

PUBLIC OPINION & COMMUNICATION COMMUNICATION 4820 SP 2015

Updated: 01/12/2015 (please note that syllabus details can change, students should check Carmen and their emails for any syllabus updates, including changes to readings or assessments).

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Office Hours: Monday 3:00pm to 5:00pm & Thursday 9:15am to 11:15am

Class: Page Hall 020
Monday, Wednesday & Friday 1:50pm to 2:45pm
3 credits

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will be studying the history, nature and methodology of public opinion. In studying the nature of public opinion we will be looking at how opinions are formulated and affected. These can be split into three major categories: the formation of public opinion via media effects, the formation of opinion via social influence (such as social groups), and formation of opinions via psychology (internal cognitive processes).

In studying the methodology of public opinion we will be looking at how public opinion is measured. This is typically done by surveys and polls, however other methods (particularly deliberative polls) can be used. We will be assessing methodologies used to measure public opinion, and the pitfalls and errors that can occur when trying to measure opinion.

Also of importance to the measurement of public opinion are considerations of democratic competence, in other words how Governments pay attention to public opinion, and how informed citizens need to be for democracy to function successfully.

Course Goals

- Students will understand the role of public opinion in democratic society.
- Students will be familiar with competing theories related to democratic competence
- Students will be aware of methodologies used to measure public opinions and the various issues that create errors of measurements.
- Students will be aware of possible media effects on public opinion.
- Students will be aware of possible social influences on public opinion.
- Students will understand the psychological processes in the formation of public opinion and ideology.

REQUIREMENTS

Class Attendance

Students should attend all class sessions in order to get the most from the course. Classes will take place in a lecture and discussion format. Participation in class is encouraged, and at times there will be some in class activities to help further understanding of the content. Evidence clearly shows that students who come to class regularly and engage in discussion learn more and generally do better in the class.

Whilst attendance for this class will not be taken, there will be relevant course content only covered in the class, as well as advice and guidance given on the various assessments. Therefore those who do not attend the lectures may be at a distinct disadvantage. It is also recommended to students that they inform the instructor of any absences in case there was especially pertinent information missed in the class that the student may have missed. Attendance is required for assessment dates (ie the poster presentation and exams).

Readings

There is one required textbook for this course.

Berinsky, Adam J. (2012). *New directions in public opinion*. New York: Routledge.

Other readings will be available as PDF via Carmen. Most classes are assigned a reading, and you can see which reading to read at the end of this syllabus. You are expected to read the assigned reading for each class in advance to gain the most from the course.

Carmen

Carmen will be used a great deal for this course. Homework, the essay material, poster task (see assessment section), grades and some readings will all be hosted on Carmen. Carmen will also be used for class announcements and updates to classes and the syllabus. Carmen can be accessed at:

<http://carmen.osu.edu>

ASSESSMENT

Grades

The OSU “standard scheme” of points graded as implemented by Carmen is used and grades will be kept on Carmen’s gradebook. Here is the OSU “standard scheme”:

A: 93-100

B-: 80-82.99

A-: 90-92.99

C+: 77-79.99

B+: 87:-89.99

C: 73-76.99

B: 83-86.99

C-: 70-72.99

D+: 67-69.99
D: 60-66.99

E: 0-59.99

Your grade will be made up of the following components

Homeworks: 15% (3% each, best 5 scores taken from 7)
Group Poster Presentation: 20%
Essay: 20%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Final Exam: 25%

There is no extra credit opportunity. Early or late exams will only be allowed under situations of illness, family emergency, significant family events (eg weddings, funerals), or other extenuating circumstances. Evidence, such as doctor's notes, may be requested, and unless it is not possible, students should inform the instructor ahead of the exam date/essay or homework deadline. Permission to retake or reschedule essays or exams will be at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Homework Assignments (15% in total)

There will be seven homework assignments set throughout the course. Your best five scores from the seven homeworks will be taken. Each homework is worth 3%, leading to a possible 15% in total.

Homeworks will be completed on Carmen. They will be posted on a Friday immediately after class on the dates listed at the end of the syllabus. The homeworks are due by 2pm the following Wednesday. Homeworks will mostly be in the form of short quizzes or simple tasks based on class content for that week.

Group Poster Project (20% in total)

After week two, via Carmen, you will be able to sign up to a group for the poster project. Each group will consist of four people, and will create a poster based on a particular topic. These posters should display relevant information on a theory or area of study. These posters will then be presented on the date mentioned in the syllabus.

Posters will be displayed to the instructor and other academics from the department. You will be assessed as a group both on the posters and how you respond to questions by the instructor and other academics. Further information on the poster project is available on Carmen.

