

Fall 2015

POLI 4621

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Political Science 4621-001
Public Opinion

Dr. Edward Chervenak

Fall 2015

Office: 234 Milneburg Hall

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Course Objectives

Public opinion is an essential component in many theories of representative democracy. This course is designed to introduce the student to the contemporary study of public opinion. Though potential topics for this course are vast, we will concentrate our attention on five main areas; (1) What is public opinion? (2) How do we measure public opinion? (3) What are the forces affecting the formation and expression of public opinion? (4) What is the distribution of opinion on major issues and towards government? (5) What are the consequences of public opinion in modern politics? Do political leaders pay any attention to, or do they manipulate, "the will of the public?"

These are fascinating questions, and in this course we will attempt to answer them using the results of scientific studies of attitudes in the fields of political science, sociology, media studies, and cognitive psychology. Students will develop an understanding of the practical and theoretical nature of public opinion through several workshops, participation in a gubernatorial election survey, and two examinations.

Learning Objectives: This course will enable students to:

1. Identify the scope of attitudes and behaviors measured in public opinion polls.
2. Identify and evaluate the relative influence of various demographics on opinion.
3. Identify and evaluate the various research designs and methods for studying public opinion.
4. Recognize the impact of public opinion on political leaders.

Course Requirements and Policy

University policy is that class attendance is required. If you cannot attend class for some reason, call the instructor or the departmental secretary and explain why. You must sign an attendance sign-in sheet passed around at the start of class. If you do not sign the sheet you are considered absent. Absences are excused only when you can provide written documentation from a legitimate source.

All students are responsible for having the readings completed in advance of the material being covered in class. Since the readings lend themselves to considerable debate and discussion, it is my expectation that you will be prepared to participate in class discussions. The assigned readings, while interesting and provocative, are not to be considered as absolute truth. Students should read the material thoughtfully, challenge the ideas of the authors, and voice observations in class. In other words, they should feel free to raise questions concerning the readings, the instructor's discussion, and the comments of other students. Meaningful participation is strongly encouraged and enhances the quality of class sessions.

Participation

Participation means active and purposeful engagement with the topic at hand. Your participation grade will be based on voicing your opinions, contributing your observations, comments, or thoughts and asking questions.

Examinations

There will be a mid-term exam, which covers the material in the first half of the course, and a final exam, which will test the material learned in the second half of the semester.

Gubernatorial Election Survey

UNO's Survey Research Center will be conducting a survey this semester for the Louisiana Governor's election. The survey will be conducted from November 2nd through November 13th. Students taking this course will be required to be telephone interviewers for the poll. Each student will be required to do 3 sessions of interviewing. Each session is 3 hours long. We will conduct two training sessions during class time. Participation in the poll is worth 20 percent of your grade.

IMPORTANT: You must complete all 3 sessions to receive credit. Please be aware that there is no partial credit. It's an all or nothing proposition.

Phone interviews will be scheduled on weeknights, including Friday; from 6 pm to 9 pm. Sessions on Saturdays will be held from 1 pm to 4 pm and on Sundays there will be two sessions from 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm and from 6 pm to 9 pm.

Workshops

There will be a series of workshops throughout the semester. Two of the workshops are in-class sessions. For the classroom workshops, we will divide into small groups, complete the exercise, and hand it in at the end of the class period. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS!!** If you miss a workshop, you cannot make it up except in extreme circumstances with written documentation. You will be graded as a group for class workshops. We will also have workshops in the computer lab where we will examine public opinion by analyzing data from the National Election Study (NES) and the Quality of Life (QOL). These workshops are in MH 317 where each individual will complete and submit his or her own work on the assigned date. (However, that does not mean that you cannot work together on the project.)

Grade Scale

Midterm Exam	30 percent of grade
Final Exam	30 percent of grade
Survey Participation	20 percent of grade
Participation	10 percent of grade
Workshops	10 percent of grade

Extra credit work will not be available in this class, so please don't ask.

All make-up exams are a single question essay – no exceptions!!

The instructor reserves the right to amend the assignment schedule at his discretion.

Moodle

Students must have Internet access to the Moodle for this course. Students are responsible for regularly accessing Moodle for announcements and are also responsible for all e-mail communications from the instructor.

