

POLI 7150
PROBLEMS IN AMERICAN POLITICS: PUBLIC OPINION
Wednesdays 9:30 am-12:20 pm
176 SH

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Office Hours: Mondays 9:30-12:30 and by appointment

This course provides an understanding of the theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches to studying American public opinion. The field of public opinion is rich and impossibly broad. My goal is for students to finish this course with a *basic* understanding of American public opinion and the resources to continue studying topics in more detail. We will also cover issues related to academic professionalization including a backwards calendar, talks in the department, conference presentations, and how to write a research paper.

Most of the assigned readings are available online. Those that are not will be made available to you through ICON. The following books are *required*:

Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters. Yale University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5

Ellis, Christopher and James A. Stimson. 2012. Ideology in America. Cambridge University Press.

Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, & Eric Schickler. 2002. Partisan Hearts and Minds. Yale University Press.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness. University of Chicago Press.

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. The American Voter Revisited. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1995. The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences. The University of Chicago Press.

Zaller, John. 1992. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. New York: Cambridge University Press.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Attendance in every class and active participation is expected. You will be evaluated on the quantity and quality of participation. I reserve the right to administer weekly quizzes if I sense that students are not prepared for class.

Weekly Reaction Papers (20%)

Students are required to write and submit reaction papers each week, except for those indicated in the course outline. Papers are due via ICON submissions by **NOON** the day before class (**12 pm on Tuesdays**). Your 3-4 page essays, double spaced, should NOT summarize the readings, but rather offer a critical assessment. You may also use the readings as a springboard for your own research ideas that flow from the readings and, when appropriate, feel free to bring in the recommended articles or other sources. You cannot successfully complete these papers by focusing on only one or two of the readings each week.

Things to think about before writing your reaction papers:

1. What are the central research questions?
2. What are the major theoretical concepts (“efficacy”, “political knowledge”) in the paper?
3. How is the main question tested? What data/methods are used? Do you find the empirical arguments persuasive?
4. What untested implications could be tested? Are there any (relevant) fundamental questions being ignored by the authors? That is, not all works try to answer every major question. Is this a matter of limited scope or a blind spot in the perspective taken by the author?

I have little patience for flowery prose and jargon. Write succinctly with logically placed sentences. To this end, you should spend much more time thinking than writing each week.

Late/missing papers will have escalating penalties:

You may miss one paper during the course of the semester without penalty. As many as two late papers will be accepted up to 24 hours after class (9:30 AM Thursdays) and will have a penalty of one minor grade. After two late papers, all other late papers are considered missing.

Grading: Papers that are thoughtful, reflect completion of the assigned reading, and are submitted on time will typically receive a grade of B+/A-. Papers with analyses that are superficial or overly narrow (focusing on just 1 of the assigned readings) will receive lower grades; those that show greater depth and sophistication may receive higher grades.

Seminar Paper (30%):

Students will write a full blown research paper for this course. It should take the basic form of a refereed journal article. That is, you need a research question grounded in theory, hypotheses generated from that theory, an empirical evaluation of those hypotheses using appropriate data and a conclusion. One acceptable alternative is a replication and extension of an existing published paper, however, this extension needs to be meaningful (and, better yet, grounded in theory) and discussed with me first. You are not allowed to submit a paper that was previously used as a final paper in another class. My hope is that these papers develop into publishable manuscripts or provide a basis for a dissertation project. To that end, do not think of these papers as being “done” once they are submitted in this class, but rather long-term projects that contribute to your professional career.

There are several deadlines throughout the semester where I expect significant progress to be made. However, the only aspect of the paper that I will grade will be the *final version* of the paper that you turn in. A successful paper cannot be written overnight. My advice is to start early so that time can be used for the inevitable problems that occur with data, writing, etc.

Papers are due on **December 16 at noon** via the ICON Dropbox. Late papers will be docked 1 full letter grade for every 24 hours that it is late. There is no specific page requirement, but papers that are 15 pages tend to be under-developed, while papers over 35 pages are too long. Papers need to be **double-spaced with 1” margins** with appropriate tables/figures and works cited included.

Seminar Paper Review (10%):

On November 12, you will turn in a complete rough draft of your paper. At that point, you will give a draft to me and other students in the class. You will also receive drafts from other students in the class. You will provide written feedback for the authors of the drafts that you received (and also submit these comments to me). These comments should take the form of a review that you might do for a journal article and should be at least 1 full single-spaced page for each paper (and no more than 3 pages). I will also provide written comments.

Your responsibility is to provide constructive feedback that will help the authors improve their papers. Point out strengths, note weaknesses, raise challenges, and make suggestions for alternatives. Provide solutions to the weaknesses of the paper, perhaps with ideas for additional model specifications. Generic praise is not helpful.

I will provide examples of reviews in class to help guide discussion about professional development and being a peer reviewer.

Seminar Paper Memo in Response to Reviews (10%)

Students will turn in a response to “reviewer” comments with their final paper on **December 16**. Your response memo should detail how you responded to each specific comment or reviewer either in terms of how you changed the paper or why you believe a change/response is not appropriate. Again, these comments should take the form of a reviewer response memo that you might do for a journal article and should be 2-4 full single-spaced pages. I expect to see substantial changes to the seminar paper and the incorporation of suggestions, where appropriate. The point is that the final paper should be *different* from the rough draft.

