

PLAP 2270: Public Opinion and Political Behavior Spring 2011

Mon & Wed 10:00–10:50am
Wilson Hall 301

Course web page:
<https://collab.itc.virginia.edu/>

Professor Nicholas Winter
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<http://faculty.virginia.edu/nwinter>
S385 Gibson Hall
office hours:
Wednesday 2:00-3:30

Teaching Assistants		
Laura Blessing leb7s@virginia.edu	Justin Peck jcp2d@virginia.edu	Emily Sydnor esydnor@virginia.edu
Monday 11:30–12:30 in Alderman Café	by appointment in Alderman Café	Wednesday 1:30–2:30 Gibson S195

This course will examine public opinion and assess its place in the American political system. The course will emphasize both how citizens' thinking about politics is shaped and the role of public opinion in political campaigns, elections, and government. While the course will focus on research on the current state of public opinion, throughout the course we will also discuss historical developments in opinion and its place in politics, including changes that arose with the development of polling and with the advent of television and other electronic media. We will also consider normative questions, including the role opinion *should* play in American democracy.

Course Requirements

Requirements for this course include attendance and participation in *section*, submission of weekly *identification items*, an in-class *midterm examination*, two *papers*, and a comprehensive *final examination*, during the allotted final exam time slot for this class. Your TA may assign additional short writing assignments, quizzes, and the like as part of your section participation grade.

The assignments for the papers will be posted to Collab and announced in lecture.

Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

Item	Points	Date
Section participation	15 percent	—
Weekly IDs	5 percent	—
First Paper	15 percent	Wednesday, March 2 at the beginning of lecture
Midterm exam	15 percent	Wednesday, March 16, in class
Second Paper	25 percent	Monday, May 2 at the beginning of lecture
Final exam	25 percent	Saturday , May 7, 9am-noon

Readings

There is one required book for this course, which is available at the UVa Bookstore and from the usual online sources:

Asher, Herbert. 2007. *Polling and the Public* (7th ed.). Washington: CQ Press.
(Note: The sixth edition (2004) is also acceptable and may be less expensive.)

All other readings for the course are available through the Collab page for the course.

Sections

The section meetings will provide an opportunity for you to clarify material from the course, discuss the lectures, readings, and current events. Your TA may also assign periodic brief written work in or out of section.

Each week you will be required to submit an identification item (a term or concept) from the week's reading or lectures, along with a short paragraph defining the item. The midterm and final exams will include a section of identification items, drawn from among those you have submitted during the term. Your TA will explain the mechanics of turning in your IDs, as well as further details on expectations, and weekly due dates. You will be allowed to miss one week with no penalty.

Attendance at your weekly section meeting is required. This requirement is reflected, in part, in the 15% of your grade that comes from attendance and active participation in section. *In addition, note that consistent section attendance is a requirement of this course, without which you will not receive a passing grade.*

Sections will not meet the first week; they will meet for the first time on January 26 and 27.

Other Policies

We respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, or religious discrimination; and all forms of harassment.

If you have (or suspect you have) a learning or other disability that requires academic accommodations, you must contact the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (<http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/lneec.html>) as soon as possible, at least two to three weeks before any assignments are due. We take learning disabilities very seriously and we will make whatever accommodations you need to be successful in this class but they must be properly documented by the LNEC.

Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own without giving proper credit to the source. You are responsible for not plagiarizing and are expected to abide by the University of Virginia Honor Code (see <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/proc/fraud.html>).

Papers turned in late without prior arrangement with your TA will not be considered for a grade.

Course Schedule and Outline

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

January 19: Welcome and introduction to the course

II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT

January 24: What is “public”? What is “opinion”?

Is “public opinion” the intersection of the two?

V.O. Key. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, chapter 1 (3-17).

Converse, Philip E. 1987. “Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51(Supplement): 12-24.

January 26 and 31: Measurement and analysis

Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapters 3, 5, and 8 (“Wording and Context of Questions,” “Interviewing and Data Collection Procedures” and “Analyzing and Interpreting Polls”).

III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

February 2: The public’s political information and sophistication

“Dunce Cap Nation.” *Newsweek*. September 4, 2007. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/39529>

Brady, Henry E., James S. Fishkin, and Robert C. Luskin. 2003. “Informed Public Opinion About Foreign Policy.” *Brookings Review*: 21(3):16.

February 7: Political Tolerance

Mueller, John. 1988. “Trends in Political Tolerance.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52(1):1-25.