Many materials, including the syllabus and the workshop assignments, are on the Internet, via Moodle (via UNO home page (www.uno.edu)). The documents are in Microsoft Word and can be printed in any lab on campus or at home. The course schedule is also on Moodle, but may be changed as the semester progresses. It is your responsibility to regularly access the site. Also, workshop assignments are on Moodle, so be prepared on workshop days with your printed workshop assignment. Any study guides for the midterm and the final will also be posted on Moodle.

It is recommended that students regularly access web sites devoted to the study of public opinion. You can find a list of sites in Moodle. Various sites, such as the Gallup Poll web page (www.gallup.com) or the Pew Research Center (<http://people-press.org/>) will be useful to you. You are welcome to bring to class any subjects of interest from these sites so that we may discuss that material in a roundtable forum. Students are also expected to bring to class the assigned text for that day. This will help facilitate class discussions and forums.

Classroom Accommodations

Students who qualify for services will receive the academic modifications for which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of the student to register with the Office of Disability Services (UC 248) each semester and follow their procedures for obtaining assistance.

Classroom Conduct

1. Be in class on time. There is no excuse for repeatedly arriving late. Parking is a hassle; allow enough time for it. Also, cell phones should be turned off before class. Anyone texting during class will be asked to leave and you will be counted as absent.
2. Feel free to ask questions of instructor during class. But please do not ask other students, as talking disturbs everyone one in the class.
3. Students are expected to treat faculty and fellow students with respect. Any actions that purposely and maliciously distract the class from the work at hand will not be tolerated.
4. Civility in the classroom and respect for opinions of others is very important in an academic setting. It is my hope that our discussions will be civil. Although you may not agree with everything that is said or discussed in the classroom, courteous behavior and civil discourse is expected.

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the UNO Academic Dishonesty Policy for further information. The policy is available online at: <http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/documents/academic-dishonesty-policy-rev2014.pdf>

Important Dates

Last day to adjust schedule w/out fee	08/18/2015
Semester Classes Begin	08/19/2015
Last day to adjust schedule w/fee, or withdraw with 100% refund	08/25/2015
Last day to apply for December commencement	09/25/2015
Final day to drop a course or resign	10/14/2015
Mid-semester examinations	10/05-10/09/2015
Final examinations	12/07-12/11/2015
Commencement	12/18/2015

Fall Semester Holidays

Labor Day	09/07/2015
Mid-semester break	10/15-10/16/2015
Thanksgiving	11/26-11/27/2015
Labor Day	09/07/2015

Withdrawal Policy – Undergraduate only

Students are responsible for initiating action to resign from the University (withdraw from all courses) or from a course on or before dates indicated in the current Important dates calendar. Students who fail to resign by the published final date for such action will be retained on the class rolls even though they may be absent for the remainder of the semester and be graded as if they were in attendance. Failure to attend classes does not constitute a resignation. Check the dates on the Registrar's website, <http://www.registrar.uno.edu>. Please consult The Bulletin for charges associated with dropping and adding courses.

Incomplete Policy – Undergraduate only

The grade of I means incomplete and is given for work of passing quality but which, because of circumstances beyond the student's control, is not complete. The issuance of the grade of I is at the discretion of the faculty member teaching the course. For all graduate and undergraduate students, a grade of I becomes a grade of F if it is not converted before the deadline for adding courses for credit (as printed in the Important Dates Calendar) of the next regular semester including summer semester.

Repeat Policy

When a student is permitted to repeat a course for credit, the last grade earned shall be the one which determines course acceptability for degree credit. A student who has earned a C or better in a course may not repeat that course unless, (1) the catalog description indicates that the course may be repeated for credit, or (2) the student's Dean gives prior approval for documented extenuating circumstances.

Safety Awareness Facts and Education

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here:

<http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/>

UNO Counseling Services and UNO Cares

UNO offers care and support for students in any type of distress. Counseling Services assist students in addressing mental health concerns through assessment, short-term counseling, and career testing and counseling. Find out more at <http://www.uno.edu/counseling-services/>. First-year students often have unique concerns, and UNO Cares is designed to address those students succeed. Contact UNO Cares through <http://www.uno.edu/fye/uno-cares.aspx>.

