

Political Science 4160: Public Opinion

Professor Thomas E. Nelson
2044 Derby Hall
292-6408; nelson.179@osu.edu

Fall Semester, 2014
Tuesday, Thursday, 3:55 – 5:15 pm
0436 Bolz Hall

Course Description

What is public opinion? Where does it come from? How does it change? What does it matter? These are fascinating questions, and in this course we will attempt to answer them using the results of scientific studies and our own insights. We will explore the landscape of opinion on a variety of political topics. We will attempt to find out what the public thinks about these issues, and more importantly, why they think the way they do. Our analysis will draw extensively from scientific studies of attitudes in the fields of political science and social psychology. We will also attempt to understand how political attitudes change. Finally, we will explore the political ramifications of public opinion. We will try to find out how a person's political opinions influence their behavior, and whether or not political leaders pay any attention to, or manipulate, "the will of the public."

Course Requirements and Grading

There will be three examinations: two during class, and a final at the scheduled examination period. Each examination will focus on the lectures and readings.

You will also write a 4-6 page paper, due at the end of the semester. You will turn in a draft of that paper, and I will provide feedback. The format of the paper and exams will be discussed in class.

Finally, on most weeks there will be a quiz covering the readings assigned for that week. These quizzes will be posted online on Tuesday, and you will have until Friday to complete them. You may drop your lowest quiz grade.

The breakdown of the grading is as follows:

Quizzes	10%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Final Exam	25%
Paper	25%
Total	100.00%

There will be an optional, anonymous, online survey during the second week of class. Please consider participating in this survey, as we will discuss the results in class.

Extra Credit

Students in this class have an opportunity to earn extra credit by participating in research studies conducted by faculty and graduate students in the Department of Political Science. More information will be announced in class, and is available on the class web site.

Course Website

A course website is available through the Carmen system. I will post lecture outlines, assignments, and readings from the *New York Times* and other sources on the website.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Time will be set aside every week for class discussion. An important part of participating in the class is showing respect to your classmates and your professor. Disagreement is fine, and is expected, but should always be respectful. Likewise, I expect students to refrain from statements or actions that disrupt the flow of the class. I consider the following to be highly disruptive: using cell phones in class, sleeping in class, arriving late, and leaving early. I will warn those whose behavior I find especially disruptive, and then deduct points from final grades as necessary.

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Readings

Three books are required for purchase: *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice, 2nd Edition* by Clawson and Oxley; *Influence: Science and Practice, 5th Edition*, by Cialdini; and *A River Lost*, by Harden. All are available at the OSU bookstore. Additional articles are available from the course website on the Carmen system or via URL.

Aug. 28	Course introduction
Sep. 2, 4	The scope and methods of public opinion research <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapter 1
Online Survey	“The Coming Democratic Schism.” <i>New York Times</i> .

Sep. 9, 11 Quiz	Research methods in public opinion <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapter 7 Philip H. Pollock III, "Issues, Values, and Critical Moments: Did 'Magic' Johnson Transform Public Opinion on AIDS?"
Sep. 16, 18 Quiz	Sources of opinion: The psychology of attitudes <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapter 4 <i>Influence</i> , chapter 1 "Basic Religion Test Stumps Many Americans." <i>New York Times</i>
Sep. 23, 25 Quiz	Political knowledge and ideology <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapters 5, 8 "In Senate Health Care Vote, New Partisan Vitriol." <i>New York Times</i>
Sep. 30, Oct. 2 Exam	Rational actor theory <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapter 6
Oct. 7, 9 Quiz	Culture and values <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapter 2 "In Topeka, The Price of Free Speech." <i>New York Times</i>
Oct. 14, 16 Quiz	Values, continued <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapter 9 "Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology." http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/the-political-typology-beyond-red-vs-blue/
Oct 21, 23 Quiz	Political Influence <i>Influence</i> , chapters 2-5 "States Seek Limits on 'Robocalls' in Campaigns." <i>New York Times</i>
Oct. 28, 30 Exam	Political Influence <i>Influence</i> , chapters 6-8 "G.O.P. Maps Out Waves of Attacks Over Health Law." <i>New York Times</i>
Nov. 4, 6 Quiz	Mass media <i>Public Opinion</i> , 3 "The Water Cooler Runs Dry." <i>New York Times</i>
Nov. 13	Mass media <i>Public Opinion</i> , chapter 10 "Cable Wars Are Killing Objectivity." <i>New York Times</i>

Nov. 18, 20 Quiz	Environmental Politics <i>A River Lost</i> , chapters 1-5 “Clouds’ Effect on Climate Change Is Last Bastion for Dissenters” <i>New York Times</i>
Nov. 25	Environmental Politics <i>A River Lost</i> , chapters 6-11 “GOP Deeply Divided Over Climate Change.” http://www.people-press.org/2013/11/01/gop-deeply-divided-over-climate-change/
Dec. 2, 4 Paper Draft	Democracy <i>Public Opinion</i> , Chapters 11, 12
Dec. 9	Wrap-up
Final Examination: Friday, December 12, 6 pm Final Paper Due Monday, December 15th	