

Public Opinion

Class: Mondays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:20, ACE 201

Professor: Jack Reilly

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Office: SSC 205

Office Hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays 10-11 & by appointment (jacklreilly.youcanbook.me)

Assignment Submission: TBD

Latest Syllabus Revision: February 7, 2017

Description: This course will examine the role of mass public opinion in American politics. As members of a representative democracy, the collective judgments of citizens are supposed to play an influential role in the governance of the nation, from the selection of political leaders to the policies those leaders enact into law. However, the judgments that individual citizens make are sometimes faulty, poorly informed, or otherwise erroneous. In this course, we will try to understand what citizens should know about politics, examine what citizens actually know about politics, and discuss what implications our answers to these first two questions have for the American democratic system.

Prerequisites: Introduction to American Politics or, with permission of the instructor, another introductory or intermediate class in Political Science. Competence in high school level mathematics. Recommended: introductory statistics. Additional requirement for advanced seminar credit: competence in data analysis (quantitative or qualitative).

Notes: This is a **writing enhanced course** (WEC) and is eligible for **gender studies credit** and/or **advanced seminar credit** toward your AOC requirements. As a writing enhanced course, students are expected to not just turn in writing assignments, but participate in a series of drafting and self-reflective exercises about their writing. Students who wish to receive gender studies or advanced seminar credit should contact the professor early in the semester.

Books

- Most readings for this class are available online in the course google drive. Accordingly, you should **budget \$30** for printing articles over the course of the semester. (This is easily less than the cost of additional readers.) We will be engaging in close reading of articles and you will need to be able to reference them in class.
- Berinsky, Adam (ed.). *New Directions in Public Opinion, 2nd Edition*. Routledge. Referred to as "Reader" ISBN: 978-1-138-77466-7

Course Requirements

Students have the option of taking this class for *intermediate* credit or *advanced seminar* credit. Each track has a set of core requirements along with a set of presentation and writing requirements specific to their track.

Common Requirements:

- 1. Daily Participation and Reading.** This is an intermediate seminar course. As such, informed participation in class is not merely suggested, it is mandatory.
- 2. Discussion Leadership.** During the semester, every student will be responsible for being that day's "discussion leader." Being the discussion leader for the day means that you are responsible for leading the class for part of the day. Typically, each day of class begins with the discussion leader and then transitions to co-leadership between the professor and daily discussion leader.
- 3. Discussion Questions.** Each student is required to submit a discussion question or point (broadly construed) on the day's reading to the class by 9 AM the day of class. Please respond to the first e-mail sent out, so all responses appear in a thread, and if you are the first questioner, title your e-mail "[PO] Questions: Week X.Y."
- 4. Core Exams.** Two in-class exams ("core material" and "extensions").

Intermediate Track Requirements:

- 1. Short Position Papers.** Two five-page papers synthesizing, and reacting to, readings from class. For each paper, you are required to submit:
 1. A **draft**.
 2. A **discussion** of what you would like to revise.
 3. A **final** paper, involving substantive revisions identified in step (2).
- 2. Debate Preparation and Participation.**

Advanced Track Requirements:

- 1. Research Assignments (5).** A variety of scaffolded writing assignments set to help you develop your research paper.
- 2. Research Project.** A piece of advancing an original argument about public opinion research. Original data collection and/or analysis required.
 - 1. Presentation.** A 10 minute slide-based presentation on your final project.
 - 2. Paper.** 10-15 pages advancing an original argument about public opinion research. Original data collection or analysis required.

Participation Expectations

Attendance and Readings: You are expected to attend every class. By class each day, you are expected to have completed the readings for that day. Students are not expected to have mastered the reading by class, but students are expected to be familiar with it so that they may ask and answer questions about the material. As this is an intermediate seminar class, lectures are rare and there are no slides. Thus, *missed class time cannot be easily made up*. If you must

miss a class, make sure to complete the reading for the class and review the material with your fellow classmates or with the professor in office hours.

Daily Questions: For each seminar with assigned readings, you are expected to submit one to three (or more) questions to the professor and class, by e-mail, by 9 AM the day of class. This question can be about anything from the reading: uncertainty on the analysis technique, a challenge of the author's theory, a question about the implications of a paper, etc. The idea is for your classmates and professor to get a feel for what you are thinking about the reading, and what you are having trouble with, so that we conduct class accordingly.

Daily question e-mails should be titled as follows: [PO] Questions 1.2, [PO] Questions 2.1, [PO] Questions 2.2, [PO] Questions 3.1, etc.

