

PLAP 2270: Public Opinion and Political Behavior Spring 2010

Mon & Wed 10:00–10:50am
Olsson Hall 120

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

Professor Nicholas Winter
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S385 Gibson Hall
office hours:
Wednesday 2:00-3:30

Teaching Assistants

Laura Blessing
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office hours:
Tuesday 10:00-11:00
in Alderman Cafe

Justin Rose
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office hours:
Wednesdays 2:00-3:00
in Alderman Cafe

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	March 3, at the beginning of lecture
Midterm exam	15 percent	March 22, in class
Second Paper	25 percent	May 3, at the beginning of lecture
Final exam	25 percent	Tuesday, May 11, 9am-noon

Readings

There is one required book for this course, which is available at the UVa Bookstore:

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.*

101	Wed	1200-1250	New Cabell B030	Blessing
102	Wed	1300-1350	New Cabell B028	Blessing
103	Thu	1600-1650	New Cabell 325	Rose
104	Thu	1800-1850	Clark G054	Rose
105	Thu	1900-1950	Clark G054	Blessing
106	Wed	1500-1550	New Cabell 338	Rose

Sections will not meet the first week; they will meet for the first time on January 27 and 28.

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 20: Introduction to the course

II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT

January 25: 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 27 and February 1: 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 3: 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 8: 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

February 10: 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 15: In-Class Movie

Boogie Man

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

February 17: 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 22: Guest Speaker

Claudia Deane, Associate Director of Public Opinion & Media Research at the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation; Former Assistant Polling Director at the *Washington Post*

(Reading TBA)

February 24: Groups I—political parties

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.

March 1: Groups II—race and gender

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.

Fahey, Anna C. 2007. "French and Feminine: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Emasculation of John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential Race." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(2):132-50.

March 3: Self interest

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.

The first paper is due at the beginning of lecture.

March 8 & 10: No class (spring break)**March 15: Core values**

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

March 17: Emotion

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

March 22: *Midterm examination in class*

V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

March 24: Guest Speaker

Admiral Joseph Prueher, Consulting Professor at the Center for International Security and Cooperation and Senior Adviser, Preventive Defense Project.

(Reading TBA)

March 29 & 31: 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).

April 5: 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 7: In-Class Movie

Journeys with George

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

April 12: 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

April 14: 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 19: Guest Speaker

Joel Bradshaw, President of Joel Bradshaw Associates

(Reading TBA)

VII. CONCLUSIONS: PUBLIC OPINION IN POLITICS

April 21: In-Class Movie: Campaigns in practice

"By the People: The Election of Barack Obama"

April 26: 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 28: 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 3: 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.

Tuesday, May 11: Final Examination (9:00am–noon)