

# PACs and Congress

## General Course Information

**PACs and Congress**

**Thursday 6:00-8:00 pm**

**Hall of States**

**Summer, 2012**

## Instructor Information:

Dr. Steven Billet

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## Course Description:

This course is an intensive examination of political action committees (PACs) and the system of campaign finance in the United States. It will focus especially on business, association and labor PACs, but will also include discussion and consideration of ideological and leadership PACs. The course will be divided into three broad efforts. The goal of the course is straightforward: to train the student to assume the management and effective direction of a political action committee.

First, it will examine **core PAC and campaign finance functions** in the US. Included in this part of the course will be consideration of historical, philosophical, regulatory and legal dimensions of PAC operation.

Another component of this section will prepare students to assume the management and operation of a PAC. It will include a thorough

examination of major PAC functions: member communications, solicitation, candidate selection, financial controls and budgeting.

Second, the course will examine the **strategic dimensions** of PAC and campaign finance management. Instruction will include a comprehensive consideration of tools that might be employed to improve the strategic performance of the PAC within the broader context of the US campaign finance system. Accordingly, we will examine elements of competitor analysis, champion development, differentiation in contributions and basic correlation work.

Third, we will examine the **broader PAC environment**. The intention is to elevate the role of PAC administrator to one that approximates a PAC Steward. This part of the course will integrate the information covered in the first two parts with tools and information that make the PAC director a more valuable and integral component in the development and delivery of strategic information to its organization. The section will include methods for the systematic analysis of candidates, the assessment of the electoral environment, alternative contribution strategies and approaches to improving strategic communication within the parent organization. It will also include changes to the campaign finance environment, accounting for the introduction of Super PACs and other emerging campaign finance players.

## **Course Objectives**

The course is intended to train PAC managers -- elevating and professionalizing the PAC management function in government relations operations. The course is intended to enhance the role of PAC administrators to one that embraces the concept of **PAC stewardship**. This course has been developed in response to needs in present-day PAC operations to educate PAC managers that do much more than the basics: 1) provide reports to the FEC, 2) issue checks to campaigns and 3)

report to the organization's lobbyists on the funds available for disbursement each month.

## **Method of Instruction**

The primary method of instruction will be lectures and class discussion. It is expected that students will participate throughout. Class participation is incorporated in the pedagogical plan and counts for 30% of your final grade. Guest lectures from experts in the field are included in parts of the course dealing with specific PAC functions.

## **Methods of Evaluation**

### *Tests*

There will be a mid-term exam covering the initial lectures dealing with historical, philosophical, functional and legal dimensions of PAC management. It will count for 30% of the final grade and require that **the student have a mastery of the core competencies covered in the first part of the course.** There is no final exam.

### *Final Paper*

Each student will be required to submit a final project on a topic to be determined and approved by the instructor. The final paper will be approximately 5,000 words and be fully documented including footnotes and bibliography. It will count for 40% of your final grade. The instructor will distribute information on the paper early in the semester.

### *Class Participation*

Class participation counts for 30% of your final grade. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each session. To that end, everyone in the class is expected to prepare

two questions based on the readings for each week. They should be written ahead of time and submitted to the instructor via e-mail by noon of the class day. **You will be called upon randomly to offer and perhaps explain the relevance and/or importance of the question and to lead a brief discussion of the topic in class.** You should note that each week's reading will include a website or other on-line information site that you should review thoroughly before coming to class.

I use a rubric for grading purposes. This helps to manage mutual expectations about what is expected for everyone. I will distribute this early in the semester.

### **Texts/Resources**

Federal Election Commission. *FEC Guide for Corporations and Labor Organizations*. January, 2007. *This includes the Supplement* (Available on-line)

Other articles will be included in weekly readings for the class. Please note: Most of the readings in the class are drawn from easily accessible articles in the holdings of the Gelman Library. You should be able to get these with no problem.

Early in the semester one of our classes will convene in the Gelman Library for a session with Dr. David Ettinger, GW Political Science Librarian. He and I will review the Gelman Library's resources related to PACs and campaign finance. **Gelman Library Room B-06.**

### **GRADES**

I use the following system to assign grades. It is the standard for all courses in the Legislative Affairs program.

A 94-100

A-	90-93
B+	85-89
B	80-84
C+	75-79
C	70-74

Students who do superior work well above and beyond the basic assignment tend to get A or A- in my classes. A B or a B+ indicates that the basic assignment was completed. Grades less than B indicate a need for dramatic improvement and that the work falls short of grad school expectations.

## RUBRIC

I use a rubric when I grade papers and other work. A copy of mine is attached at the end of this syllabus.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY ET AL.

