

**Political Science 3625: Public Opinion**  
**University of Connecticut**  
**Spring 2019**  
**Mondays, 6:20 p.m. – 8:50 p.m.**  
**Room 107 Downtown**

**Professor:** Robert N. Lupton.

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**Office:** 355 Downtown

**Office Hours:** Tues.: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Thurs. 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

### **Course Description and Objectives**

This course examines American public opinion and voting behavior. We will explore the sources of individuals' political attitudes, perceptions and electoral choice, and compare Americans' attitude formation process and behavior to standards of democratic citizenship. We will also investigate the role of core values, as well as partisan, ideological racial, class, religious and gender identities, to public opinion and their contribution to political polarization.

Ultimately, this course will enable you to understand better how and why people think about politics the way they do, as well as how they behave in the political realm, and the degree to which citizen inputs influence policy outcomes.

### **Requirements and Grading**

Our course textbook is the following:

Erikson, Robert S., and Kent L. Tedin. 2014. *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Routledge.

Note: You may also purchase the eighth edition of the book (published in 2010).

This book is the only one you need to purchase for the course. As you will notice on the course calendar, various book chapters and journal articles also will be assigned throughout the semester. All of the articles are available online, and I also will make them and the book chapters available on the course website. The book chapters and journal articles are marked on the course calendar with an \*.

Please note that the date for which a reading is listed indicates you should have the reading completed **before** lecture on that date. Completing the weekly reading assignments is essential in order for you to understand lecture material and succeed in this course.

## Response Papers

You will be required to write three (3), 2-3-page response papers to the assigned weekly readings of your choice throughout the semester. You can complete these papers during any three weeks in which readings are assigned. You should summarize the authors' major arguments, highlight common themes across the assigned readings and provide your own reactions to the works. I expect you to approach the works critically and provide an independent perspective toward the weekly topic you are engaging. These response papers will account for 20% of your final course grade.

## Examinations

This course features two examinations. The midterm will account for 25% of your final course grade, and the cumulative final exam, which will focus primarily on topics discussed after the first midterm, will also account for 25% of your final course grade.

The examinations will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. Their written component will require you to connect the readings, lectures and other information presented throughout the semester in the form of a coherent argument. Constructing and persuasively advancing an argument is a critical skill, and these questions will provide you with an opportunity to showcase and improve upon your argumentative writing aptitude.

The midterm examination will be held on **Monday, March 25**.

The final examination is **TBD**.

Both examinations will be held in the lecture room (107 Downtown).

## Research Paper

Given that this class is an upper-level course, not to mention the importance of writing to your future, a critical component of the course is an original research paper that you will write on a topic you find relevant to American public opinion and voting behavior. You will develop the 10-to-12 page paper throughout the semester and submit a rough draft that I will grade and return to you to edit before you submit the final draft. The project will allow you to write your own academic literature review and theorize about a political science question you find substantively interesting.

The research paper will require you to explore your topic in-depth and incorporate scholarly citations beyond those that appear on the syllabus or that I discuss in lecture. I will provide additional guidance regarding the research paper as the semester progresses, but please note that the **research paper rough draft must incorporate at least five scholarly sources, and the final draft must incorporate at least ten such sources**. Scholarly sources include academic books and articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals. Example topics are below:

- What are the sources of American public opinion?
- Do voters hold consistent and concrete policy attitudes, and what factors influence whether they do or not?
- What are the primary predictors of voting behavior in American national elections?
- What factors divide the American electorate? What group differences do we observe in public opinion and voting behavior ?

Ideally, you will begin thinking of the question you would like to address very soon, perhaps even later today or right at this very moment! As always, the earlier you begin considering this project, the better your paper will be at each stage of the process, including the final product. The paper will account for 30% of your final course grade, the breakdown of which is described below by component (and the due dates for each component are listed in parentheses):

Proposal due: 5% (February 25)

Rough draft: 10% (April 1)

Final draft: 15% (May 11)

Please note that all aspects of the research paper must be submitted electronically via the course website. I will not accept emailed or hard copies of any of these documents.

### **Attendance, Participation and Politics Monitoring**

Although attendance is not formally required, I will note that failing to attend class will make performing well in the course extremely difficult given the importance of lecture to exam material, not to mention the contribution of quizzes to your overall course grade.

Participation also is not officially part of your course grade, but lively and vibrant discussion enhances all students' learning experience. Actively participating in the course will foster a more enjoyable and productive environment for you and your peers.

Additionally, **students should read about ongoing political events** from political news sources such as Politico.com (<http://www.politico.com/>) and NBC First Read (<http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read>). My most preferred publications are *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Economist*. I find them to report decidedly real news!