Emergency Procedures

Sign up for emergency notifications via text and/or email at E2Campus Notification: <http://www.uno.edu/ehso/emergency-communications/index.aspx>. All emergency and safety procedures are explained at the Emergency Health and Safety Office: <http://www.uno.edu/ehso/>.

Diversity at UNO

As the most diverse public university in the state, UNO maintains a Diversity Affairs division to support the university's efforts towards creating an environment of healthy respect, tolerance, and appreciation for the people from all walks of life, and the expression of intellectual point of view and personal lifestyle. The Office of Diversity Affairs promotes these values through a wide range of programming and activities. <http://diversity.uno.edu/index.cfm>

Learning and Support Services

Help is within reach in the form of learning support services, including tutoring in writing and math and other supplemental instruction. Visit the Learning Resource Center in LA 334, or learn more at <http://www.uno.edu/lrc/>.

Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity

UNO is an equal opportunity employer. The Human Resource Management department has more information on UNO's compliance with federal and state regulations regarding EEOC in its Policies and Resources website: <http://www.uno.edu/human-resource-management/policies.aspx>

Required Texts

Asher, Herbert. 2012. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know* 8th ed., (CQ Press: Washington DC). ISBN 978-1-60426-606-1

Supplemental Readings Posted in Moodle

Glynn, Carroll J., Susan Herbst, Garrett J. O'Keefe, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Mark Lindeman. 2004. *Public Opinion* 2nd ed., (Westview Press, Boulder), pp. 16-33; 35-71; 73-115; 119-165; 167-209; 211-249.

Erickson, Robert S., and Kent L. Tedin. 2011. *American Public Opinion* 8th ed., (Longman, New York), pp. 40-46; 57-66; 66-72; 72-91; 125-160; 161-189; 226-258.

Clawson, Rosalee, and Zoe M. Oxley. 2013. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice* 2nd ed., (Sage: Los Angeles), Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

Assignment Schedule

August	20	Introduction	
August	25	Polling and the Public	Asher: Chapter 1
August	27	Meanings of Public Opinion	Glynn: pp. 16-33.
September	1	History of Public Opinion Research	Glynn: pp. 35-71;
September	3	Methods for Studying Public Opinion	Asher: Chapter 4
September	8		Glynn: pp. 73-115.
September	10	Question Wording	Asher: Chapter 3 Erikson and Tedin: pp. 40-46
September	15	Workshop #1 – Question Wording	
September	17	Interviewing and Data Collection	Asher: Chapter 5
September	22	Media and Polls	Asher: Chapter 6
September	24	Polls and Elections	Asher: Chapter 7
September	29	Workshop #2 – Analyzing Polls	Asher: Chapter 8
October	1	Psychological Perspective	Glynn: pp. 119-165.
October	6	MIDSEMESTER EXAM	
October	8	Psychology of Opinion Holding	Erikson and Tedin: pp. 57-66; 72-91.
October	13	Sociological Perspective	Glynn: pp. 167-209.
October	15	MIDSEMESTER BREAK	
October	20	Political Socialization and Political Learning	Erikson and Tedin: pp. 125-160.
October	22	Perception and Opinion Formation	Glynn: pp. 211-249.
October	27	INTERVIEWER TRAINING	
October	29	INTERVIEWER TRAINING	
November	3	Non-attitudes	Asher: Chapter 2
November	5		Erickson and Tedin: pp. 66-72.
November	10	Workshop #3 – Group Differences in Political Opinions (Computer Lab)	
November	12	Media and Political Opinions	Erikson and Tedin: pp. 226-258.
November	17	Polling and Democracy	Asher: Chapter 9 Erikson and Tedin: pp. 161-189.
November	19	Knowledge, Interest, and Attention to Politics	Clawson and Oxley: Chapter 8
November	24	Support for Civil Liberties	Clawson and Oxley: Chapter 9
November	26	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS	
December	1	Support for Civil Rights	Clawson and Oxley: Chapter 10
December	3	Workshop #4 – Democratic Stability (Computer Lab)	
December	10	FINAL EXAMINATION	@ 10 am to 12 noon