I will provide examples of response memos that I have done to help guide discussion about professional development and responding to reviewer comments.

Paper Presentation (10%):

During the final two weeks of the semester, each student will present his/her paper to the class. Each presentation should be 10-15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for Q&A. I may invite other graduate students or faculty to attend these presentations. Students will have different levels of experience with having done this and I will take this into account. However, I expect these presentations to be taken seriously and be of professional quality. Think about this type of presentation as a conference presentation. Students are expected to use Power Point or equivalent.

Grading

The following grades may be assigned at the end of the class: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F. I reserve the right to make adjustments to grades based on overall performance in the course. There will be no extra credit or grading curves.

Other Considerations

If you have questions or concerns, please come to my office hours first. Please do not drop by my office with the expectation that we can meet anytime. The best way to get a quick response is through email. I will do my best to promptly answer your emails; however, typically you should not expect a same-day response after 7:00 pm.

I will only respond to emails sent from your UI account.

Please turn off all cell-phones during class. I also discourage the use of laptops in class. Research has consistently shown that retention improves when a student writes notes down, but is not improved by the act of typing things onto a screen. I understand the temptation to check your email, monitor game scores, and generally distract yourself when class is a little slow, but attention to, and participation in, class discussion is very important. I reserve the right to dismiss you from class if disruptions occur, resulting in an absence for the day.

All additional class materials will be posted to the ICON website.

All assignments are to be completed individually. Collaboration of any kind will be considered academic misconduct and reported appropriately. It is the student’s responsibility to understand The University of Iowa’s policy on academic honesty.

This class is about the scientific study of public opinion. We will not engage in political discourse about which views are “right” or “wrong.” Instead, we will focus on evidence and logic. Personal opinions about particular politicians, for example, should be checked at the door. Students are expected to have an open mind and be respectful of other students in class so as to create a comfortable and healthy classroom environment. I also expect students to be respectful of me.

If you are having difficulties in class or any other problems or concerns arise, please *talk to me first*.

While my own political viewpoints are trivial for our purposes, this class is not value-free. A general premise is that democracy is good and that it is better to have a democratic government compared to other alternatives. You do not need to agree to this principle to do well in this class, yet there may be times where you are expected to assume this for the sake of argument.

PUBLIC OPINION RESOURCES

American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR):

<https://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/default.aspx>

American National Election Survey: <http://www.electionstudies.org/>

Cooperative Congressional Election Survey: <http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cces/home>

General Social Survey: <http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm>

Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences: <http://www.tessexperiments.org/>

Annenberg Public Policy Center: <http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/tag/data-sets/>

COURSE OUTLINE

August 26: Class introduction *No reaction papers due.*

Burstein, Paul. 2003. "The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda." *Political Research Quarterly*, 56 (1): 29-40.

Druckman, James N. 2014. "Pathologies of Studying Public Opinion, Political Communication, and Democratic Responsiveness." *Political Communication* 31(3): 467-492.

Take a look at Frank Baumgartner's notes on Backward Calendars:

<http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/teaching/Misc/CALENDAR-2000.htm>

September 2: Challenges in Survey Research *Backwards Calendars Due*

Groves, Robert M. 2011. "Three Eras of Survey Research." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 75 (5): 861-871.

Berinsky, Adam J., Gregory A. Huber, and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. "Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk." *Political Analysis* 20: 351-368.

Huber, Gregory A. and Celia Paris. 2013. "Assessing the Programmatic Equivalence Assumption in Question Wording Experiments: Understanding Why Americans Like Assistance to the Poor More than Welfare." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77 (1): 385-397.

Holbrook, Allyson L. and Jon A. Krosnick. 2010. "Social Desirability Bias in Voter Turnout Reports: Tests using the Item Count Technique." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74 (1): 37-67.

Kempf, Angela M. and Patrick L. Remington. 2007. "New Challenges for Telephone Survey Research in the Twenty-First Century." *Annual Review of Public Health*, 28: 113-126.

September 9: Political Knowledge and Citizen Competence

Converse, Philip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In David Apter (Ed) *Ideology and Discontent*. Free Press. *On ICON*.

Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters. Yale University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Barabas, Jason, Jennifer Jerit, William Pollock, and Carlisle Rainey. 2014. "The Question(s) of Political Knowledge." *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 840-855.

Recommended:

Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88(1): 63-76.

September 16: Ideology

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. The American Voter Revisited. Chapter 9

Ellis, Christopher and James A. Stimson. 2012. Ideology in America. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7

Recommended:

Shawn Treier and D. Sunshine Hillygus. 2009. "The Nature of Political Ideology in the Contemporary Electorate." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73:679-703.

September 23: Party Identification *Be prepared to talk in class about data for your final paper*

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. The American Voter Revisited. Chapter 6

Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, & Eric Schickler. 2002. Partisan Hearts and Minds. Yale University Press.

