

POS 3233
Politics and Public Opinion
Fall 2017

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1 Course Description

This course examines the core concepts for understanding and measuring public opinion in contemporary American politics. It explores the structure and dynamics of American public opinion, providing a broad-based introduction to the forces that shape citizens political opinions, how these opinions endure over time, how these perspectives are communicated to elected officials, and how these opinions are measured. Each week is divided into three sessions. *Monday* classes provide the theoretical framework for understanding public opinion, where opinions come from, the nature of opinion about several salient issues, and whether public opinion affects policymaking. *Wednesday* classes provide the theoretical framework for measuring public opinion using surveys and polling. *Friday* classes provide analytical and basic statistical research skills with a hands-on approach on analyzing public opinion data from publicly available survey data sources such as American National Election Studies (ANES), General Social Survey (GSS) etc.

Note: Class meets in 134 Anderson Hall, MWF from 8:30am-9:20am.

2 Readings

Required Text

Clawson, Rosalee A., and Zoe M. Oxley. 2017. Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice, 3rd Edition. Washington: CQ Press.

Clawson, Rosalee A., and Zoe M. Oxley. 2011. Conducting Empirical Analysis: Public Opinion in Action. Washington: CQ Press.

Recommended Text

*Asher, Herb. 2017. Polling and the Public: What every Citizen Should Know. 9th Edition. Washington: CQ Press.

Weisberg, Herbert, Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen. 1996. An Introduction to Survey research, Polling, and Data Analysis. Sage.

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

3 Course Requirements

Your grade will reflect the following components:

- Participation - 10%
- Quizzes - 30%
 - 10/12 quizzes total
 - * 3% each
- Assignments - 20%
 - 2 assignments total
 - * 10% each
 - 1st assignment from the workbook
 - 2nd conduct interviews at BEBR and write a report
- Final Paper/Poster - 40%

3.1 Quizzes

There will be twelve short quizzes. However, only ten quizzes with the highest points will be calculated toward your final grade. Each quiz will have five multiple choice or short answer questions. Short quizzes contribute 30 % of your final grade. Each quiz is worth 3%. Questions will come from the lecture, readings, and lab.

3.2 Assignments

There will be two practical assignments worth 20% of your final grade. The first assignment will ask you to identify, improve, and critically assess issues related to a survey questionnaire. For the second assignment you have to be a survey interviewer for a day. The purpose of this assignment is for you to get a better understanding about data collection, how difficult it is, issues and problems that might occur during this process, and what consequence this might have in our analysis and understanding of public opinion. Telephone interviews will be conducted at the University of Florida Survey Research Center. As an interviewer you are responsible to complete a shift of three hours. You should submit a short report about this experience.

I will provide guidelines for both assignments.

3.3 Research Paper/ Poster

You are also required to write a research paper or a poster as the final assignment for this course. The goal of the **research paper** will be to review the literature (books, chapters, or journal articles) about factors that affect public opinion, which we will discuss throughout the course, it will be 8-10 pages long. You will have do some simple data analysis (using the SDA system that I

will introduce in class, or another software of your choice), and explain whether your data analysis tends to support or undermine the theory and previous findings in your literature review. A preliminary research question and bibliography will be due November 8. Pick a topic that interests you. Do some preliminary research on the topic, formulate the research question, and think about the data that you will use to analyze the research question. I strongly recommend that you discuss your research plan with me before November 8. The deadline for the research paper is December 11.

Those of you who would choose to do a **poster**, should follow all the steps explained above. However, instead of submitting the 8-10 pages written paper you have to prepare a poster and present it during the last week of classes. This is a simulation of poster presentations at professional conferences. Students who would decide to write the research paper are expected to attend the poster presentations and provide constructive feedback to their peers.

The final paper/poster contributes 40% to your course grade.

Some materials and links to sources will be made available to registered students through E-Learning. Students will be required to submit the paper assignment using the Turnitin.com links within the assignment folders in E-Learning. Turnitin.com provides students will an electronic time-stamped receipt, and also checks for plagiarism by comparing your submission to online sources and previous submissions. Students will also be able to use E-Learning to access grades throughout the semester. I will use the date and time of submission at Turnitin@UF to assess late penalties (see above).

3.4 Participation

Class participation is worth 10% of your final grade. Students are expected to have read the assigned chapters and articles before class, and be prepared to discuss them in class. You should view this class as an opportunity for an exchange of ideas by scholars with common interests. Obviously, I will contribute the most to the discussion, but I expect participation from the class, and I expect your individual participation to be especially insightful when we are discussing topics related to your chosen paper topics. I reserve the right to reward outstanding participation by as much as one-half a letter grade (for example, from a "B" to a "B+") at the end of the term.

Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

4 Course Grades

Your grade in the course will be a weighted average of the requirements: participation (10%), quizzes (30%), assignments (20%), and final research paper/poster (40%).

For information on UF grading policies for assigning grade points, see

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Grading Scale	(Grade Point Equivalent)
A = 90 or above	4.00
A- = 87-89	3.67
B+ = 84-86	3.33
B = 80-83	3.00
B- = 77-79	2.67
C+ = 74-76	2.33
C = 70- 73	2.00
C- = 67-69	1.67
D+ = 64-66	1.33
D = 60-63	1.00
D- = 57-59	0.67
E = 56 or below	0.00

Note that a grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit.

5 Policies and Related Information

Persons with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Anyone with a disability should feel free to see me during office hours to make the necessary arrangements.

Policies on Cell Phones and Laptops

Students should turn cell phones to silent or vibrate before coming to class. Each time a student's cell phone rings or each time that a student texts during class, 1% will be deducted from that student's final grade (1% per instance). If a call or text is urgent, please quietly leave the classroom to answer it. Laptops should be used only for course-related activities (e.g., taking notes or reviewing the reading). Violations will also result in a 1% penalty. I do not intend to make a show of these penalties. Instead, I will most likely pause and make a note. My silence, then, does not mean that infractions have gone unnoticed.

Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment. "

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore,

you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.

In the event that I discover that a student is cheating or has plagiarized, s/he will automatically fail the course and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Acts of Plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper or another assignment that was written by someone else (i.e., by another student, by a research service, or downloaded off the Internet);
- Copying, verbatim, a sentence or paragraph of text from the work of another author without properly acknowledging the source through a commonly accepted citation style and using quotation marks;
- Paraphrasing (i.e., restating in your own words) text written by someone else without citing that author;
- Using a unique idea or concept, which you discovered in a specific reading, without citing that work.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Additional Information

Phone numbers and contact sites for university counseling services and mental health Services can be found at <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx> or you may call 392- 1575. To contact the University Police Department call 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

6 Course Outline

*(Subject to changes. * means optional reading.)*

1. Week 1

- Monday, Aug. 21
 - Introduction
- Wednesday, Aug. 23 - What is Public Opinion?
 - Lippman, Walter. Chapter 1
 - Clawson and Oxley. Chapter 1
- Friday, Aug. 25 Conducting Empirical Analysis- Overview
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 1

2. Week 2

- Monday, Aug. 28 - Measuring Public Opinion
 - Clawson and Oxley. Appendix pp. 27-40
 - Weisberg et al. Chapter 1 & 2
- Wed-Fri, Aug. 30 - Sept. 1st
 - Class canceled. APSA meeting.

3. Week 3

- Monday, Sept. 4
 - No class. Labor Day
- Wednesday, Sept. 6 - Political Socialization
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 2
 - Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. 2009. Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined. *Journal of Politics* 71(3): 782-799.
- Friday, Sept. 8 Analyzing and Interpreting Polls
 - Asher - Chapter 8
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 2

4. Week 4- CANCELED

- Monday, Sept. 11- Media Influence
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 3 - Mass Media
 - Zaller, Chapter 3.
- Wednesday, Sept. 13 - Media and the Polls
 - Asher- Chapter 6
- Friday, Sept. 15 - Lab
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 3

5. Week 5

- Monday, Sept. 18 Ideology, Partisanship, and Polarization I
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley. Chapter 5
 - Abramowitz, Alan I. and Kyle L. Saunders. 2006. "Exploring the Bases of Partisanship in the American Electorate: Social Identity Vs. Ideology." *Political Research Quarterly* 59 (2, June): 175-187.
- Wednesday, Sept. 20
 - Asher. Chapter 3 Wording and Context of Questions
- Friday, Sept. 22 - Lab
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 5

6. Week 6 - Mass Media

- Monday, Sept. 11- Media Influence
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 3 - Mass Media
 - Zaller, Chapter 3.
- Wednesday, Sept. 13 - Media and the Polls
 - Asher- Chapter 6
- Friday, Sept. 29
 - Presentation: “Effective search strategies for finding scholarly sources.” David Schwieder. Political Science Librarian.
 - Assignment I (due date)

7. Week 7

- Monday, Oct. 2 Pluralistic Roots of Public Opinion
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley. Chapter 7: The Central Role of Groups
- Wednesday, Oct. 4
 - Asher. Chapter 4 Sampling Techniques
- Friday, Oct. 6
 - No class. Homecoming

8. Week 8

- Monday, Oct. 9 - Attitude Stability and Change
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley. Chapter 4
 - Kuru, Ozan, Josh Pasek, and Michael W. Traugott. 2017. ”Motivated Reasoning in the Perceived Credibility of Public Opinion Polls.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 81(2): 422-446.
- Wednesday, Oct. 11 - Nonattitudes
 - Asher. Chapter 2
- Friday, Oct. 13 - Lab
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 4

9. Week 9

- Monday, Oct. 16 Political Knowledge
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley. Chapter 8
 - Lupia, Arthur. 1994. Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections. *American Political Science Review* 88(1): 63-76.

