

Public Opinion, Political Psychology, & Polarization in the United States

COURSE INFORMATION	<i>Term:</i> TBD <i>Level:</i> Intermediate Seminar <i>Meet:</i> Tuesday & Friday, 2:30-3:50 <i>Room:</i> Anthropology Lab <i>Revision:</i> November 9, 2023	<i>Instructor:</i> Jack Reilly <i>Office:</i> Social Sciences 205 <i>E-mail:</i> jreilly@ncf.edu <i>Office Hours:</i> Tues & Fri 4-5:30 and by appt <i>Appointments:</i> jacklireilly.com/appointments
DESCRIPTION	Why do people think about politics in the way that they do? 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, evaluate the sources of that knowledge, and discuss what implications our answers to these questions have for the American democratic system. Particular attention will be paid to the sources of political attitudes and beliefs, the nature of political polarization, and the identity structures that help form and shape individual and collective public opinion.	
PREREQUISITE	Introductory or intermediate work in political science (American politics recommended) or social psychology. Competence in basic numeracy: comparisons, fractions, proportions, interpreting charts and graphics, averages, the concept of correlation.	
ENROLLMENT	The course has a soft cap of 12, but I anticipate not having to cap the class. If one is necessary, priority will be given to upper year students in political science and related areas (broadly defined), with preference given to those with the most adjacent coursework.	
NOTES	This is a writing enhanced course (WEC) and is eligible for gender studies credit and/or advanced seminar credit toward your Political Science AOC requirements. Students who wish to receive gender studies or advanced seminar credit should contact the professor early in the semester. Students who wish to receive advanced seminar credit will need to take an introductory statistics course as a co-requisite if not already completed.	

Materials

BOOKS	Required <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mason, 2018. <i>Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became our Identity</i>. Chicago. Recommended <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
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Course Requirements

OVERVIEW

Satisfactory completion of the course requires completion of the following:

1. Daily Reading & Discussion Questions
2. Discussion Leadership (2)
3. Short Position Papers (2 papers, 5 pages each). For each paper, you are required to submit, in successive weeks:
 - (a) A draft.
 - (b) A discussion of what you would like to revise.
 - (c) A final paper, involving substantive revisions identified in step (2).
4. Exams
 - (a) Midterm
 - (b) Final

Additional requirements only for those taking the class for the Political Science AOC advanced seminar requirement:

5. Final Research Project
 - (a) Outlining/Stage Assignments
 - (b) Final Paper (10-15 pages)

DAILY PARTICIPATION AND READING

This is an intermediate seminar course. As such, informed participation in class is not merely suggested, it is mandatory for satisfactory performance in the class.

You are expected to attend every class.¹ By class each day, you are expected to have completed the readings for that day. You are *not* expected to have mastered the reading by class, but you should be familiar with it enough so that you may ask and answer questions about the material. As this is an intermediate seminar class, lectures are vanishingly scarce 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 a fellow classmates or with the professor in office hours.

I'm well aware that, sometimes, participation in class can seem intimidating (even scary!). That said, like writing and presenting, participation in seminars and workgroups is also a life skill that we all need to do our best to learn.² If you find yourself to be intimidated at first when it comes to seminar participation, know that I am not trying to formally evaluate the "quality" of every single comment you make (nor do I have any interest in doing so - what a terrible way to socially interact as human beings that would be). I also do not view participation in a purely quantitative "check or no check" way. There are a variety of ways to participate effectively: if you find speaking in class to be challenging, a very good way to start participating is to make sure you're contributing good discussion questions over email.

¹If you are sick, don't come to class, of course - just let me know.

²Unless you become a professional academic, "seminars" are things you're less likely to find yourself in after graduation. That said, you *will*, regularly and repeatedly, find yourself part of meetings, workshops, client discussions, and plenty of other things that form a similar structure: there is a group of people settled around a table for common purpose. See this as your training ground.

