

POLS 321: Public Opinion

Spring 2018

Tuesday/Thursday 4:00–5:15 p.m.

307 Ford Hall

Professor: Adam Enders

Office: 105 Ford Hall

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00–2:30 p.m. (or by appointment)

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Course Description

More than a mere summary of peoples' attitudes about a given political issue or actor, public opinion is a powerful force in American mass politics that works to both express the preferences of ordinary individuals and constrain the actions of political elites. In this course, students will learn about the basic elements of public opinion, from partisan and ideological attachments to racial attitudes, polarization and media effects. We will consider how public opinion is measured, the psychological principles that guide the formation of public opinion, and the consequences of particular attitudes and beliefs for interpersonal interactions, the interpretation of new information and events, and individual orientations toward the government and political elites.

Upon completion of this course, students will have a better understanding of how people psychologically interact with politics, and where individual attitudes come from. Students will also develop communication skills – both oral and written – throughout the course of the semester, further preparing them for life after college. Finally, through the interaction with scholarly work and individual development of a research paper, students will leave this course better connoisseurs of information and analytical thinkers.

Course Materials

We will primarily be using the textbook listed below. This is the only text that students are required to have regular access to.

American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content and Impact. Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. 2015. Routledge. ISBN: 0133862674.

Note that some weeks the textbook information will be supplemented by additional journal articles or book chapters. All of this supplementary is available via the course Blackboard page.

Course Requirements

Participation: Since the class is a relatively small one, regular participation will be important in ensuring lively and productive meetings. Students are expected to regularly contribute to class discussions, in-class simulations and exercises, and attend class. While attendance will not be formally recorded, systematic absences and lack of participation will be obvious in such a small class, and those absences will be reflected in the participation component of the student's final grade.

Data Presentation: Each class period (after the first couple weeks), one student will present some actual public opinion data that corresponds with the broad topic being discussed that week. Presentations should be relatively short, and focus on connecting course material to real world public opinions. More details will be provided in class.

Exercises and Quizzes: Quizzes designed to test students' comprehension of the material assigned for that class meeting will occasionally be administered at the very beginning of class. Quizzes will not be announced prior to class, and absent students or those arriving to class late will not be allowed to make them up. Students will also frequently engage in group activities in class. There will be many opportunities to engage with fellow classmates and earn points.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will be an in-class exam consisting of short answer and essay questions.

Final Paper: Students will employ their substantive knowledge about the various elements of public opinion to research a topic of their interest. The paper will be 8-10 pages long, and students will develop the paper in stages. More details will be presented as the semester progresses.

Additional Information and Expectations

Respect in the Classroom: Because of the nature of partisanship and the values that underwrite it, tensions can sometimes be created throughout the course of class discussions. Students must be particularly mindful of their own political predispositions and respectful of the fact that others may not share their views so that class meetings can be as productive as possible. Students should also note that the professor will do his best to present material objectively and respectfully. If students have any concerns regarding this general policy, or feel that they are not being respected in the classroom, they are strongly encouraged to contact the professor directly.

Grades

Distribution

Participation	10%
Data Presentation	10%
Exercises & Quizzes	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Paper	30%

Scale

94-100 = A	75-78 = C+
90-93 = A-	71-74 = C
86-89 = B+	68-70 = C-
82-85 = B	60-67 = D
79-81 = B-	60 and below = F

Class Schedule

All of the following reading assignments are to be completed *before* attending class on the associated date/week. The material not included in the main text (journal articles and book chapters) are available for download on the course Blackboard page.

Week 1 (Jan 9 & 11): Introductory Material

Go over syllabus

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 1

Part I: What is Public Opinion and How is it Measured?

Week 2 (Jan 16 & 19): Democratic Theory & Effects of Public Opinion

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 6

Glynn et al., Chp. 4 (Blackboard)

Page, Benjamin I. Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013 “Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans.” *Perspectives on Politics* 11(1): 51-73.

Week 3 (Jan 23 & 25): Measuring Public Opinion

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 2

Glynn et al., Chp. 3 (Blackboard)

Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 579-616.

Part II: Where Does Public Opinion Come From?

Week 4 (Jan 30 & Feb 1): Political Socialization

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 5

Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1968. "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." *American Political Science Review* 62(1): 169-184.

Erikson, Robert S., and Laura Stoker. 2011. "Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes." *American Political Science Review* 105(2): 221-237.