The poster presentation session will take place in Journalism 106.

Essay (20% in total)

Students will be required to hand in an essay related to methodology. The essay will ask you to critically evaluate public opinion methods, and understand the findings of a public opinion

survey. Students will be expected to display an understanding of why methods are used, the limitations of the methods, and to suggest alternatives.

Essays will be between 800-1000 words each. Students are expected to use references as part of the essay. The essay will be posted after the midterm.

Late essays will be accepted, however penalties will apply.

- Essays received on Saturday 11th or Sunday 12th April can receive a maximum mark of 80%
- Essays received on Monday 13th April can receive a maximum of 70%
- Essays received on Tuesday 14th April or later will receive a grade of 0.

Midterm Exam (20% in total)

The midterm exam will consist mostly of short answer questions (there may be some multiple choice or single word answer questions. This will be confirmed nearer the time.) The exam will last for forty-five minutes. The exam will take place during class time in the same room.

Final Exam (25% in total)

The final exam will last for ninety minutes. The exam will consist of short and long answer questions (there may be some multiple choice or single word answer questions. This will be confirmed nearer the time).

The exam date is on the 5/5/2015. The exam will take place in the classroom (Page Hall 020) at 4pm.

POLICIES

Academic Misconduct

All students at the Ohio State University are bound by the Code of Student Conduct (see http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp). Suspected violations of the code in this class, especially pertaining to 3335-23-04 Section 1 on Academic Misconduct, will be taken through the procedures which the university has set up to deal with violations of the code.

The university's Code of Student Conduct defines academic misconduct as "any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." While many people associate academic misconduct with "cheating," the term encompasses a wider scope of student behaviors which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Violation of course rules;
- Violation of program regulations;
- Knowingly providing or receiving information during a course exam or program assignment;

- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during a course exam or program assignment;
- Knowingly providing or using assistance in the laboratory, on field work, or on a course assignment, unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor or, where appropriate, a project/research supervisor;
- Submission of work not performed in a course: This includes (but is not limited to) instances where a student fabricates and/or falsifies data or information for a laboratory experiment (i.e., a "dry lab") or other academic assignment. It also includes instances where a student submits data or information (such as a lab report or term paper) from one course to satisfy the requirements of another course, unless submission of such work is permitted by the instructor of the course or supervisor of the research for which the work is being submitted;
- Submitting plagiarized work for a course/program assignment;
- Falsification, fabrication, or dishonesty in conducting or reporting laboratory (research) results; Serving as or asking another student to serve as a substitute (a "ringer") while taking an exam; Alteration of grades in an effort to change earned credit or a grade;
- Alteration and/or unauthorized use of university forms or records.

Discussing Public Opinion in Class

Class participation is expected, and students are encouraged to join in the discussion, and come up with ideas and questions as part of the class. However, students should also acknowledge that when discussing public opinion, topics can move to major public issues where individuals can have strong views and there may be sensitive topics. Students should at all times respect each other's viewpoints, and be mindful to others' perspectives.

Students with disabilities

This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and seeking assistance in a timely manner. Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs, or contact the office for disability services at 292---3307 in Room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate your documented disabilities.

Technology in the Classroom

Students are permitted to bring laptop computers, iPads, Kindles or other technology that will assist with their learning. Students are permitted to use technology to look at relevant course materials (eg readings) or to take notes. Students are not permitted to use technology to check email, browse the web or for other recreational use whilst in the classroom. If a student, or students continue to misuse technology in the classroom, the instructor maintains the right to prohibit specific students or all students from using technologies in the classroom.

Use of Email and Carmen for Class Announcements

You are responsible for all information sent to you via your OSU email account and/or posted on the Carmen website. It is important for you to check your OSU email account regularly and to clear out unnecessary material so that new messages can get through. Check your spam settings to be certain that class emails from us are getting through to your mailbox. Check Carmen regularly for any updates or announcements posted there.