As the professor, I will do my best to ensure that the same voices don't dominate class day in and day out, ensuring a space for all to participate. In an effective seminar, however, this responsibility does not fall on one person: it is the responsibility of everyone to be (self-)aware of their contributions and those of their classmates. If it seems like you're the only voice you're hearing, step back for a bit. (And if I don't call on you, or ask someone else to speak, don't take it personally - it's not that I don't like your contributions. It's that I'm trying to make sure everyone has a chance to take the floor.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For each day with assigned readings, you are expected to submit one to three (or more, if you really want to) questions to the professor and class, by e-mail, by noon on the day of class. This question can be about anything from the reading: uncertainty on the analysis technique, a challenge of the authors 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: [POP] Questions 1.2, [POP] Questions 2.1, [POP] Questions 2.2, [POP] Questions 3.1, etc. and should be sent to the course email list: publicopinion@ncf.edu.

Make sure to read other's discussion questions before class. Sometimes, the best questions can come from responding to someone else's question.

DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP

Twice 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. Discussion leaders still submit discussion questions.

EXAMS

There are two exams in this class. While the course is cumulative, and each test will be comprehensive, each test roughly corresponds to material from its "half" of the class. Test dates will not change and may not be missed except for documented medical or family emergencies. If you know now that you are unable to attend class on one of the test days, contact me during the first week of class so that we can make alternate arrangements.

PAPERS

You must turn in each paper on time or you will not receive credit. **I do not accept late work.** If, however, after turning in your piece of writing, you are unsatisfied, I welcome you to freely revise it as you wish and I will evaluate (only) the revised document. (I won't even look at the initially submitted version if you don't want me to! But you do have to submit something on time in order to receive the "extension" to revise it.) All papers are due Sunday, by midnight, of the identified week.

CONDITIONS FOR SATISFACTORY COMPLETION

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 two unexcused class absences may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation. [Excused absence example = "I emailed the professor because I was sick"]
2. Students who fail to submit more than three days worth of discussion questions may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.³

³This isn't that hard a line. Essentially, I don't care if you miss one or maybe two days: everyone has tough days here and there. At three days, I start looking askance at it, and by four, you're clearly not doing what you need to do - or at minimum, need to be talking to me more about it.

3. Students missing a paper will not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.
4. Students missing an exam will not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.

Course Expectations

COURSE STRUCTURE

This is an intermediate seminar (discussion) class; students are expected to read and participate in each course period. Each class period has two to three readings⁴ that we will analyze, dissect, and discuss as a class. Each day in class has at least one student discussion leader who will co-lead class with the professor.

COURSE POLICIES

Etiquette: Course participants must be courteous to the professor and fellow students. Attend class on time, listen to fellow students when they talk, and disagree (or agree) with others' arguments professionally. Keep cell phones silenced and out of sight.

Computation and Technology: Laptops are required to be closed and left out of sight. Alternate accommodations, if necessary, can be made in the case of documented necessity through New College's Student Disability Services office (SDS).⁵

Office Hours: I encourage you to stop by my 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: if the door is open, you are welcome to come in, so long as I am not facing an immediate deadline of some kind. (In other words, coming in minutes before class is usually not a good idea.) If you want to be sure you can speak with me, setting up an appointment beforehand at jacklreilly.com/appointments is always a good idea. You can also schedule zoom meetings with me via my website, as well as find additional free times, outside of regular office hours, that I am available for appointments each week there.

E-mail: Students can generally expect a response to all e-mails within 24 hours, excepting weekends. Questions that require more than a couple sentences in response should usually be addressed in person. Please feel free to send me all the peculiar, eccentric, odd, weird and neat elections, voting, and public opinion-related tidbits you find.

⁴Give or take a reading here and there, depending on complexity.