You are encouraged to review GW's academic integrity code, <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html> and the emergency preparedness information at <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/PDFs/SyllabusInsert2010-2011.pdf>

For students that have some issues with their writing skills, GW has a Writing Center. It is located in the Gelman Library, Suite 103. Their hours and dates of operation are posted below:

May 16th-June 23rd &  
July 6th- August 16th  
Summer Hours: Monday-Thursday 10:00am-4:00pm

Any student that may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services

office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Session 1**

#### **Course Introduction**

##### **Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Introduce Course Requirements/Expectations**
- 2. Introduce the Concept of Stewardship of PACs**
- 3. Mastery of Core, Strategic and Environmental Elements of PAC Management**
- 4. The PAC I.Q. Test**

### **Session 2**

#### **Core Competencies:**

##### **Political Money**

##### **Learning Objectives:**

- 1. History of PACs and Campaign Finance Regulation**
- 2. The Federal Election Commission: Background and Structure**
- 3. The Federal Election Commission: Getting a PAC Up and Running**
- 4. How Much?**

## **READING:**

Chapters 1-2 FEC Guide for Corporations and Labor Organizations

Website: FEC Website <http://www.fec.gov/>

Read the following sections:

“About” paying particular attention to Commissioners.

“Mission and History” read The Thirty Year Report

“Quick Answers” read PAC section reviewing the information for SSFs and Non-connected PACs

Recommend you sign-up for “Tips for Treasurers” and “FEC Policy Developments”

### **Session 3**

#### **Core Competencies:**

#### **Library Resources and Key FEC Processes**

#### **Learning Objectives**

- 1. On-line Databases at the Gelman Library**
- 2. Introduction of Advisory Opinions, Alternative Dispute Resolution and Matters Under Review**

#### **READING:**

FEC Guide, Chapters 3-4

FEC website: Read brochures/web sections on Advisory Opinions, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Matters under Review and FEC Rulemaking Procedures

<http://www.campaignfinancesite.org/>

### **Session 4**

#### **Core Competencies**

#### **Landmark Laws, Court Cases and FEC Decisions**

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Learn the basic outline of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA)**
- 2. McConnell v. FEC**
- 3. Sun PAC Decision**
- 4. Federal Election Campaign Act**
- 5. Buckley v. Valeo**

## **READING:**

FEC Guide: Chapters 5-7

FEC Read summaries of SunPAC Advisory Opinion 1975-23, the Federal Election Campaign Act, Buckley v. Valeo

Malbin: Read Appendix 1 and 2, p. 247

Website: Brookings [www.brookings.edu/topics/campaign-finance.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/topics/campaign-finance.aspx)

## **Session 5**

### **Core Competencies**

### **Working with the FEC: “Why they’re your friend . . . really”**

**Guest Lecture – Maureen Benitz, Senior Analyst, FEC  
(unconfirmed)**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Practical lessons for working with the Federal Election Commission**
- 2. First Amendment and Election Regulation Controversies**

## **READING:**

FEC Guide, Ch. 8-11, Appendices A-G, Supplement December, 2008.

Kenneth Doyle, “BNA and Politics Report: Persistent Attacks on Campaign Regulation On Track to Be Considered by the Supreme Court,” December 8, 2008.

Richard Briffault, “*WRTL* and *Randall*: The Roberts Court and the Unsettling of Campaign Finance Law,” Ohio State Law Journal, v. 28:807, pp 807-847.

Website: Campaign Finance Institute

<http://search.msn.com/results.aspx?q=campaign+finance+institute&FORM=MSNH11>

## **Session 6**

### **Core Competencies**

#### **Fundamental PAC Functions: An Overview**

- 1. Introduce the basic PAC management functions**
- 2. Understanding the basic Strategic Model – “Honor the contributor; celebrate their contribution.”**
  - a. Strategy**
  - b. Governance**
  - c. Budgeting**
  - d. Communication**
  - e. Fundraising**
  - f. Decision-making**
  - g. Financial Control**

#### **READING:**

Thomas Stratmann, “Some Talk: Money in Politics. A (partial) review of the literature,” Public Choice (2005), 124, 135-156.

Jeffrey Milyo, David Primo and Timothy Groseclose, “Corporate Campaign Contributions in Perspective,” Business and Politics (2000), 2, pp. 75-88

Website: Electionlawblog [electionlawblog.org](http://electionlawblog.org)

## **Session Seven**

### **Core Competencies**

#### **Strategy, Governance and Budgeting**

#### **Learning Objectives**

- 1. Why PACs need strategies**
- 2. How governance and budgeting are an extension of the PACs strategic imperatives**
- 3. Guidelines for Contributions**

#### **READING:**

Stratmann, “Are Contributors Rational? Untangling Strategies of Political Action Committees,” *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 100, No. 3. (Jun., 1992), pp. 647-664.

Website: CQ Moneyline Available through Gelman Library website

## **Session Eight**

### **Strategic Competencies**

#### **Decision Making by PACs**

#### **Learning Objectives**

- 1. How PACs measure performance**
  - a. Basic elements of PAC measurement**
- 2. What can “differentiation” do for your PAC?**
- 3. How can a PAC build a Champions Program?**

## **READING:**

Christopher Magee, “Do Political Action Committees Give Money to Candidates for Electoral or Influence Motives?” Public Choice, (2002), 112, pp. 373-399.

