

PLAP 2270: Public Opinion and Political Behavior Fall 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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S385 Gibson Hall
office hours:
Wednesday 3:30-4:30

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Teaching Assistants
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Thursdays 10-11
Gibson S195

Mondays 11-12
Wilson Foyer

Mondays 11-12
Outside Gibson Starbucks

This course will examine public opinion and assess its place in the American political system, and 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, October 5 at the beginning of lecture
Midterm exam	15 percent	Wednesday, October 12, in class
Second Paper	25 percent	Monday, December 5 at the beginning of lecture
Final exam	25 percent	Friday, December 9, 9am-noon

Note however, that you cannot pass the course without receiving a passing grade on each of these items individually. Thus, for example, if you never turn in an ID, you will not pass the course despite the fact that it is only worth 5 percent of the final grade.

Readings

There is one required book for this course:

Berinsky, Adam J. (editor). 2011. *New Directions in Public Opinion*. New York: Routledge.

This book is newly published (as of August 23), and the publisher is rushing copies to the UVA Bookstore. I will post on Collab copies of any chapters that we read before the book comes in at the bookstore. The book should be available from online retailers soon, although I cannot guarantee that you will get it in time from those sources.

All other readings for the course are available through Collab.

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.

Sections will not meet the first week; they will meet for the first time on August 31, September 1, and September 2.

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/lhec.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

August 24: Welcome and introduction to the course

Berinsky, Adam. "Introduction." *Reader*

II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT

August 29: What is "public"? What is "opinion"?

Is "public opinion" the intersection of the two?

Herbst, Susan. "The History and Meaning of Public Opinion." Reader, chap. 1.

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

August 31 & September 5: Measurement and analysis

Hillygus, D. Sunshine. "The Practice of Survey Research: Changes and Challenges." *Reader*, chap. 2.

Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapters 3 and 8 ("Wording and Context of Questions" and "Analyzing and Interpreting Polls").

III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

September 7: The public's political information and sophistication

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

Gilens, Martin. "Two-Thirds Full? Citizen Competence and Democratic Governance." *Reader*, chap. 3.

September 12: Political Tolerance

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/>

September 14: Ideology and the organization of opinion

Federico, Christopher M. "Ideology and Public Opinion." *Reader*, chap. 4.

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

September 19: 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).

September 21: 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.

September 26: Groups I—political parties

Hetherington, Marc. "Partisanship and Polarization." *Reader*, chap. 5.

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.

September 28: Groups II—race and gender

Burns, Nancy and Donald R. Kinder. "Categorical Politics: Gender, Race, and Public Opinion." *Reader*, chap. 7.

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.

October 3: Race and campaigns

We will watch the beginning of the movie *Boogie Man* in lecture. You are responsible for watching the rest of the movie before your section meeting this week. (Available online through Collab)

Junn, Jane, Tali Mendelberg, and Erica Czaja. "Race and the Group Bases of Public Opinion." *Reader*, chap. 6.

October 5: Guest Speaker

CPT Damon Armeni

The first paper is due at the beginning of lecture.

October 10: No class (reading day)**October 12: Midterm examination in class****October 17: —****October 19: Core values**

Campbell, David E., Geoffrey C. Layman, and John C. Green. "A Jump to the Right, A Step to the Left: Religion and Public Opinion." *Reader*, chap. 8.

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

October 24: Emotion

Brader, Ted. "The Emotional Foundations of Public Opinion." *Reader*, chap. 9.

V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

October 26 & 31: John Zaller's theory of opinion formation and expression

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).

November 2: Political campaigns

Sides, John and Jake Haselswerdt. "Campaigns and Elections." *Reader*, chap. 11.

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

November 7: The media

Baum, Matthew. "Media, Public Opinion, and Presidential Leadership." *Reader*, chap. 12.

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

November 9: In-Class Movie

Journeys with George

November 14: 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

November 16: 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.

November 21: Guest Speaker

Cara Carter, Opinion Research Business
(Reading TBA)

November 23: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

November 28: 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)

November 30: Representation—how does (does?) opinion affect policy?

Campbell, Andrea Louise. "Public Opinion and Public Policy." *Reader*, chap. 271.

December 5: Conclusions: 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).

Sears, David O. "Conclusion: Assessing Continuity and Change." *Reader*.

The second paper is due at the beginning of lecture.

Friday, December 9: Final Examination (9:00am–noon)