⁵Why is my technology policy so constrained? Because in this class, we trust science. And on this matter, science is clear: use of laptops and technology in classes tends to not just distract the user, but also peers next to them – even in lecture based classes (Sana et al., 2013; Fried, 2006). In seminar classes, the problem is worse, with laptops breaking the implicit social contract of the classroom space and hindering sustained reflection of the material. Why? Because humans, by nature, are bad at multitasking (yes, despite what you hear about the importance of multitasking) and are prone to distraction by shiny things in the corner (Lee et al., 2011; Rosen et al., 2013). There is even some reason to believe that long-hand writing and note taking improves comprehension and mental processing of material (Mueller and Oppenheimer, 2014). To be present and engaged in a meaningful educational experience means placing yourself in the correct context for learning. Which, in turn, means knowing when to keep the electronics off.

Class Schedule & Readings

Readings may be found in the course google drive; authors are given here for easy identification

#	Topic	Reading	Work Due
1	Course Overview: The Problem	Dahl; Lippman	
2	Citizen Competence	Converse; (opt: Kinder & Kalmoe)	
3	Surveys & Persuasion	Zaller & Feldman; Iyengar	
4	Mental Processing	Kahneman (&Tversky); Simon	
5	Expertise	Tetlock; Mendez & Osborne	
6	Motivated Reasoning	Taber & Lodge; Kunda	
7	Biased Processing	Washburn & Skitka; Frimer et al; Ditto et al	
8	Cues, Heuristics, & Correct Voting	Downs; Lupia; Lau & Redlawsk; Kuklinksi & Hurley	Paper 1 Draft
9	Partisanship & Macropartisanship	Slothuus & Bisgaard; Erikson, MacKuen, & Stimson	
10	Methodological Individualism & Social Context	Huckfeldt; Klar; Sokhey & McClurg	Revision Plan 1
11	Group Consciousness	Sanchez; Jefferson; Cramer	
12	Group Politics	Jones; Kam; Hanchard & Dawson	Revised Paper 1
13	Group Threat	Tajfel; Cottrell et al; Enos	
14	Citizen Competence, Reconsidered	Sniderman; Gilens	Midterm Due
B		BREAK	
15	The Polarization Debate	Fiorina; Abramowitz	
16	Affective Polarization & Negative Partisanship	Iyengar, Sood & Lelkes; Abramowitz & Webster	
17	Social Sorting, Identity, & Politics	Mason, selections	
18	Affective Policy or Social Identity?	Orr & Huber; Dias & Lelkes	
19	Dealing with Disagreement & Cross-pressures	Huckfeldt et al; Mutz	
20	American Animus	Mason; Webster et al; Feinberg et al; Jardina	
21	Intergroup Contact & Persuasion	Kalla & Broockman; Berinsky	
22	A Counter-Take: The Other Divide	Klar, Krupnikov & Ryan; Druckman et al; Carlson & Settle	
23	Social Pressure & Social Influence	Asch; Sinclair; Green; Nickerson	
24	Media	Levendusky; Iyengar & Hahn; Prior	Paper 2 Draft
25	Social Media	Settle; Bor; Lazer	
26	Trust & Satisfaction	Hetherington; Vandusky	Revision Plan 2
27	Democratic Norms & Distortion	Simonovits, Mccoy, & Littvay; Kingzette et al; McCoy, Rahman, & Somer; Carlson	
28	The Future of Public Opinion	Fishkin et al; Finkel et al	Revised Paper 2
F		FINALS	Final Due

