POLS 3314-001: Public Opinion

Dr. Ozymy
Spring 2014
Class Time: M&W 3:30-4:45 OCNR-118
Office Hours: M&W 1-2:00 and T 3-6:00 in BH 304
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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 and comprehensive final exam 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:
10% of course grade: Participation- demonstrated by thoughtful class participation and attendance.

20% of course grade: Group Presentation and Writing Assignment- students will be assigned to work in groups of three. They will be required to present on a topic of their choosing relevant
to the class material. In this presentation the group will create a PowerPoint presentation and submit a research paper of no less than 10 pages and using at least ten scholarly sources. The grade will be weighted equally across both components of the assignment to include: the quality of work in the written component as well as the thoroughness of the material presented in class, the organization of the presentation, clarity, and poise of the presenters. Suggestions of topic areas might be: a PR campaign to affect public opinion, tracking American public opinion on an issue over time, explaining aspects of mass public opinion, comparing public opinion in cross-nationally, an analysis of corporate or political strategies to affect public opinion.

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. 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. 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) 
Penalty for lateness is 10 point/day.

*Research Paper Advice*

1. This is a research paper and treat it as such. You need SCHOLARLY references for the paper. This means peer-reviewed journal articles, books, etc you find either through the scholarly databases in the elibrary or in a physical library. It is all too easy to grab a bunch on internet-based sources on a topic, paraphrase, and weave the material into a paper. That is not the goal of this assignment; it is to produce well-written paper that includes the added substance and nuance of scholarly sourcing. If you write a good paper, but do not provide any real research, you should not expect to receive a passing grade.

2. Proper citation. The majority of the writing must come from you, not paraphrased material online. You should use information online for context, but cite scholarly sources throughout the paper to verify your statements throughout. DO NOT TAKE MULTIPLE PARAGRAPHS FOR ANY SOURCE together (ESPECIALLY ONLINE) AND AT THE END SIMPLY CITE THE SOURCE; THIS IS PLAGIARISM-INTENTIONAL OR NOT. For example, if a student copies a page-or part of a page from pressrecord.com, copies it into the document and at the end cites (pressrecord.com) as such, this is of little value to me in demonstrating your understanding of the
material and is not a proper way to cite the work of others. Plagiarism, intentional or not in this respect will result in you receiving a zero on the paper. Quoted material is to be used when appropriate (even often), but in proper amounts.

3. How can I tell if an article is SCHOLARLY/PEER-REVIEWED?

If the article is published in an academic journal or by an academic press, it is likely a scholarly source. There is also a good chance that it is peer reviewed, which basically means the article went through a blind process of review where 2-4 scholars that are experts in the subject matter review the article, make comments, and provide recommendations to the journal/book editor on whether to pursue publication, provide the author an opportunity to address their comments and revise and resubmit the manuscript, or reject the manuscript. For most reputable journals, authors generally undergo 2-3 rounds of revision and 1-2 rounds of editing before publication. The best journals in a field routinely reject 90-95% of article submissions and the better journals generally reject roughly 75-85%. At present this is the best tried and true method for assuring that research is original, theoretically and empirically sound.

There really aren't key words associated with separating scholarly sources although you might include terms such as "study", "research", "data", and the like. We focus on empirical research because it provides more valid and reliable information than relying on sources that are based on single observations or personal experiences. When a researcher takes the time to conduct a valid and reliable study and then has his/her study reviewed by his/her peers, the study holds more weight than if the article was based on personal opinion. Journal in Political Science/Public Policy of note include-this is representative and by no means exhaustive: *American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Political Behavior, Journal of Politics, Political Research Quarterly, Public Administration Review, Review of Policy Research, Policy Studies Journal, etc.*

35% of course grade: **Comprehensive Essay Exam**- Will include all material covered in the course. The exam will be distributed via Blackboard and is due by the official university final exam date via the Blackboard dropbox (date TBD at this time).

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:**


**Segment I: Political Agenda Setting/Corporate Propaganda/Public Relations**

Introduction
22- Introduction to the Class
Group assignments, books, flow of course explained

**Political Agenda Setting (Luntz book)**
27- Generating paper ideas
29- Fashioning proper political language (first ½ book)
3- Fashioning proper political language (first ½ book)

5- Documentary: *Manufacturing Consent* (Chomsky)
10- Corporate and political case studies (second ½ book)
12- Corporate and political case studies (second ½ book)

**Corporate Propaganda and Public Relations (Stauber and Rampton book)**
17-: Documentary: *Boogie Man or Alternate*
19-: Chapters 1-2
24- Chapters 3-4
26: Chapters 5-6
3- Chapters 7-8
5- Documentary: *Art and Copy or Alternate*
10- **Spring Break-No Class**
12- **Spring Break-No Class**

**Wrapping up Segment I**
17: Chapters 9-12 and wrap up

**Research Day I** - Instead of holding class during this session, I will reserve the time in my office (and the office hours that follow) to assist students with their final paper

**Segment II: Understanding the Dynamics of Public Opinion**

**Measuring Public Opinion (Lecture)**
24- Survey design
26- Polling strategies

**Political socialization and political learning/chapter 5**
31- Socialization of opinion

**Research Day II** - Instead of holding class during this session, I will reserve the time in my office (and the office hours that follow) to assist students with their final paper
Micro vs. macro-level considerations in public opinion/chapters 3, 4, and 8
7: Public opinion in open societies

Public opinion in democratic societies/chapters 1, 6, 7, and 11
9- Group differences
14- Group presentations (Groups 1-3)
*Research papers due on 4/14.
*Final Exam distributed

Presentations
16- **Instructor attending conference-no class**
21- Group presentations (Groups 4-6)

Presentations
28- Group presentations (Groups 7-9)
30- Group presentations (Groups 10-12)

Last day of class
5- Group papers due by 5/5

*Final exams are due in the BB dropbox by the university-approved final exam date (time TBD).

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.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.