

PUBLIC OPINION
POLS 030:171 (POLI:3204)
Fall 2013
MWF 9:30-10:20
15 Schaeffer Hall

Professor Julianna Pacheco
Office: 326 Schaeffer Hall
Office Phone: 319-335-2341
Email: julianna-pacheco@uiowa.edu
Office Hours: M 11-1, W 11-12, and by appointment

Department Chair: Professor Sara Mitchell
Office: 343 Schaeffer Hall
Office Phone: 319-335-2358

Course Description

In this course, we will examine the sources, the nature, and the consequences of mass political opinions, values, and interests in the United States. Specifically, the following questions will be addressed in this course: What is public opinion? How is public opinion measured? What is the role of public opinion in a democracy? What factors affect public opinion? How does public opinion change over time? Is the electorate polarized? Do elites respond to public opinion changes? Throughout the course we will be analyzing current and past opinion of issues important today.

A second component of the course will be designing, implementing, and evaluating the Iowa Hawkeye Poll. Students will perform group work in developing their own questions that will be included on the Poll and gain experience at the Survey Research Center in fielding the poll.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should (1) have a basic understanding of existing social science theories and debates regarding the formation, measurement, and content of public opinion; (2) be able to apply these theories to real world events in order to better understand the role of public opinion in American politics; (3) be a more informed consumer of public opinion polls.

Required Texts

Erikson, Robert S., and Kent L. Tedin. 2010. American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact, 8th edition. New York: Pearson Longman.

Fowler, Floyd J. 2008. Survey Research Methods 4th Edition. USA: CQ Press.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Exams: There will be two in-class exams. The exams will most likely consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer/conceptual questions, and essay questions. Each exam is worth 15% of the final grade. The dates for the exams are listed below in the Course Schedule.

Make-up exams will be given *only in extreme circumstances*. These include extreme illness (student must provide a note from a physician), mandatory religious obligations, University activities (student must provide a written statement from a coach), or other family emergencies (student must provide documentation e.g., a funeral program). If you need to reschedule an exam, you *must* contact me *within 48 hours* of the scheduled exam. No exceptions.

Survey and Training Participation: This involves completing IRB certification (5%) by the listed deadline, participating in our survey calling training session (5%), and completing the required hours of calling (10%). **The required number of hours is 8 hours during the calling week.** You must fully complete each of these to get credit—there is no partial credit for any of these categories. Please note that if you do not complete IRB certification you will not be eligible to call and will therefore receive a zero for that portion as well.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each and every class meeting. I will be taking attendance and excessive absences will result in an overall course grade penalty. Because unavoidable conflicts sometimes arise, students will be allowed 2 absences without penalty, and without need to provide an excuse. After that, each absence will result in a penalty of one point deducted from the student's final numerical average for the course. This penalty can be waived only under very limited circumstances, such as travel to represent the University, serious documented illness, or a real family emergency. Exceptions to the attendance policy *must* be cleared with the instructor, in advance if possible. Attendance counts towards 10% of the final grade.

If you must miss a day, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Talk to your classmates; borrow their notes. Be aware that important announcements regarding course materials, schedule, and assignments may be made solely in class.

Participation: Class participation is my way to gather information about how well you have read and understood the material presented in the readings and a chance for you to pull things together with the help of your peers and me. Participation may extend outside the classroom and involve online polls or discussions. In-class discussion should be inclusive. Always feel comfortable asking questions. If you have a particular question, others will too. (And if everyone is quiet, we will resort to quizzes over the reading material). Participation counts towards 10% of your final grade.

Group Presentations: Groups will do two formal presentations of their work, such as with question selection and final group reports. Each group member will be required to present a portion of the group's work. More details on this as the semester progresses. Group presentations consist of 15% of your final grade.

Written Assignments: Individual students and groups will also submit written versions of the materials for some of their presentations as well as separate written assignments. Written assignments consist of 15% of your final grade.

Grading

Exam 1: 15%
Exam 2: 15%
Survey and Training Participation: 20%
Attendance: 10%
Participation: 10%
Group Presentations: 15%
Written Assignments: 15%

Course grades will be distributed as follows:

98-100: A+	78-79: C+
94-97: A	74-77: C
90-93: A-	70-73: C-
88-89: B+	68-69: D+
84-87: B	64-67: D
80-83: B-	60-63: D-
	Below 60: F

Grade Appeals: I will not discuss changes in grades on exams for 24 hours after the exam has been handed back. If you feel that we missed an important point that you made or there is some other problem with your grade, after 24 hours, you may submit a grade appeal. Your appeal should be a typed argument for why your grade should be changed. It should be no longer than 1 page. You will need to hand the appeal and the original exam back into me for review. I will then ask you to schedule a time to meet or come in during office hours to discuss the appeal. Appealing the grade does not mean that I will automatically increase your grade.

Policy on Late Assignments:

Written assignments are due at the time specified. Any late work will have points deducted at the rate of 2% of the total available points per calendar day unless arrangements are made *prior* to the due date. If you have a legitimate, personal reason for missing a scheduled assignment and cannot notify me in advance, please come talk to me afterwards and provide documentation.

