

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
INTEREST GROUPS,
FREUD, AND THE UNCONSCIOUS BASIS OF MIND

Terms and concepts to know:

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| Interest groups | Madison / <i>Federalist 10</i> / factions |
| Calhoun / <i>Disquisition on Govt.</i> | Concurrent majority |
| Bentley and <i>Process of Government</i> | Truman and <i>Governmental Process</i> |
| Olsen and <i>Logic of Collective Action</i> | Lowi and <i>End of Liberalism</i> |
| “Iron triangles” | Pluralism |
| Hyperpluralism | Elitism / Pareto / Mills |
| Corporatism | Interest group dynamics |
| Group tactics | Group typology |
| Freud and un/consciousness | |

Study and discussion questions:

1. Discuss Madison’s notion of “faction” and how it relates to interest groups. What do you think Madison felt was the most common reason for the development of factions?
2. Discuss Calhoun’s idea of a “concurrent majority.” Do you think this might be a better way to protect minority rights? What problems might result?
3. Examine David Truman’s thesis that no one group could attain overly powerful as a result of “overlapping memberships.” How do you think that this notion serves the pluralist definition of American politics?
4. What is the implication in Olsen’s thesis that certain groups ultimately obtain governmental action favorable to their interests? Do you see any connection between Olsen’s ideas and elite theory?
5. Discuss the concept of an “iron triangle.” Which entities make up an iron triangle in the military-industrial complex?
6. Udi Greenberg suggests that the real message behind Freud’s seminal political work, “Civilization and Its Discontents” is that “human life is always dominated by ambiguity, uncertainty, and inconsistency, and that there’s no escape from the haunting torment that this entails.” Given all the recent trials and tribulations that we’ve experienced in the last few years, do you think Freud was correct? Why or why not?
7. Discuss the differences that exist between “self-interested” and “altruistic” or “attitudinal” groups. What effect do one or both of these groups have on democracy?
8. Begin a discussion on the philosophical and scientific thought of Sigmund Freud. Did he have a theory of the universe? What was his position on the question of human nature? Discuss in depth his diagnosis of what is wrong with us and his prescription for putting things right.

Readings:

Heineman. *Political Science*, Chapter 9.
Stevenson. *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*, Chapter 10.

Video: *The Century of Self*.