

**PLAP 3270: Public Opinion and Political Behavior**  
**Fall 2021**

Monday & Wednesday  
8:00–8:50am  
Nau Hall 101

**Professor Nicholas Winter**  
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S385 Gibson Hall

**office hours:**

Wednesday 2pm–3:30pm & by appointment  
(During office hours I will be available both in my physical office and also  
on Zoom at <https://virginia.zoom.us/my/nwinter>)

**Teaching Assistants**

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

This course examines public opinion and assesses its place in the American political system. It emphasizes 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 new media. We will also consider normative questions, including the role opinion *should* play in American democracy.

The latest/current version of the syllabus is always available on Collab.

**Changelog:**

V21.0.0—8/24/2021     Initial release

## Course Requirements

Requirements for this course include:

- attendance and participation in *section*,
- a *midterm* exam,
- a comprehensive *final* exam, and
- a public opinion *research project* that includes
  - a written proposal,
  - a research instrument,
  - a summary of preliminary findings, and
  - a final research paper.

Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

| Item                            | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Section participation           | 15 percent |
| Midterm exam                    | 15 percent |
| Comprehensive final exam        | 20 percent |
| Research project                | 50 percent |
| Proposal                        | 5 percent  |
| Research instrument             | 10 percent |
| Summary of preliminary findings | 10 percent |
| Final research paper            | 25 percent |

**You must turn in each component of the research project in order to pass the course.** Assignments turned in late *without prior arrangement with your TA* will be given a zero, though you will receive feedback that you can use as you complete the following components. If you have an extraordinary situation, contact your TA to discuss it as far in advance as possible.

## Readings

There are two required books for this course:

Berinsky, Adam J. (editor). 2020. *New Directions in Public Opinion*. Third Edition. New York: Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-1-138-48356-9 (This book is referred to as “Reader” in the syllabus.)

Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN-13: 978-0-226-34911-4

(The UVa bookstore is out of physical copies of Cramer. I have put the first chapter on Collab in PDF form so you have enough time to order a copy online if you wish.)

The books should be available from the UVa bookstore and the usual online sources. All other readings for the course are available through Collab and/or links on the syllabus. Each TA may assign additional required readings over the course of the term.

## Sections

The section meetings will provide an opportunity for you to clarify material from the course and to discuss the lectures, readings, and current events. In addition, a substantial amount of time in section will be devoted to work on your research project. Your TA may also assign periodic brief written work in or out of section.

*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, and the additional 50% from the research project. If you are ill, we and your fellow students prefer that you *not* attend; otherwise you are expected to be there. If you do miss a section, you are responsible for all the material covered and the research project work that you missed.

Sections *will* meet the first week of class. They will *not* meet the week of October 20–22.

## Exams

The midterm and final will both be multiple choice exams designed to test your attention to lecture and readings. They are closed-book and timed. Each will be administered via Collab during a window as noted below. The final will be comprehensive. The midterm from 2019 will be posted on Collab prior to this year's midterm so you have some sense of what to expect.

## Other Policies

We respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to students with physical, visual, hearing, and other disabilities or impairments; 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 Student Disability Access Center (<https://www.studenthealth.virginia.edu/sdac>) as soon as possible, and at least two to three weeks before any assignments are due. We take learning differences very seriously and we will make whatever accommodations you need to be successful in this class. However, they must be properly documented by the SDAC and we must have enough notice to make appropriate arrangements.

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 <https://honor.virginia.edu/academic-fraud>). Note that we employ plagiarism detection software to help ensure the integrity of the course.

I may record the lectures for the sake of students who are unable to attend due to COVID isolation or quarantine. Recordings will be available only to the students who cannot attend due to mandated isolation/quarantine. Recordings will be deleted when no longer necessary, and may not be reproduced, shared with those not enrolled in the class, or uploaded to other online environments. Per UVA policy, students are prohibited from recording of any kind unless authorization is obtained from the instructor.

## Laptops in Lecture

A growing body of research demonstrates that multitasking decreases comprehension and performance, that being able to see multitasking degrades *other* students' performance, and that taking notes by hand increases comprehension and performance. Therefore, the use of laptops and other electronic devices is *strongly discouraged* during lecture.

However, I am aware that some students have a learning or other disability that precludes you from taking notes effectively by hand, and others simply prefer to use an electronic device. Therefore, I will designate a "laptop-optional" section of the lecture hall. Laptops and other electronic devices will be allowed *only* in this section of the lecture hall. I expect that electronic devices will be used only for taking notes during lecture—please don't distract yourself or those behind you with other things during lecture.

