POLS 3314-001: Public Opinion

Dr. Joshua Ozymy
Spring 2012
CI 102
3:30-4:45 MW
Office Hours T: 3:20-4:20/ MW 1-2:00, 4:20-5:20

Overview:
This course will focus on the role of public opinion in a democratic political system--its formation, properties and patterns, with special attention to problems of linking public opinion to public policy.

Method of evaluating Student Learning Objectives (SLOs):
The instructor will gauge student learning through formal testing via a comprehensive essay exam. This exam will demonstrate that students can recall and understand the material. Formal testing will be supported through a series of less-formal means including: thoughtful reading of the material by students demonstrated by class participation, instructor-student interaction in class, and group assignments, which will contribute substantially to each student’s final grade. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply these principles by writing a substantial research paper by the conclusion of the course.

Format:
Participation is encouraged and expected. The class will be structured around instructor lecture and class discussion.

Attendance policy:
You should attend every class. Poor attendance will hurt your participation grade considerably.

Student Learning Objectives:
1. Recall basic facts related to American political behavior and partisanship as they apply to political opinion and socialization.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts relating to U.S. public opinion
3. Explain how public opinion polling is constructed and undertaken
4. Explain the connection between public opinion and public policy

Grading:
20% of course grade: Participation- demonstrated by thoughtful class participation
Why is your participation weighted so heavily in the course? Each Monday I will lecture on the appropriate topic noted in the syllabus. The following Wednesday each student will be assigned a research topic will be required to integrate that information into the discussion when prompted as part of their participation grade. Students will be required to submit (at the beginning of class only) a one-page synopsis of the issue and be prepared to discuss in class.
10% of course grade: **Group assignment** students will be assigned to work in groups of three. They will be required to present a comparative analysis on a specific topic lasting no more than 20 minutes, following by a Q&A session. In this presentation the group will create a PowerPoint presentation.

35% of course grade: **Research paper (major writing assignment)**- each student will write a paper analyzing an issue related to public opinion in the United States. This assignment constitutes a serious research paper. It should not be the Wikipedia version of a president's stay in office. I will grade the paper on the following 100 point scale:

50 points for content: The paper should be clearly written, thorough, analytical and representative of a university paper in an upper-division class. It must show both a historical and institutional understanding of the president and the challenges he faced, their strengths and weakness, and their contribution to the office. The paper must be a minimum of 12 pages (minus back matter).

40 points for research and scholarly sourcing: The paper must include a minimum of 12 scholarly sources (i.e. from peer reviewed journals found in the online databases through the TAMUCC library) and use these sources in appropriate ways, such as adding nuance and detail to the paper and backing for claims made throughout-paraphrase Wikipedia material if you must, but do not cite it.

10 points for grammar and style: The paper must use APSA style appropriate for a research paper in political science and be written in a clear and interesting manner (other sources available online as well): [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html)

*The paper will be due in class by Tuesday, November 22. Penalty for lateness is 10 points per day.

35% of course grade: **Comprehensive Exam**- Will include all material covered in the course. Penalty for lateness is 10 points per day.

Letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

- A= 89.50 or above
- B= 79.50 to 89.49
- C= 69.50 to 79.49
- D= 59.5 to 69.49
- F= Below 59.5

Required Texts:
Journal articles and online readings as assigned on first day of course

Segment I: Agenda Setting and Propaganda

Week 1: Introduction
Introduction to the Class
Introductory Lecture- research design and understanding empirical research articles

Weeks 2&3 Opinion-making and Corporate Propaganda
Energy and the environment
Healthcare, big Pharma, and Tobacco

Week 4: Agenda Setting and Government Propaganda
War propaganda
Hot button issues

Segment II: Understanding the Dynamics of Public Opinion

Week 5 Measuring Public Opinion (Lecture)
The Basics of Survey Methodology
Types of surveys
Properly executing a survey

Week 6: Public opinion in democratic societies/chapters 1, 6, and 11

Week 7: Micro vs. macro-level considerations in public opinion/chapters 3 and 4

Week 8: Political socialization and political learning/chapter 5

Week 9: Group differences in political opinions/chapter 7

Week 10: The news media and political opinions/chapter 8

Week 11: Elections as instruments of popular control/chapter 9

Segment III: Constructing Political Discourse

Week 12: Rules of effective language

Week 13: Crafting opinions by creating new meanings for old words; Corporate and political case studies

Week 14: Presentations

Week 15: Presentations

Last day of class: Final Exam Distributed and due on university-approved final exam date

Student Responsibilities:
TURN OFF CELL PHONES!!!
Pay attention during class. Private conversations, sleeping, and reading non-class related material will not be tolerated.
Learn something! Participate in class discussions.

**Students with Disabilities/Religious Needs:**
If you are a student with a disability or have special needs, please let me know during the first week of class. In addition, students observing religious holidays that conflict with class exams/presentations must let me know during the first week of class.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Driftwood 101.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Academic Honesty:**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) If unsure of what honesty entails or if for more information regarding the penalties for academic dishonesty, please refer to the University Catalog.

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Grade Appeal Process**
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the student may take the steps below.

1. Presentation of grievance to instructor. (This step must be taken within fourteen calendar days after the beginning of the next term.)
2. Appeal to department chair or area coordinator.
3. Written appeal to the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.
4. Preliminary review and advising by an ombudsman appointed by the Provost.
5. Submission of file by department chair to the chair of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.
6. Review of file by committee chair and submission of case to committee.
7. Proceedings of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee. (Committee holds hearing, reviews data, presents findings to all parties, and makes recommendation to Provost.)
8. Decision by Provost.
9. Final appeal in writing to the Provost if student or instructor thinks appropriate procedures have not been followed.
For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamu.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.