Technology Support through the Political Science Collaboratory

The Political Science Technology TA, currently Dongkyu Kim, is also available to consult with students in Political Science courses regarding technology that may be required for their homework or research projects. This might include tips on accessing or entering data, doing basic statistical analysis, or working with computers in other ways.

Dongkyu holds regular office hours in the Political Science Collaboratory in 334 SH from 10-12 on Monday through Friday. He is also available by appointment and his email address is dongkyu-kim@uiowa.edu.

The Collaboratory has 8 computers including 2 with high-end hardware and special software, including ArcGIS, Stata MP, and Mathematica. These 2 computers should be reserved for applications needing their capabilities as possible.

Students needing regular access to the Collaboratory through the AMAG system should contact its Director, Fred Boehmke, at frederick-boehmke@uiowa.edu.

Other Considerations

I will not answer any questions immediately after class. If you would like to talk, please come to my office hours. If you cannot make my office hours, please email me to set up an alternative time to meet. 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 reserve the right to dismiss you from class if disruptions occur, resulting in an absence for the day.

All slides and class materials will be posted to the ICON website. Occasionally, polls or other online discussions will be administered through ICON. These activities will count towards your participation grade.

Collaboration is allowed on group projects, although each student will be required to submit individual portions of the overall assignment. Collaboration on individual assignments (such as exams) is not allowed, 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 public opinion as it relates to political science, not politics. We will not engage in political discourse about which views are "right" or "wrong." Instead, we will focus on the scientific study of public opinion—backed by 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 health classroom environment. However, I will try to incorporate "real-world" examples into the class materials as much as possible.

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.

Course Schedule

8/26- Organizational Session and Introduction¹

8/28- What is public opinion and why do we care about it?

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 1

8/30-No class, APSA

9/2- No class, Labor Day

9/4-The Basics of Survey Research

Fowler, Chapters 1-2

9/6- Discussion of Possible Question Topics

Browse the following websites: pollingreport.com, gallup.com, [iPoll](http://ipoll.com), Pew Research Center

9/9-Sampling and Nonresponse

Fowler, Chapters 3-4; Section 2-2 in Erikson & Tedin

9/11- Designing Questions

Fowler, Chapter 6; Section 2-3 Erikson & Tedin

9/13-Discussion of Possible Question Topics

Browse previous Hawkeye Poll Questionnaires

9/16- Question Wording Effects and Experimental Designs

Erikson & Tedin, pgs. 38-46

Pew Research Center Government Surveillance: A Question Experiment

<http://www.people-press.org/2013/07/26/government-surveillance-a-question-wording-experiment/>

9/18- Cell Phones, Surveying Young People

The Challenges of Conducting Surveys of Youth <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/21/the-challenges-of-conducting-surveys-on-youths/>

Kempf, Angela M. and Patrick L. Remington. 2007. "New Challenges for Telephone Survey Research in the 21st Century." *Annual Review of Public Health* 28: 113-26.

9/20-Group Presentations of Question Topics

9/23- Group Presentations of Question Topics

Final Survey Questions Due

¹ Any changes to this schedule will be announced verbally in class. It is the student's responsibility to note changes and adhere to the new schedule.

9/25-What people know and think

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 3

9/27-The building blocks of public opinion

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 5

9/30-Building blocks, continued

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 5

IRB Certification Due

10/2-Public opinion & Democratic Stability

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 6

10/4- Democratic Stability, continued

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 6

10/7-Visit to UI Main Library Gallup Papers Special Collections

10/9- Catch-up/Review for Exam 1

10/11-Exam 1

10/14- Frequencies and Distributions

Fowler, Chapter 9-10

10/16- Group differences in opinion

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 7

10/18- Group differences, continued

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 7

10/21- News Media

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 8

10/23- News Media, continued

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 8

10/25-Writing Press Releases

Visit from UI News Service

10/28-Misuse of Surveys

Fowler, Chapter 13

10/30-Predictions using Data

“Can Software that Predicts Crime Pass Constitutional Muster?”

<http://www.npr.org/2013/07/26/205835674/can-software-that-predicts-crime-pass-constitutional-muster>

<http://www.npr.org/2013/03/07/173176488/the-big-data-revolution-how-number-crunchers-can-predict-our-lives>

Campbell, James E. 2012. “Forecasting the 2012 American National Elections.” *PS: Political Science*, October 610-623. ON ICON

11/1- Trends in Public Opinion

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 4

Press Release Due

11/4- Trends in Public Opinion, Continued

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 4

11/6-Elections as Instruments of Popular Control

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 9

11/8- Elections, continued

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 9

11/11- No Class-Survey in Field

11/13- No Class-Survey in Field

11/15- No Class-Survey in Field

11/18- Representation

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 10

Survey Calling Reaction Paper Due

11/20- Representation, continued/Review for Exam 2

11/22-Exam 2

11/25-11/29-Thanksgiving, No Class

12/2-Using SDA to Visualize and Interpret Data

12/4-In-Class Workshop for Group Presentations/Final Paper

12/6- In-Class Workshop for Group Presentations/Final Paper

12/9-Group Presentations

12/11-Group Presentations

12/13-Group Presentations/Course Evaluations

Final Group Paper due during finals week

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 Academic Policies Handbook at <http://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, III.15.2, k.11).

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

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

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.

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 Department of Public Safety website.

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 are available for students if necessary.