

**PLAP 3270: Public Opinion and Political Behavior  
Spring 2018**

Mon & Wed 10:00–10:50am  
Wilson Hall 402

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

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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.

Latest syllabus is always available on Collab.

**Changelog:**

v. 18.0.0	1/16/2018	beta release
v. 18.1.0	2/28/2018	updated exam administration info
v. 18.2.0	3/26/2018	updated for snowday

## 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

**Assignments turned in late without prior arrangement with your TA will not be considered for a grade. If you have an extraordinary situation, contact you TA to discuss it as far in advance as possible.**

## Readings

There are two required books for this course:

Berinsky, Adam J. (editor). 2016. *New Directions in Public Opinion*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-1138774667 (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: 978-0226349114

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 a number of 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, discuss the lectures, readings, and current events, and work on your research project. Your TA will 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 deathly 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.

## 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. They will be administered via Collab during a window as noted below.

The midterm and final will be multiple-choice format, and will focus on the material from reading and lecture. The final will be comprehensive. Last year's midterm and final will be posted to Collab 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 (<http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/sdac/sdac.html>) as soon as possible, and 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. 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 <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/what-is-academic-fraud-2/>). Note that we employ plagiarism detection software to help ensure the integrity of the course.

In addition, I have posted some information on nonacademic support for UVA students here: <http://faculty.virginia.edu/nwinter/syllabusAddendum.pdf>.

## Laptops in Lecture

A growing body of research is demonstrating 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 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. It is expected that electronic devices will be used *only* for taking notes during lecture—please don't distract those behind you by multi-taking.

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

## Lecture Schedule and Outline

### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

#### January 17: 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. [Available online.](#)

*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

#### January 22: What is "public opinion"? Why is that a hard question?

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

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

#### January 24 – February 7: Conceptualization, measurement, and analysis of public opinion

*Survey Research:*

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

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

*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").

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

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)

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.
- 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.
- Kitzinger, Jenny. 1994. "The Methodology of Focus Groups: The Importance of Interaction between Research Participants." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 16 (1):103-21.
- 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 (focus groups); we will see it again in the ideology unit.)

#### *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.)

#### *The following are optional, but very useful if you are considering a 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

#### **February 14 & 19: Information, misinformation, and the public's sophistication**

- Gilens, Martin. "Two-Thirds Full? Citizen Competence and Democratic Governance." *Reader*, chapter 3.
- Guess, Andrew, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2017. "‘You’re Fake News!’ Findings from The Poynter Media Trust Survey." St. Petersburg, FL: The Poynter Institute for Media Studies.
- Pasek, Josh, Gaurav Sood, and Jon A. Krosnick. 2015. "Misinformed About the Affordable Care Act? Leveraging Certainty to Assess the Prevalence of Misperceptions." *Journal of Communication* 65 (4):660-73. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12165>

## February 21: 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.)

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

## February 26: Ideology and the organization of opinion

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

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.)

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). (We read this before...take another look, this time focusing on their findings about political reasoning.)

## IV. ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS

## February 28: 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).

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).

Berinsky, Adam J, Vincent L Hutchings, Tali Mendelberg, Lee Shaker, and Nicholas A Valentino. 2011. "Sex and Race: Are Black Candidates More Likely to Be Disadvantaged by Sex Scandals?" *Political Behavior* 33 (2):179-202.

## March 5 – 7: Spring Break (no class)

## March 12: 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").

Bishop, Bradford H. 2014. "Focusing Events and Public Opinion: Evidence from the Deepwater Horizon Disaster." *Political Behavior* 36 (1):1-22.

## March 14: No lecture—midterm exam on Collab

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, March 12 at 11am and Wednesday, March 14 at 4pm**. We will not hold lecture on March 14.

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 on March 14, 15 and 16.*

### **March 19: Groups I—political parties & polarization**

Hetherington, Marc. “Partisanship and Polarization in Contemporary Politics.” *Reader*, chapter 7.

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

### **March 21: Snow Day**

### **March 26 & 28: Groups: Race, gender, “American”**

Czaja, Erica, Jane Junn, and Tali Mendelberg. “Race, Ethnicity, and the Group Bases of Public Opinion.” *Reader*, chapter 5.

Burns, Nancy, Ashley E. Jardina, Donald Kinder, and Molly E. Reynolds. “The Politics of Gender.” *Reader*, chapter 6.

Barreto, Matt A. and Christopher S. Parker. “Public Opinion and Reactionary Movements: From the Klan to the Tea Party.” *Reader*, chapter 14.

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

### **April 2: Emotion**

Brader, Ted. “The Emotional Foundations of Democratic Citizenship.” *Reader*, chapter 10.

Albertson, Bethany, and Shana Kushner Gadarian. 2016. “Anxiety over Terrorism Advantages Hillary Clinton.” *Political Communication* 33 (4):681-5.

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

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

### **April 4: Lecture cancelled**

### **April 9 & 11: 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).

### **April 16 & 18: The media & framing**

Baum, Matthew. “Media, Public Opinion, and Presidential Leadership.” *Reader*, chapter 15.

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](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/02/19/070219fa_fact_mayer)

Gilens, Martin. 1996. “Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60 (4):515-41.

Hayes, Danny, and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2017. “The Decline of Local News and Its Effects: New Evidence from Longitudinal Data.” *The Journal of Politics* 80 (1):332-6.

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

**April 23: Campaigns & Elections**

Sides, John & Jake Haselswerdt. “Campaigns and Elections.” *Reader*, chapter 12.

VI. CONCLUSIONS: PUBLIC OPINION IN POLITICS

**April 25: The conversation between citizens and government: representation**

Campbell, Andrea Louise. “Public Opinion and Public Policy.” *Reader*, chapter 16.

Gilens, Martin. 2009. “Preference Gaps and Inequality in Representation.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42(2):335-41.

**April 30: Conclusions: Public opinion and American democracy**

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

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

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

**Tuesday, May 8, 2018, 9am-12noon: Final Exam**

The final, like the midterm, is a timed, closed-book, multiple-choice exam. You will have 3 hours minutes to complete the exam in one sitting on Collab. You may take the exam at the time of your choosing during a 72-hour window that will be announced in advance.

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.