Section rules on the use of laptops and other electronic devices are at the discretion of your TA.

## Lecture Schedule and Outline

### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

#### August 25: Welcome and introduction to the course

Berinsky, Adam. "Introduction." *Reader*

Strauss, Valerie. 2014 "Why a leading professor of new media just banned technology use in class." *The Washington Post*. September 25. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/25/why-a-leading-professor-of-new-media-just-banned-technology-use-in-class/>

*Optional, for your information:*

Sana, Faria, Tina Weston, and Nicholas J. Cepeda. 2013. "Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers." *Computers & Education* 62:24-31. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254>

Mueller, Pam A., and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. 2014. "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard." *Psychological Science* 25 (6):1159-68. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0956797614524581>

### II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT OF OPINION

#### August 30 & September 1: What is public opinion?

Herbst, Susan. "The History and Meaning of Public Opinion." *This is from the prior edition of the Reader; it is available on Collab.*

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 1 ("Making Sense of Politics through Resentment.")

#### September 6: **No lecture**

#### September 8: Measuring public opinion—Survey research

Hillygus, D. Sunshine. "The Practice of Survey Research: Changes and Challenges." *Reader*, chapter 1.

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

## September 13: Measuring public opinion—In-depth interviewing & focus groups:

### *In-depth interviewing:*

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 2 (“A Method of Listening”), Appendix B (“Descriptions of Groups”) and Appendix C (“Questions Used”).

Chong, Dennis. 1993. “How People Think, Reason, and Feel about Rights and Liberties” *American Journal of Political Science* 37(3):867-899. (Skim this now, focusing on the method; we will see it again in the tolerance unit.)

### *Focus Groups:*

Gamson, William A. 1992. *Talking Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter 2 & Appendix A.

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) & Appendix A. (Focus on the method they use—focus groups.)

*Optional—these may be helpful if you are considering using one of these methods for your project:*

### *Interviewing*

Lane, Robert Edwards. 1962. *Political Ideology: Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does*. New York: Free Press. Introduction and Appendix A (1-11 & 481-493)

Hochschild, Jennifer. 1981. *What's Fair*, 17-26.

### *Focus Groups*

Kitzinger, Jenny. 1994. “The Methodology of Focus Groups: The Importance of Interaction between Research Participants.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 16 (1):103-21.

Delli Carpini, Michael X, and Bruce Williams. 1994. “The Method Is the Message: Focus Groups as a Method of Social, Psychological, and Political Inquiry.” *Research in micropolitics* 4:57-85.

## September 15: Measuring public opinion—Experiments

Gross, Kimberly, and Julie Wronski. 2019. “Helping the Homeless: The Role of Empathy, Race and Deservingness in Motivating Policy Support and Charitable Giving.” *Political Behavior* 43: 583–613. (Skim this, focusing on the method.)

Nownes, Anthony J. 2019. “Can Celebrities Set the Agenda?” *Political Research Quarterly* 74:1(117-130). (Skim this, focusing on the method.)

## September 20: Measuring public opinion—Content analysis

Prasad, B. Devi. 2008. "Content Analysis: A Method for Social Science Research." In *Research Methods for Social Work*, ed. D. K. Lal Das and V. Bhaskaran. New Delhi: Rawat, 173-93.

Gilens, Martin. 1996. "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60 (4):515-41. (Focus on the method (content analysis); we will see it again in the media unit.)

*Optional—these may be helpful if you are considering content analysis for your project:*

Lee, Jayeon, and Young-shin Lim. 2016. "Gendered Campaign Tweets: The Cases of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump." *Public Relations Review* 42 (5):849-55.

Tankard, James W., Jr. 2001. "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing." In *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy and August E. Grant. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 95-105.

Gamson, William A., and Andre Modigliani. 1989. "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach." *American Journal Of Sociology* 95 (1):1-37.

## III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

### September 22: Democratic competence & political knowledge

Gilens, Martin. "Citizen Competence and Democratic Governance." *Reader*, chapter 2.

### September 27: Political information, misinformation, and disinformation

Jerit, Jennifer. "How People Learn About Politics: Navigating the Information Environment." *Reader*, chapter 12.

### September 29: Everything you ever wanted to know about research instruments!

### October 4: Acceptance of democratic norms: the case of political tolerance

Chong, Dennis. 1993. "How People Think, Reason, and Feel about Rights and Liberties" *American Journal of Political Science* 37(3):867-899. (We read this before...take another look, this time focusing on his findings about political tolerance.)

