
Public opinion is critical for the success of a representative democracy, but it is not clear citizens possess the political sophistication to effectively meet normative ideals. To assess whether this is the case, this course introduces students to many facets of public opinion in the United States. Some of the topics we will examine are: citizens' political knowledge and attitudes, the role of elites and groups in opinion formation, and the extent to which elites respond to public opinion.

As a result of completing the course, you should be able to (better) answer the following questions:

What is public opinion and how do we measure it?

How sophisticated are Americans' views of politics?

What are the forces affecting public opinion?

Can public opinion play the role we expect of it in a democracy?

Your class participation consists of three parts.

First, you are expected to complete the readings and contribute to class discussion. If you must miss a class for a legitimate reason, such as illness, family emergency, or University-sponsored activity, you should contact the professor as soon as possible. An absence is excused only if explicitly stated by Professor Rogers by email (therefore if you speak to Professor Rogers – be sure to send a follow up email to confirm excuse). If you have more than three unexcused absences, your final course grade will be lowered by 0.5% for each additional day.

Second, on the Blackboard discussion forum, you will be required to comment on readings for 6 Course Topics (excluding Topic 1). The below course outline has 12 separate topics. Comments should address readings' main arguments, shortcomings, and questions you would like to discuss in class. Comments should not address textbook readings (e.g.

Erikson). Blackboard posts should be at least 350 word(s)5-ntac (1 0 0 1 325.49 380.59 Tm[()] TJETBh2mh

Third, you will present and lead discussion for two readings. You will do this once by yourself and once with a partner. These presentations should respectively be approximately 10 and 15 minutes. Solo readings to choose from are designated in the Course Reading list by an asterisk (*). Partner readings are designated by two asterisks (**). Presentations should:

- Describe the main _____ of the reading
- Explain what its _____ are to our understanding of public opinion
- Provide specific _____ of the study (e.g., its theoretical argument, hypotheses, evidence, analysis, etc.)
- Raise _____ about specific theoretical or empirical issues that you did not understand
- Include a one page handout for fellow students

You will choose which readings you would like to present on August 26th.

There will be two main written assignments in this course. They will require you to review and critique debates in the public opinion and elections literature. The first paper focuses on the role of income and social issues in public opinion _____, and the second paper will focus on presidential elections _____. Each paper will be 7 - 9 pages. You will receive more specific details about the assignments at least three weeks before the papers are due.

There will be a midterm and final exam in this course. Each exam will be in-class, open book, and open note. Format will be short answer and/or essay.

Your grade for this course

When determining the final grade, the following grading scale will be used. I will round final grades. Depending on the distribution of grades, I reserve the right to impose curves to assignments and final grades.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty:
<http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to celu/MCID 4eas, lefa8MCID 4iplend

The following listing of topics outlines the subjects we will cover in class and the reading assignments for each of the topics. My intent for the course is to be more lecture focused on Mondays and discussion focused Wednesdays and Fridays. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as the semester progresses. You are responsible for any of the changes to the assigned readings. All of the articles and readings on the syllabus will be available on Blackboard. If you have any trouble accessing any of the on-line pieces,

August 24 – Course Introduction

August 26

Erikson: Chapter 1

Herbst, Susan. "The History and Meaning of Public Opinion." In

August 28

Key, V.O. 1961.

. New York: Knopf. pp. 3-18

("Introduction")

Lippmann, Walter. 1925. "The Phantom Public" Excerpt

August 31

Erikson: Chapter 2

September 2 ~ No Class – Rogers at Academic Conference

September 4 ~ No Class – Rogers at Academic Conference

September 7 ~ No Class – Labor Day

September 9 & 11

"What the Public Knows – In Pictures, Words, Maps, and Graphs." – Pew 2015

Herbst, Susan. 1993. Chapter 3: "Techniques of Opinion Expression and Measurement" in *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics*.

Berinsky, Adam. 1999. "Two Faces of Public Opinion."

: 43(4), 1209 – 1230.*

Silver, Nate. 2014. "Here's Proof Some Pollsters Are Putting a Thumb on the Scale."

September 14

Erikson: Chapter 3

September 16 & 18

Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 5. "Ideological Incongruence and Critiques."

Focus on parts of reading related to Converse, Philip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." Skim the Converse piece (also on Blackboard) after reading Clawson and Oxley

Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response." . 36(3).

Bartels, Larry. "Democracy with Attitudes." In Michael B. MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, eds. . Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

September 21

Bartels, Larry. 2008. "The Study of Electoral Behavior."

Erikson: Chapter 4

September 23 & 25

Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." 88: 63-76.*

Popkin, S. . 2nd ed. (1994), Prologue (p. 1-6) and Ch. 4 (p. 72-81, 91-95)

Krosnick, Jon. 1990. "Government Policy and Citizen Passion." (12)1 p. 59 – 92.

Page, Benjamin. And Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. "The Rational Public." Chapters 1, 2, 8, & 9**

September 28

Erikson: Chapter 5

September 30 & October 2

Zaller, John. 1992. . pp. 6-52.

Fiorina, Morris. . Chapters 1, 2, and 9

Mutz, Diana. 2006. Chapters 1 – 3. **

October 5 & 7

Newcomb, Theodore M. 1958. "Attitude Development as a Function of Reference Groups: The Bennington Study." In , ed. Eleanor E.

Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Hane L. Ha440 1 144.5(comb,)-2(a)0520 a Hor2

October 9

Catch up & Review

October 12

Midterm

October 14 & 16

Erikson: Chapter 7: p. 190 – 199

"What's the Matter with Kansas?" ~ (Watch Documentary in Class)

October 19: Fall Break

October 21 & October 23

Nelson, Thomas E. and Donald Kinder. 1996. "Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion." 58(4): 1055-78.