- *Schaffner, Brian F., and Cameron Roche. 2016. "Misinformation and Motivated Reasoning: Responses to Economic News in a Politicized Environment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 81(1): 86-110.
 - Wednesday, Oct. 18
 - Asher. Chapter 5- Interviewing and Data Collection Procedures
 - Friday, Oct. 20- Lab
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 7
10. **Week 10** Survey Reports
- Monday, Oct. 23
 - Quiz
 - Weisberg et al. Chapter 11
 - AAPOR Transparency Initiative <http://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Transparency-Initiative/Latest-News.aspx>
 - Wednesday, Oct. 25
 - Survey Training
 - Friday, Oct. 27
 - BEBR survey field
11. **Week 11**
- Monday, Oct. 30 Elections
 - Quiz
 - Erikson and Tedin. Chapter 9
 - Healy, Andrew J., Neil Malhotra, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo. 2010. "Irrelevant Events Affect Voters' Evaluations of Government Performance." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107(29): 12804-12809.
 - Wednesday, Nov. 1
 - Asher. Chapter 7 Polls and Elections
 - John Sides, In Defense of Presidential Forecasting Models, New York Times/Five Thirty Eight (March 2012) <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/in-defense-of-presidential-forecasting-models/>.
 - Friday, Nov. 3
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 12
 - Assignment II Report (due date)
12. **Week 12-** Elections
- Monday, Nov. 6
 - Quiz
 - Zaller. Chapter 10
 - Nate Silver, Models Based on Fundamentals Have Failed at Predicting Presidential Elections <https://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/26/models-based-on-fundamentals-have-failed-at-predicting-presidential-elections/>;

- Zukin, Cliff https://www.aapor.org/getattachment/Education-Resources/Election-Polling-Resources/Election-Polling-AAPOR-2015-primary_cz120215-FINAL.pdf.aspx
- Wednesday, Nov. 8
 - Brendan Nyhan, Presidential Polls: How to Avoid Getting Fooled, New York Times (7/30/15) <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/29/upshot/2016-presidential-election-polls-how-to-follow.html>
 - AAPOR Report- An Evaluation of 2016 Election Polls in the U.S. <http://www.aapor.org/Education-Resources/Reports/An-Evaluation-of-2016-Election-Polls-in-the-U-S.aspx>
 - Final project proposal (due date)
- Friday, Nov. 10
 - No class. Veterans Day

13. Week 13

- Monday, Nov. 13 - Trust in Government
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley. Chapter 11
- Wednesday, Nov. 15
 - Levi, Margaret, and Laura Stoker. 2000. “Political Trust and Trustworthiness.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3(1): 475-507.
 - Mayne, Quinton and Armen Hakhverdian. 2016. “Education, Socialization, and Political Trust” in Handbook on Political Trust. Ed. Sonja Zmerli and Tom van der Meer. Edward Elgar Publishing.
 - Beyond Distrust- PEW <http://www.people-press.org/2015/11/23/beyond-distrust-how-americans-view-their-government/>
 - *PEW Report <http://www.people-press.org/2017/05/03/public-trust-in-government-remains-near-historic-lows-as-partisan-attitudes-shift/>
- Friday, Nov. 17- Lab
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 10

14. Week 14

- Monday, Nov. 20 Support for Civil Liberties
 - Quiz
 - Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 9
- Wed-Fri, Nov. 22-24
 - No class. Thanksgiving

15. Week 15

- Monday, Nov. 27- Public Opinion and Public Policy
 - Quiz

- Clawson and Oxley. Chapter 12
- Gilens, Martin. 2005. Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(5): 778-796.
- Wednesday, Nov. 29
 - Asher. Chapter 9 Polling and Democracy
- Friday, Dec. 1
 - Clawson and Oxley (Workbook). Chapter 11

16. Week 16

- Monday, Dec. 4
 - Poster Presentations
- Wednesday, Dec. 6
 - Poster Presentations
- Friday, Dec. 8
 - No class. Reading day

17. Week 17

- Monday, Dec. 11
 - Final paper due