Kerr, Benjamin, and Peter Godfrey-Smith. 2017. "After Charlottesville, How We Define Tolerance Becomes a Key Question." *The Conversation*.  
<http://theconversation.com/after-charlottesville-how-we-define-tolerance-becomes-a-key-question-83793>.

Boch, Anna. 2020. "The Limits of Tolerance: Extreme Speakers on Campus." *Social Problems* 39(online first): 1-21.

### October 6: Ideology and the organization of opinion

Federico, Christopher M. "Ideology and Public Opinion." *Reader*, chapter 3.

Hetherington, Marc. "Worldview Politics." *Reader*, chapter 8.

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 3 ("The Contours of Rural Consciousness").

(You should focus on several things in this chapter: (1) Cramer's method; (2) her understanding of rural consciousness; and (3) the ways rural consciousness might serve as a political "ideology," or a lens for understanding politics more generally.)

### October 11: **Fall Break (no lecture)**

## IV. ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS

### October 13: The political unconscious: 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).

Erisen, Cengiz, Milton Lodge, and Charles S. Taber. 2014. "Affective Contagion in Effortful Political Thinking." *Political Psychology* 35(2): 187-206.

### October 18: Midterm exam (on Collab; no in-person lecture)

The midterm is a timed, closed-book, multiple-choice exam. You will have 50 minutes to complete the exam in one sitting on Collab. **You may take the exam at the time of your choosing between Monday, October 18 at 6am and Tuesday, October 19 at 4pm.**  
*The exam will cover all reading and lectures through October 13 (Political unconscious).*

If you are entitled to extended time on assessments you will have access to a version of the exam that allows 1.5x or 2x time, as appropriate.

*Sections will not meet this week (on October 20, 21, and 22).*

### October 20: What is in it for me? Self-interest and (versus?) values

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

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 4 ("The Context of Rural Consciousness").

### October 25: Political parties, partisanship, & polarization

Iyengar, Shanto. "Affective Polarization or Hostility Across the Party Divide: An Overview" *Reader*, chapter 4.

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 5 ("Attitudes toward Public Institutions and Public Employees").



### **October 27 & November 1: Groups—race, gender, “American”**

Tesler, Michael. “Racial Attitudes and American Politics.” *Reader*, chapter 5.

Czaja, Erica, Jane Junn, and Tali Mendelberg. “Race, Ethnicity, and Public Opinion.” *Reader*, chapter 6.

Kinder, Donald, Molly E. Reynolds, and Nancy Burns. “Categorical Politics in Action: Gender and the 2016 Presidential Election.” *Reader*, chapter 7.

### **November 3: Principles and values**

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

### **November 8: Emotion**

Brader, Ted. “The Emotional Foundations of Democratic Citizenship.” *Reader*, chapter 9.

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 6 (“Support for Small Government”).

## **V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT**

### **November 10 & 15: 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 17 & 22: The media & content analysis**

Baum, Matthew. “The ‘Daily Them’: Hybridity, Political Polarization, and Presidential Leadership in a Digital Media Age.” *Reader*, chapter 11.

Lee, Latoya A. 2017. “Black Twitter: A Response to Bias in Mainstream Media.” *Social Sciences* 6(1): 26.

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 7 (“Reactions to the Ruckus”).

### **November 24: No lecture—Happy Thanksgiving**

### **November 29: Framing & the formation of opinion**

Winter, Nicholas J. G. 2005. “Framing Gender: Political Rhetoric, Gender Schemas, and Public Opinion on U.S. Health Care Reform.” *Politics and Gender* 1(3): 453–80.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS: PUBLIC OPINION IN POLITICS**

### **December 1: The conversation between citizens and government: representation**

Campbell, Andrea Louise and Elizabeth Rigby. “Public Opinion and Public Policy.” *Reader*, chapter 15.

Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment*, chapter 8 (“We Teach These Things to Each Other”).

### **December 6: Conclusions—public opinion and American democracy**

Sears, David. “Assessing Continuity and Change.” *Reader*, conclusion.

### **Final exam window**

**Friday December 10 (noon) through Monday, December 13 (5pm)**

The final, like the midterm, is a timed, closed-book, multiple-choice exam.

You will have 3 hours to complete the exam in one sitting on Collab. You may take the exam at the time of your choosing **during the 77-hour window listed above. (Note that this window includes the course's official exam slot from 2–5pm on Monday, December 13.)**

If you are entitled to extended time on assessments you will have access to a version of the exam that allows 1.5x or 2x time, as appropriate.

The final exam is comprehensive, covering the entire semester.