

POLI 325: Business, Government, and Politics
Spring 2023
M, W, 2-3:15pm
SCI D224
3 credits

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In western democracies business is one of the largest interest groups operating in politics, and some argue that corporations and businesses are now the most important non-governmental institutions. Business and government working together (and in opposition) address some of the most pressing public policy issues and problems. Thus, it is critical to understand how these institutions interact with each other in politics and the process of creating public policy.

This course explores the relationship between business and government. It investigates how business-government relations are conducted and focuses on such issues as corporate lobbying and activism, public opinion, the regulatory environment of business, and legal and public policy issues that affect corporations in the United States and overseas.

The course will focus on several broad themes.

1. How and why do corporations and businesses advocate for political and policy change?
2. How do political institutions structure the ways in which business engage in politics?
3. How does government seek to control business?
4. How does business use political structures such as the legislative and regulatory processes to get policies favorable to their interests? When is it successful? When does it fail?

Textrental: Government and Business: American Political Economy in Comparative Perspective, Richard Lehne (CQ/Sage, 2012)

Purchase: Ian Bremmer, The Fat Tail: The Power of Political Knowledge in an Uncertain World, (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Other readings provided in Canvas.

Grade Scale

A	94-100%	A-	90-93%	D+	66-69%
B+	87-89%	B	84-86%	D	60-65%
B-	80-83%	C+	77-79%	F	<60%
C	74-76%	C-	70-73%		

Assignments

Paper #1	25%	DUE February 25
Paper #2	25%	DUE April 1
Participation	20%	
Final Paper	30%	DUE May 16

Learning outcomes:

Students will learn about:

1. Historical and theoretical approaches to corporations and businesses in American political and constitutional thought;
2. How businesses advocate for change through political institutions;
3. How corporations and businesses engage in lobbying and other forms of political advocacy; and
5. How social, economic, and political forces affect businesses and public policy.

January 23 Introduction

Module 1: The Environment for Government-Business Relations

January 25, 30; February 1, 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 22

Readings:

Textrental: Government and Business: American Political Economy in Comparative Perspective, Richard Lehne (CQ/Sage, 2012)

Origins of Government and Business, Chapter 1
Creating Government Business Relations, Chapter 2
The Stakes in Govt Systems, Chapter 3
Corporate Governance, Chapter 4
Lecture: The Corporation

Canvas:

-A Capitalist Joker: The Strange Origins, Disturbing Past, and Uncertain Future of Corporate Personhood in American Life, Constitutional Accountability Center

Supreme Court case: Citizens United v. FCC

-Milton Friedman "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits"

-Brookings Report, "The Problem of Corporate Purpose" 2012

-NY Times DealBook Debrief on Friedman, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XvDstDwk0c&t=1494s>

Module 2: Business, Corporations, and the Political System

February 27; March 1,6,8,13,15; Spring Break; March 27, 29

Readings:

Textrental: Government and Business: American Political Economy in Comparative Perspective, Richard Lehne (CQ/Sage, 2012)

Advocacy Environment, Chapter 6
Corporations and Business Associations, Chapter 7
Lobbying, Chapter 8
Why Does Business Win or Lose, Chapter 9

Canvas:

Lewis Powell memo, "Attack on the Free Enterprise System" and Edelman Trust barometer

Module 3: Government Policies and Business

April 3,5,10,12,17,19

Readings:

Textrental: Government and Business: American Political Economy in Comparative Perspective, Richard Lehne (CQ/Sage, 2012)

Business and Economic Policy, Chapter 10
Regulatory Policy, Chapter 11
Industrial Policy, Chapter 13

Other readings to be determined.

Module 4: Political Risk

April 24, 26; May 1, 3, 8, 10

Reading: Ian Bremmer, The Fat Tail: The Power of Political Knowledge in an Uncertain World

Assignments

Paper #1

Paper to be submitted to Canvas. Paper will cover topics covered in first module. Student will respond to a specific prompt in Canvas.

Word court: 1500 words minimum.

See rubric in Canvas for grading criteria.

Paper #2

Paper to be submitted to Canvas. Paper will cover topics in second module. Student will respond to a specific prompt in Canvas.

Word court: 1500 words minimum.

See rubric in Canvas for grading criteria.

Paper #3

Word court: 2000 words minimum. You will choose from several prompts.

See rubric in Canvas for grading criteria.

Participation

See rubric in Canvas for grading criteria.