Week 5 (Feb 6 & 8): Ideological Sources of Public Opinion

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 3, pp. 70-80

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter. New York, NY: Free Press, pp. 206-219.

No class on Thursday, February 8

Week 6 (Feb 13 & 15): Political Knowledge, Heuristics, and Low-Information

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 3, pp. 55-69

Delli-Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. "What Americans Know About Politics." This is a chapter in their book *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

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

Week 7 (Feb 20 & 22): Partisanship and Group Cues

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 3, pp. 81-88

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. "The Impact of Party Identification." *The American Voter*. University Of Chicago Press.

Enders, Adam M. and Steven M. Smallpage. 2018. "On the Measurement of Conspiracy Beliefs." *Research and Politics*.

- Sides, John. 2016. “Democrats are gay, Republicans are rich: Our stereotypes of political parties are amazingly wrong.” *The Washington Post*/Monkey Cage.

Week 8 (Feb 27 & Mar 1): Cognitive Dissonance & Motivated Reasoning

Glynn et al., Chp. 5 (Blackboard)

Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2010. “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions.” *Political Behavior* 32: 303-330.

Leeper, Thomas J. and Rune Slothuus. 2014. “Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Public Opinion Formation.” *Advances in Political Psychology* 35(S1): 129-156.

Final Paper Proposal due Tuesday, February 27

Week 9 (Mar 6 & 8): Catch Up and Midterm

Midterm Exam: Thursday, March 8

Week 10 (Mar 13 & 15): Spring Break!

No class

Week 11 (Mar 20 & 22): Media and Framing Effects

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 8

Jacoby, William G. 2000. “Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 750-767.

Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance.” *American Political Science Review* 91(3): 567-583.

Week 12 (Mar 27 & 29): Race and Racial Attitudes

Erikson & Tedin, Chp. 7, pp. 193-198

Tesler, Michael. 2012. “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Race and Racial Attitudes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3): 690-704.

Enders, Adam M. and Jamil Scott. Forthcoming. “The Increasing Racialization of American Electoral Politics, 1988-2016.” *American Politics Research*.

Week 13 (Apr 3 & 5): Personality

Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, and Conor M. Dowling. 2011. "Personality and Political Attitudes: Relationships Across Issue Domains and Political Contexts." *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 111-133.

No class on Thursday, April 5

Part III: Modern Contours of Public Opinion

Week 14 (Apr 10 & 12): Genopolitics and Emotion

Alford, John R., Carolyn R. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review* 99(2): 153-167.

Armaly, Miles A., and Adam M. Enders. "Fight or Flight? The Role of Disgust in Exacerbating Social Polarization."

Final Paper Draft due Thursday, April 12

Week 15 (Apr 17 & 19): Conspiracy Theories, Misinformation, and Distrust

Enders, Adam M., Steven M. Smallpage, Robert N. Lupton, and Christopher Hare. "Healthy American Skepticism?: The Role of Political Suspicion in American Mass Politics."

Flynn, D.J., Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2017. "The Nature and Origins of Misperceptions: Understanding False and Unsupported Beliefs about Politics." *Advances in Political Psychology* 38(S1): 127-150.

Final Paper due Thursday, April 26 @ 5:00 p.m.

Course Policies

Title IX/Clery Act Notification: Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain **confidential** support from the PEACC Program (852-2663), Counseling Center (852-6585), and Campus Health Services (852-6479). To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact the Dean of Students (852-5787) or University of Louisville Police (852-6111).

Disclosure to **University faculty or instructors** of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is **not confidential** under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

For more information, see the **Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide**.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty is prohibited at the University of Louisville. It is a serious offense because it diminishes the quality of scholarship, makes accurate evaluation of student progress impossible, and defrauds those in society who must ultimately depend upon the knowledge and integrity of the institution and its students and faculty. For more information, see the **Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities**.

Disabilities Accommodation: The University of Louisville is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodation to participate and complete requirements for this class, notify me immediately and contact the Disability Resource Center (Stevenson Hall, 502-852-6938) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations. For more information, visit the **Disability Resource Center**.

Religious Observation Policy: Federal law and university policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious belief. It is the policy of the University of Louisville to accommodate students, faculty, and staff who observe religious work-restricted holy days. Students who need to alter a quiz/exam deadline due to religious observations must, however, bring the matter to the attention of the instructor during the first week of the semester.

Final Caveat: While this course has been devised carefully, the instructor does reserve the right to amend the assignments or schedule as presented above.