Discussion Leadership: Once during the quarter, every student will be responsible for being that day's "discussion leader." Being the discussion leader for the day means that, along with the professor, you are responsible for leading the class for a short period of time. Typically, class will be introduced by the professor before being turned over to the discussion leader.

Evaluation

Exam dates: There are two exams in this class. While the course is cumulative, and each test will be comprehensive, each test roughly corresponds to one of the two units in the class and will focus on material from that unit. **Test dates will not change and may not be missed except for documented medical or family emergencies.** If you are unable to attend class on one of the test days, contact me during the first week of class.

The **core exam** is on **April 6, 2017**.

The **extensions exam** is due on **May 11, 2017**.

Papers: You must turn in each paper (advanced track: or paper assignment) on time or you will not receive credit. **I do not accept late work.** *If*, after turning in your piece of writing, you are unsatisfied, I welcome you to freely revise it as you wish and I will evaluate the revised document. All papers are due Friday of the identified week.

Intermediate Track Papers: The first paper draft is due week 5, the revision plan due week 6, and the final paper due week 7. The second paper draft is due week 9, the revision plan due week 10, and the final paper due week 11.

Advanced Track Papers: There are five intermediary assignments (topic, literature review, data identification, data results, paper draft) due weeks 4, 7, 9, 11, and 13. **The final paper is due May 22, 2017.**

Conditions for Satisfactory Evaluation

To satisfactorily complete the course, you must satisfactorily complete all four course requirements: preparation, participation/presentation, writing assignments, and exams.

Specifically:

1. Students with more than three unexcused class absences may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.
2. Students who fail to submit more than three days worth of discussion questions may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.
3. Students missing a paper assignment due date may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.
4. Students missing an exam will not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.

Course Expectations

Course Etiquette: Students must be courteous to the professor and fellow students. This is a seminar course, not a lecture, so timely attendance is particularly important. Cell phones must be silent and out of sight: no text messaging, Internet browsing, etc.

Laptops: You will not need them in class. Do not bring them. Exceptions are made only in the case of documented medical necessity.

Office Hours, etc: I encourage you to stop by our office hours at any point if you have questions about the course, the readings, school, etc. In addition to formal office hours, I have an open-door policy: you are welcome to come in. If you want to be sure you can speak with me, setting up an appointment beforehand is always a good idea. You can do so by scheduling time at jacklireilly.youcanbook.me

E-mail: I'm happy to answer questions over e-mail. However, e-mail questions that require more than a two sentence response should be addressed in person in office hours. I clear my email about once a day, so students can expect a response to email within 36 hours.

A Note on Statistics and Software: This is not a course on statistics or data analysis. However, the study of public opinion is fundamentally tied to scientific questions and surveys, polls, and data. Accordingly, we will examine public opinion data in class from time to time, may have lab sessions looking at public opinion data, and the advanced class requires the analysis of polling data. I recommend using whatever software you are used to from any statistics course you taken (R, Stata, SPSS, etc) or the Berkeley SDA engine (<http://sda.berkeley.edu>). I also suggest you avoid Microsoft Excel. In addition to class, you can get assistance on data work from New College's Quantitative Resource Center.

Students with Disabilities: (NCF Policy) A student claiming a need for special accommodations because of a disability must work with the Counseling and Wellness Center, which will establish the need for specific accommodations and communicate them to the instructor.

Religious Observance: (NCF Policy) No student shall be compelled to attend class or sit for an examination at a day or time when s/he would normally be engaged in religious observance or on a day or time prohibited by his or her religious belief. Students are expected to notify their instructors if they intend to be absent for a class or announced examination, in accordance with the policy, prior to the scheduled meeting.

Academic Integrity: (NCF Policy) Any suspected instance of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the College's policy on academic dishonesty. (More information is available through the NCF portal.)

Course Outline

Week	Topic I	Topic II	Track I: Intermediate	Track II: Advanced
1	Introduction*	Dahl	Who are you?	Who are you?
2	Lippman	Downs		
3	Converse	Responses to Converse		
4	Zaller	Polling		Topic
5	Persuasion	Modern Polling Issues	Draft I	
6	Macropartisanship	Sniderman	WAYD?	
7	Cue-Taking	Voting Correctly	Essay 1	Literature Review
B	BREAK			
8	Methodological Individualism	Exam I: Core		
9	Social Networks	Biological Sources	Draft II	Data Identification
10	Personality Sources	Group Sources	WAYD?	
11	TBD	TBD	Essay II	Data Results
12	BACC WEEK	Adv. Presentations		Presentations
13	Debate	Exam II: Extensions		Paper Draft
14	The Future of Public Opinion	READING DAYS		
F	FINALS		<i>(Opt) Bonus Paper</i>	Paper