Chong, Dennis. 1993. “How People Think, Reason, and Feel about Rights and Liberties” *American Journal of Political Science* 37(3):867-899

Wright, Robert. 2011. “Opinionator: First Comes Fear.” <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/before-hatred-comes-fear/>

February 9: Ideology and the organization of opinion

Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapter 2 (“The Problem of Nonattitudes”)

Kinder, Donald R. 1983. “Diversity and Complexity in American Public Opinion.” In Finifter, Ada W. (ed.) *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, 391-401.

Press, Andrea L., and Elizabeth R. Cole. 1999. *Speaking of Abortion: Television and Authority in the Lives of Women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chapter 1 (1-24).

IV. INDIVIDUAL OPINION

February 14: Implicit and Explicit Attitudes

Wilson, Timothy D. 2002. *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Chapter 6 (117-135).

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2005. “The Warren Harding Error: Why We Fall For Tall, Dark, and Handsome Men.” In *Blink: the Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown, Chapter 3 (72-98).

February 16 – no class**February 21: Self interest [originally scheduled for 2/16]**

Chong, Dennis, Jack Citrin, and Patricia Conley. 2001. "When Self-Interest Matters." *Political Psychology* 22(3):541-70.

Bartels, Larry M. 2004. "Unenlightened Self-Interest: The Strange Appeal of the Estate Tax Repeal." *The American Prospect* 15(6):A17-A19.

February 23: Groups I—political parties [originally scheduled for 2/21]

Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quirk, Buddy Peyton, and Jay Verkuilen. 2007. "Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq." *The Journal of Politics* 69(4):957-74.

February 28: Groups II—race and gender [originally scheduled for 2/23]

Ladd, Everett C. 1997. "Media Framing of the Gender Gap." In *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. Pippa Norris. New York: Oxford University Press, 113-28.

Winter, Nicholas J. G. 2010. "Masculine Republicans and Feminine Democrats: Gender and Americans' Explicit and Implicit Images of the Political Parties." *Political Behavior* 32 (4):587-618.

Prior to your section meeting on March 2 or 3 you are responsible for

Viewing the film *Boogie Man* (available online through Collab)

Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*. Chapter 4 (111-133).

March 2: Guest Speaker

CPT Damon Armeni

(Reading TBA)

The first paper is due at the beginning of lecture.

March 7 & 9: No class (spring break)**March 14: Core values**

Brewer, Paul R. 2003. "The Shifting Foundations of Public Opinion About Gay Rights." *Journal of Politics* 65(4):1208-20.

March 16: *Midterm examination in class***March 21: Emotion**

Haidt, Jonathan. 2001. "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment." *Psychological Review* 108(4):814-34.

V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

March 23 & 28: A theory of opinion formation

Zaller, John. 1994. "Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War," In *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, ed. Lance Bennett and David Paletz, chapter 9 (186-209).

March 30: Guest Speaker

Cara Carter, Research Director, Opinion Research Business
(Reading TBA)

April 4 & 6: In-Class Movie

Journeys with George

April 11: Political campaigns

Freedman, Paul, Michael Franz, and Kenneth Goldstein. 2004. "Campaign Advertising and Democratic Citizenship." *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4):723-41.

Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapter 7 ("Polls and Elections")

April 13: The media

Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 2004. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." In *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, ed. John T. Jost, and Jim Sidanius. New York: Psychology Press, 139-49.

Mayer, Jane. 2007 (February 19). "Whatever It Takes: The Politics of the Man Behind '24.'" *The New Yorker* 83(1). http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/02/19/070219fa_fact_mayer

April 18: Framing

Price, Vincent, Lilach Nir, and Joseph N. Cappella. 2005. "Framing Public Discussion of Gay Civil Unions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(2):179-212.

Druckman, James N. 2001. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence." *Political Behavior* 23(3):225-56

VII. CONCLUSIONS: PUBLIC OPINION IN POLITICS

April 20: Collective (and rational?) opinion

Zaller, John R. 2001. "Monica Lewinsky and the Mainsprings of American Politics." In *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*, ed. W. L. Bennett, and Robert M. Entman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 252-78.

Bartels, Larry M. 2008. "The Irrational Electorate." *Wilson Quarterly* 32(4):44-50.

April 25: In-Class Movie: Campaigns in practice

"By the People: The Election of Barack Obama"

(You will be responsible for finishing the movie; it will be available online)

April 27: Representation—how does (does?) opinion affect policy?

Zaller, John. 2003. "Coming to Grips With V.O. Key's Concept of Latent Opinion." In *Electoral Democracy*, ed. Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 311-36.

May 2: Public opinion and American democracy

Ginsberg, Benjamin. 1986. *The Captive Public*, chapter 3 (59-85).

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, epilogue (310-332).

Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapter 9 ("Polling and Democracy").

The second paper is due at the beginning of lecture.

Saturday, May 7: Final Examination (9:00am–noon)