Attendance while having flu and other flu-like illnesses

You should *not* attend class while ill with influenza. Students with flu-like symptoms will be asked to leave class. The illness and self-isolation period will usually be about a week. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the flu to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful quarter despite a flu-induced absence. If you are absent due to the flu, you will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. Completion of all assignments and exams assures the greatest chance for students to develop heightened understanding and content mastery. The opportunity to complete all assignments and exams supports the university's desire to enable students to make responsible situational decisions, including the decision to avoid spreading contagious virus to other students, staff, and faculty, without endangering their academic work. Students with the flu do not need to provide a physician's certification of illness. However, ill students should inform their teachers (but not through personal contact in which there is a risk of exposing others to the virus) as soon as possible that they are absent because of the flu.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Class No.	Date	Broad Topic	Subject	Reading	Assessment Due
1	1	1/12/2015	Introduction	Syllabus Overview	Syllabus and Berinsky, Introduction	
1	2	1/14/2015		History and Definitions of Public Opinion	Berinsky Ch1 (p19-24)	
1	3	1/16/2015		The History and Role of the Public	Mills (1957) (p298-310) [Carmen]	
2		OSU CLOSED				
2	4	1/21/2015	Media	Public Opinion in the Media Age	Berinsky ch1 (p24-27)	Homework 1
2	5	1/23/2015		Agenda Setting & Priming	Benoit & Holbert (2010) (p439-442) [Carmen]	Homework 2
3	6	1/26/2015		Issue Attention Cycle	Downs (1972) [Carmen]	
3	7	1/28/2015		Framing	Benoit & Holbert (2010) (p442-443) [Carmen] Cobb (2005) (p222-227 & p233-235) [Carmen]	
3	8	1/30/2015		Media & Democratic Competence	Strömbäck (2005) [Carmen]	Homework 3
4	9	2/2/2015		Public Opinion & Social Media	Berinsky ch1 (p28-31)	
4	10	2/4/2015			Using Academic Sources	
4	11		Ideology	Introduction to Ideology	Berinsky ch4 (p79-88)	Homework 4
5	12	2/9/2015		Symbolic vs Operational Ideology	Political compass [Carmen]	
5	13	2/11/2015		Using Ideology	Berinsky ch4 (p88-100)	

Week	Class No.	Date	Broad Topic	Subject	Reading	Assessment Due
5	14	2/13/2015		Ideology & Emotion	Berinsky ch 9 (p194-205)	
6	15	2/16/2015		Ideology & Personality	Berinsky ch 10 (p217-221 & p227-235)	
6	16	2/18/2015		Political Polarization	Berinsky ch 5 (p108-118)	
6	17	2/20/2015		Knowledge Gap	American Progress (2014) [Carmen]	
7	18	2/23/2015		Poster Presentations (in J106)		Poster Presentation
7	19	2/25/2015		Digital Divide	Goodman (2013) [Carmen] and Norris (2001) (p12-25) [Carmen]	
7	20	2/27/2015		Spiral of Silence	Scheufele (2008) [Carmen]	
8	21	3/2/2015	Group Factors & Psychology	Riots	Wilkinson (2009) [Carmen]	
8	22	3/4/2015		Gender	Berinsky ch 7 (p139-140 & p157-160)	Homework 5
8	23	3/6/2015		Race	Berinsky ch 7 (p124-134)	
9	24	3/9/2015		Religion	Berinsky ch 8 (p168-176 & p186-187)	
9	25	3/11/2015		Midterm Review		
9	26	3/13/2015		Midterm Exam		Midterm
10		SPRING BREAK				
11	27	3/23/2015	Methodology	Introduction to Methodology	Berinsky ch 2 (p33-37 & p46-48)	
11	28	3/25/2015		Aggregation	Berinsky ch 3 (p57-64)	
11	29	3/27/2015		Question Problems	Kosicki (p13-17) [Carmen]	
12	30	3/30/2015		Sampling Problems	Berinsky ch 2 (p37-45)	Homework 6

Week	Class No.	Date	Broad Topic	Subject	Reading	Assessment Due
12	31	4/1/2015		Informed Decision Making	Fishkin (2006) [Carmen]	
12	32	4/3/2015		Big Data	Couper (2013) [Carmen]	
13	33	4/6/2015		Alternative Methods	Alternative Methods [Carmen]	
13	34	4/8/2015		Polling	FiveThirtyEight [Carmen]	
13	35	4/10/2015		Problem with Polls: Horse Race Coverage	Nisbet (2008) [Carmen] and Marx (2011) [Carmen]	Essay
14	36	4/13/2015	Public Opinion in Democracy	Democratic Competence	Berinsky ch 3 (p52-55)	
14	37	4/15/2015		Public Opinion & Policy	Berinsky ch 13 (p271-277 & p285-286)	
14	38	4/17/2015	Campaigns	Campaigns Pt 1	Berinsky ch 11 (p241-247)	Homework 7
15	39	4/20/2015		Campaigns Pt 2	Berinsky ch 11 (p248-257)	
15	40	4/22/2015		Campaigns in Context	Birney et al (2006) (p439-448)	
15	41	4/24/2015		Conclusions	Berinsky Conclusion	
16	42	4/27/2015		Q&A		
16		NO CLASS				
17		5/5/2015		Final Exam (4pm)		Exam