September 30: Social Cleavages *Instead of handing in a reaction paper, students will hand in an outline of their proposed papers.*

Kaufmann, Karen M. 2006. "The Gender Gap." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39 (3): 447-453.

- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. The American Voter Revisited. Chapter 12.
- Soss, Joe, Laura Langbein, and Alan R. Metelko. 2003. "Why Do White Americans Support the Death Penalty?" *Journal of Politics* 65 (2): 397-421.
- Layman, George C. 1997. "Religion and Political Behavior in the United States: The Impact of Beliefs, Affiliations, and Commitment from 1980 to 1994." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 288-316.

Recommended:

- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M., Suzanna De Boef, and Tse-Min Lin. 2004. "The Dynamics of the Partisan Gender Gap." *American Political Science Review*
- Kaufmann, Karen M. and John R. Petrocik. 1999. "The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap." *American Journal of Political Science* 43: 864-887.

October 7: Information Processing I

- Zaller, John. 1992. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zaller, John. 2012. "What *Nature and Origins* Leaves Out." *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society*. 24 (4): 569-642.

October 14: Information Processing II

- Redlawsk, David P. 2002. "Hot Cognition or Cool Consideration? Testing the Effects of Motivated Reasoning on Political Decision Making." *The Journal of Politics* 64 (4): 1021-1044.
- Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755-769.
- Lau, Richard R. and David P. Redlawsk. 2001. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (4): 951-971.
- Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." *Political Behavior* 32: 303-330.
- Jerit, Jennifer and Jason Barabas. 2012. "Partisan Perceptual Bias and the Information Environment." *The Journal of Politics* 74 (3): 672-684.

October 21: Political Socialization

- Achen, Christopher H. 2002. "Parental Socialization and Rational Party Identification." *Political Behavior*.
- Plutzer, Eric. 2002. "Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood." *American Political Science Review* 96: 41-56.
- Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. 2009. "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." *Journal of Politics* 71 (3): 782-799.
- Alford, John R., Carolyn L. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review* 99(2): 153-167.
- Sears, David O. and Nicholas Valentino. 1997. "Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Preadult Socialization." *American Political Science Review* 91 (1): 45-65.

Recommended:

- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. The American Voter Revisited. Chapter 7.

October 28: Social Networks/Contextual Influence

- Mutz, Diana C. 2002. "Cross-Cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice." *American Political Science Review* 96: 111-126.
- T.K. Ahn, R. Huckfeldt, A. K. Mayer, and J.B. Ryan. 2013. "Expertise and Bias in Political Communication Networks." *American Journal of Political Science* 57: 357-373.
- Testa, Paul F., Matthew V. Hibbing, and Melinda Ritchie. 2014. "Orientations toward Conflict and the Conditional Effects of Political Disagreement." *The Journal of Politics* 76: 770-785.

Cho, Wendy K. Tam. 2003. "Contagion Effects and Ethnic Contribution Networks." *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (2): 368-387.

Recommended:

Kenny, Christopher. 1998. "The Behavioral Consequences of Political Discussion: Another Look at Discussant Effects on Vote Choice." *The Journal of Politics* 60 (1): 231-244.

McClurg, Scott D. 2003. "Social Networks and Political Participation: The Role of Social Interaction in Explaining Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 56: 449-464.

November 4: I will hold office hours during regularly scheduled class time to discuss your final papers. Students will sign up for 20 minute appointments. No reaction papers are due this week.

November 11: Aggregate Public Opinion & Representation *Instead of reaction papers, students will turn in rough drafts of their final paper.*

Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1995. The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences. Chapters 2, 7 & 8.

Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(4): 981-1000.

Gilens, Martin and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics*.

Recommended:

Ura, Joseph Daniel, and Christopher R. Ellis. 2008. "Income, Preferences, and the Dynamics of Policy Responsiveness." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41(4): 785-94.

November 18: Elite Manipulation *Instead of reaction papers, students will turn in their reviews.*

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness. University of Chicago Press.

November 25: Thanksgiving Break

December 2: Presentations

December 9: Presentations

Final Papers and Response Memos due December 16 at noon via Dropbox.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Policies and Procedures

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS handbook (<http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/>)

Electronic Communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (*Operations Manual* can be found here: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~our/opmanual/iii/15.htm#>)

Accommodations for Disabilities

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences expects all students to do their own work, as stated in the Academic Honor Code (<http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code>). Instructors fail any assignment that shows evidence of plagiarism or other forms of cheating, also reporting the student's name to the College. A student reported to the College for cheating is placed on disciplinary probation; a student reported twice is suspended or expelled.

CLAS Final Examination Policies

Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook (<http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/x/#5>) DEO: Sara Mitchell, 343 SH, 335-2358

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/sexual-harassment-guide/index.html>).

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety web site (<http://police.uiowa.edu/stay-informed/emergency-communication/>).

Student Resources: The Writing Center www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/ and the Campus Information Center's Tutor Referral Services <http://imu.uiowa.edu/cic/> at the IMU.

*These CLAS policy and procedural statements have been summarized from the web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (<http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/>) and The University of Iowa *Operations Manual* (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~our/opmanual/index.html>).