

PSC 238: Business and Politics

This Version: October 4, 2012

Course Description

The focus of this course is the conflict and cooperation between business and government, with an emphasis on U.S. domestic politics. We will cover a broad range of issues affecting the business world, including regulation, lawmaking, the mass media, interest group activism, and crisis management. The course will connect ongoing political debates to theory, and guest speakers will bring their business and political experience to our class. Each meeting will feature a general topic, as well as in-depth analyses of real-world cases related to that topic. What happens when Wal-Mart tries to open a new store in a city with strong unions? Who is opposed to grocery stores selling wine, and why? How did General Motors fight back against a media report critical of its products? Is “corporate social responsibility” actually irresponsible? These are just a few of the questions we’ll answer during the semester, all while developing an understanding of what happens when politics meets economics.

Readings

There is one required textbook for the course: *Business and Its Environment*, 7th ed., by David P. Baron. Two copies of the textbook are on 2-hour reserve in Rush Rhees Library. Additional readings listed at the end of the syllabus are available in the Reserves section of the course Blackboard page; readings added later in the semester will also be placed here. Readings for the Sept. 4 and Sept. 6 classes are also available in the Reserves section of Blackboard for those students who are not able to acquire a textbook immediately.

Course Requirements

- **Exams**

There will be three closed-book exams in the course on October 4, November 6, and December 11. There is no final exam.

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Questions not in the Baron book will be made available in the Assignments section of Blackboard to receive credit, answers should reflect careful thought. Assignments due in class on the day or topic is discussed. Late assignments will not be accepted.

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Grading

- *Exams* each count toward 30 percent of your grade.
- *Case and Reading Questions* collectively count toward 10 percent of your grade. You are required to turn in 6 assignments to receive full credit for this portion of your grade. If you turn in fewer than 6 assignments, your grade will be reduced proportionally. For instance, if you turn in only 5 assignments you will receive 8.3 out of 10 points for this portion of your grade.

Teaching Assistants

There is one teaching assistant for this course. The TA is available to answer your questions about course content. The TA is also authorized to address your questions regarding exam and homework grading.

Trung Dang
Harkness Hall 305
Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. 2-3
tdang@z.rochester.edu

Course Meetings

Note 1: Exam dates are set in stone. I am in the process of finalizing dates for guest speakers, so the timing of some topics may change. I will give you plenty of advance notice for any changes I make to the syllabus, and confirm what material will be covered on each exam.

Note 2: Chapters and page numbers refer to the Baron text unless otherwise noted. Readings will be discussed on the days listed; for instance, the reading for the news media will be covered on September 11.

1. Thursday, August 30: Introduction/Course Overview

2. Tuesday, September 4: Introduction to the Nonmarket Environment

Reading: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-16)

Case: Repeal of the Luxury Tax (pp. 160-161)

3. Thursday, September 6: Integrated Strategy

Reading: Chapter 2 (pp. 30-47)

Case: Amazon.com and the Amazon Tax (pp. 225-229)

HW Due: Discussion questions (Blackboard; do not answers preparation questions at the end of the case)

4. Tuesday, September 11: The News Media

Reading: Chapter 3 (pp. 52-69)

Case: General Motors Like a Rock? (A) (pp. 69-71)

HW Due: Discussion questions (Blackboard; do not answers preparation questions at the end of the case)

5. Thursday, September 13: Private Politics

Reading: Chapter 4 (pp. 74-91)

Case: ~~5141-1311-0001~~ ~~Urban ExpaTj/.0005 Tc -0.0001 Tw 011.940 Td(knion qStat)egy (pp. 12181220)~~

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