Campus Academic Resources

YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISOR	Your academic advisor is your first resource at the college for navigating your courses and academic work at the college. Many first year students find themselves uncertain about when it is "ok" to go their advisor with questions or for advice—but the real answer is "anytime"! We all have open office hours that you can simply drop in at, even if you don't have an appointment, and are eager to help you.
WRITING SKILLS	Clear writing and argumentation is a critical element to success in college (not to mention, life generally). That said, writing is hard, and students come to college with very different levels of preparation for college level and professional writing. Regardless of your skill and comfort with writing, I strongly recommend exploring the options for writing (and revising!) assistance at the Writing Resource Center. You can schedule an appointment through the writing center here: https://ncf.mywconline.com
QUANTITATIVE SKILLS	Like writing skills, quantitative literacy is an integral element to success in college (not to mention, life generally). That said, math is (also) hard, and students come to college with very different levels of preparation for college level and professional data literacy. While this course will cover many aspects of data literacy, should you desire additional support beyond what I and/or the course TA can provide, I recommend exploring the options for assistance at the Quantitative Resource Center. The QRC is located in the Academic Resource Center (ARC), located on the first floor of the Jane Bancroft Cook Library.
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER	Having trouble figuring out how to manage it all? In addition to your faculty mentor and professors, New College has peer to peer coaching and group workshops available at the Student Success Center. The SSC helps you develop the skills necessary for success in college. We offer one-on-one appointments with trained peer coaches, group study sessions, recurring appointments, workshops, printable resources, regular newsletters, and referrals to other campus services. You can find more information here: https://www.ncf.edu/academics/student-success-center/
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	Please see the Campus Support Resources document—located in the course canvas page and google drive—for all the academic resources available to you at New College.

New College & Community Academic Policies

CRITICAL THINKING	Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.
STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY	New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, you are encouraged to initiate a conversation with the AALC (Advocacy and Accessible Learning Center). The AALC works with students with disabilities to identify reasonable accommodations and plans ways to implement these with your faculty members. Please visit their website for additional information: https://www.ncf.edu/departments/advocacy-accessibility/ . You may also contact the AALC in-person (HCL3), via phone at 941-487-4844, or via email at aalc@ncf.edu . Students are welcome to discuss privately any

concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. Students with accommodations are highly encouraged to meet with their primary or partner instructor as soon as possible.

TITLE IX

New College of Florida is committed to equal access to education pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. The law protects all individuals on our campus from gender-based discrimination or exclusion or instances of sexual misconduct. All full-time faculty, full-time staff, and resident advisors are Responsible Employees required to report any known instances of sexual misconduct or gender discrimination to the Title IX Coordinator. Please contact our Title IX coordinator (titleix@ncf.edu) or see the website (<https://www.ncf.edu/campus-life/title-ix/>) for more information.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

New College's commitment to excellence can only be realized in a learning environment that is inclusive, characterized by openness to diverse perspectives, and marked by mutual respect. Anything short of this aspiration is inconsistent with our commitment. Equal access, and the opportunity to participate fully in all of our programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, political ideology, national origin, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, is essential to that commitment and will be the standard to which we expect all members of our learning community to adhere.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining a vibrant, healthy, and engaging learning environment for which we all must take responsibility. The New College faculty considers academic dishonesty to be a serious violation of community standards. Students are expected to refrain from acts of academic dishonesty, which may include:

1. cheating and/or plagiarism (such as: presenting the intellectual work of others as one's own; failing to cite sources; improper paraphrasing via failing to use own words even if a citation is given; partial, incomplete, or inaccurate citation of work of others);
2. unauthorized multiple submissions (submission of the same work for different academic activities, without the approval of the instructor);
3. false citation (false citation of a source or knowingly attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained);
4. falsifying data (fabricating or altering data to deliberately mislead; for example, changing data to get better experiment results is academically fraudulent);
5. falsifying information, signatures, or initials on official and academic forms.

If you are in doubt about what practices are permissible in an examination, you should consult the professor prior to sitting for the exam. If you lack understanding of how, in a paper or other presentation, to distinguish your thoughts from those of others, the faculty can refer you to standard guidelines and discuss specific questions.

CLASSROOM RECORDING

Florida State Law allows students to record classroom lectures without a requirement for prior notice and without the faculty member's consent, with specific limitations on where and how those recordings can be used.

"A recorded lecture may not be published without the consent of the lecturer," and it may be employed only

- a. "for a student's own personal educational use"

- b. "in connection with a complaint to the public institution of higher education where the recording was made"
- c. "as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding"

Recorded lectures used for other purposes may allow the faculty member to seek damages plus court costs and reasonable attorney fees, with the total recovery not to exceed \$200,000.

A class lecture is defined as an educational presentation delivered by faculty or guest lecturer, as part of a New College course, intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.