Michael Lord, “Corporate Political Strategy and Legislative Decision Making, Business and Society, (2000), 39, pp. 76-93

Website: USelections.com [www.uselections.com](http://www.uselections.com)

### **Session Nine**

#### **Core Competencies**

#### **Fundraising, Communications and PAC Credibility**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Outline of Fundraising Programs**
- 2. Communications Programs for PACs**
- 3. Putting all the critical factors together**

## **READING:**

Jennifer Griffin and Paul Dunn, “Corporate Public Affairs: Commitment, Resources, and Structure,” Business and Society (2004), 43 pp. 196-220.

Website: Center for Public Integrity [www.publicintegrity.org](http://www.publicintegrity.org)

### **Session Ten**

#### **Strategic Competencies**

**Competitor Analysis**  
**Discussion of final papers**

**Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Using Correlation and Regression to Measure PAC performance**
- 2. Performing Competitor Analysis**
- 3. Even the basic numbers have meaning.**

**READING:**

Hall and Wayman, “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees,” *APSR* V. 84, No. 3. (Sep., 1990), pp. 797-820

Website: National Institute on Money in State Politics  
[www.followthemoney.org](http://www.followthemoney.org)

**Session Eleven**

**Strategic Competencies**

**Ethics and Values in PAC Management/A Look at Predictive Tools**

**Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Stewardship and the consideration of ethical issues**
- 2. Honor the contributor; celebrate their contribution**
- 3. Predicting competitor activity**

**READING:**

William Oberman, “A Framework for the Ethical Analysis of Corporate Political Activity,” *Business and Society*, (2004), 109, pp. 245-262

Website: Project Vote Smart [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)

**Session Twelve**  
**The PAC Environment**  
**Perspectives on Congress**

**Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Evolution and Drivers of Congress**
- 2. Consideration of Mayhew and how Congress has evolved**
- 3. Iron Triangles and the Leadership Model of Congress: What does it mean?**

**READING:**

Steven Billet, "The Rise and Impact of Monster PACs," Ed. Dennis Johnson, The Routledge Handbook of Political Management, 2009, pp. 139-150.

Website: More Soft Money Hard Law  
[www.moresoftmoneyhardlaw.com](http://www.moresoftmoneyhardlaw.com)

**Session Thirteen**  
**The PAC Environment**  
**Analyzing Elections**

**Learning Objectives:**

- 1. Understanding Polls**
- 2. Evaluating candidacies**
- 3. Interviewing candidates**

**READINGS:**

Readings for this class will be sent early in the semester.

Website: The Polling Report [www.pollingreport.com](http://www.pollingreport.com)

## **Session Fourteen**

### **The PAC Environment**

#### **Major Trends and Things to Watch**

#### **Learning Objectives**

- 1. Legislation in Process**
- 2. Issues at the FEC**
- 3. Political Trends**
- 4. Developing you personal network**

#### **READING:**

Reading for this class will be sent later in the semester.

## CRITICAL THINKING/CRITICAL WRITING

### Questions to Keep You Focused

This class requires that students participate as writers, as presenters and as questioners. The skills you use to make your participation most effective involve more than just reading the material and listening to lecture information. They involve the use and application of your critical thinking skills. Below is a set of questions that are intended to guide your work in this class and might be applied to a variety of life-situations. They are intended to guide the study of topics you read and write about in this class and should be used as you prepare for your in-class presentations. These are basically generic and do not apply for every article you read or for every circumstance you encounter. However, with some adjustment and training, they will help you 1) search beneath the surface of most issues we address in the class, 2) get beyond the trite partisanship that characterizes much of what passes for political discourse in Washington, 3) examine in closer detail the intent and impact of things you read and 4) appreciate and understand alternative viewpoints.

1. What is the purpose, goal or main point of the article? Is there a main thesis or theme?
2. Is there a particular problem being addressed? Is the article descriptive, analytical, predictive, or prescriptive? Is it just an opinion piece?
3. Does the author describe a primary causal relationship? How about other relationships?
4. Can you identify dependent and independent variables?
5. Is there a problem being presented and discussed in the article?

6. Does the writer suggest a particular resolution? Do they prove their argument? Do they discuss a research design?
7. Are there biases inherent in the design or in assumptions that underlie the design or the way data is presented?
8. What are the new terms introduced by the author? Do the terms make sense? Can you identify any bias in the selection of terms?
9. Is there a political or ideological point of view being expressed?
10. How might the same question be asked in other ways and produce the same results? Different results?

The idea behind these and a multitude of other questions about your reading and other class work is that you think about what you are presented and train yourself to ask questions digging deep into the material.

Dr. Steven Billet  
General Rubric

Student \_\_\_\_\_

	A	B	C
Factual Presentation	Impressive depth and insight	Adequate depth and insight	Unexceptional depth and insight
Synthesis and Analysis	Integrates insights, information and arguments from multiple perspectives	Integrates insights from narrower perspectives	Fails to integrate important factual information

<b>Organization of Argument</b>	Cogent organization of arguments	Adequate organization of argument	Lacking organization
<b>Grammar/Writing</b>	Error free grammar/spelling and usage	Few errors in grammar/spelling and usage	Many errors in grammar/spelling and usage

<b>Question #</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Comments</b>