inconsistency in the literature?
- mastery and knowledge of the topic, theories, and papers cited: this assesses the factual accuracy and general knowledge of the topic, the theories used in the analysis, and the papers on which your paper builds;
- method (mostly relevant for an empirical paper) or justification of selected papers (for the review paper): to answer the research question, do you use an appropriate methodology;
- quality of writing: the paper is written adequately from a linguistic point of view (grammar, spelling) and structured according to academic writing

Deadline for the final paper is May 30.

## **GRADING**

The final grade is based on the following elements:

Response notes and class attendance: 20%

Exercise I: 15%

Exercise II: 15%

Seminar paper: 40%

Peer review session: 10%

### **SUBMITTING YOUR WORK**

All assignments, including the response essays, should be submitted only electronically through Blackboard. Work that is not submitted in time is not graded. Papers should **NOT** be submitted through email.