I will spend the first approximately ten minutes of each class period discussing current political debates, controversies and developments, and I expect you to help generate, facilitate and sustain these discussions. Indeed, I urge you to raise issues and questions that you find relevant, and you should feel free to email me before class with topics that you would like me to address. These discussions will form the basis of some course quizzes and exam questions. Lastly, and importantly, please note that respect and consideration for all students and viewpoints will be demanded at all times during class discussions.

## **Summary of Grading**

Response papers: 20%  
Research paper: 30%  
Examinations: 50%

Please note that passing this course requires completion of both examinations!

## **Grading Scale**

93-100% = A  
90-92% = A-  
87-89% = B+  
83-86% = B  
80-82% = B-  
77-79% = C+  
73-76% = C  
70-72% = C-  
67-69% = D+  
63-66% = D  
60-62% = D-  
<60%. = F

This grading scale represents a baseline scenario. I reserve the right to curve any assignment, as well as final course grades, as I deem appropriate.

## **Civil Discourse, Rights and Responsibilities**

At the University of Connecticut, students and faculty are afforded an academic environment that allows for intellectual expression. Challenging issues and ideas may arise, but none of these should be expressed in an inappropriate manner either verbally or in writing. One of the goals of a university is to challenge us to think again about what we know (and that all that we don't know). This demands that we all share responsibility for creating and maintaining a civil learning environment in our classrooms and in the larger community. We will be conscious of and accept responsibility for what we say and do, how we act, how our words and actions have consequences and how our words and actions affect others.

## **Academic Honesty**

Academic integrity is critical to every aspect of your performance in this course. I maintain a zero tolerance policy against academic dishonesty, which includes cheating and all forms of plagiarism. You are responsible for maintaining a personal standard of integrity, and I will vigilantly hold you to that standard. Actions such as copying and pasting information from the Internet, using identical language of another author without

attribution, assisting another student on an exam or assignment or receiving similar assistance and other egregious forms of cheating should be easily identifiable and preventable — don't cheat! However, other forms of plagiarism are subtler, and committing unintentional plagiarism is possible if you are not careful. If you have any questions regarding academic honesty, please contact me **before** you insert questionable material into your work. Depending on the severity of the offense, a student caught cheating may automatically receive a zero for the course.

The University of Connecticut uses a specific process for investigating and resolving misconduct concerns. The process is outlined online at the following location:

<http://community.uconn.edu/academic-misconduct/>

## **Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence**

The University of Connecticut is committed to maintaining a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living and working environment for all members of the University community – students, employees, and visitors. Academic and professional excellence can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination, discriminatory harassment or interpersonal violence.

The University's full statement can be found online at the following location:

<http://policy.uconn.edu/2015/12/29/policy-against-discrimination-harassment-and-related-interpersonal-violence/>

## **People with Disabilities Statement**

The University of Connecticut is committed to achieving equal educational and employment opportunity and full participation for persons with disabilities. It is the University's policy that no qualified person be excluded from consideration for employment, participation in any University program or activity, be denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. This policy derives from the University's commitment to nondiscrimination for all persons in employment, academic programs, and access to facilities, programs, activities, and services.

The University's full statement can be found online at the following location:

<http://policy.uconn.edu/2011/05/24/people-with-disabilities-policy-statement/>

## Course Calendar

Articles and book chapters marked with an \* will be located on the course website. Please note that I reserve the right to alter the calendar at any time depending on our progress. I will always notify you in advance of any changes that I make to the syllabus.

### January 28: Democratic Theory and Public Opinion

Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 1, Public Opinion in Democratic Societies

\*Berelson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee. 1954. "Democratic Practice and Democratic Theory." This is the chapter in the book *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

\*Converse, Philip E. 1987. "Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51 (2): S12-S24.

\*Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. "From Democratic Theory to Democratic Practice: The Case for an Informed Citizenry." This is a chapter in the book *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

### February 4: Political Knowledge and Heuristics

Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 3, pp. 55-69.

\*Delli-Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. "What Americans Know About Politics." This is a chapter in their book *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

\*Gilens, Martin. 2001. "Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences." *American Political Science Review* 95 (2): 379-396.

\*Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior In California Insurance Reform Elections." *The American Political Science Review* 88 (1): 63-76.

### February 11: Ideological Sources of Public Opinion

Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 3, pp. 70-80.

\*Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter. New York, NY: Free Press, pp. 206-61.

\*Devine, Christopher J. 2015. "Ideological Social Identity: Psychological Attachment to Ideological In-Groups as a Political Phenomenon and a Behavioral Influence." *Political Behavior* 37(3): 509–35.

## **February 18: Partisanship and Political Attitudes**

Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 3, pp. 81-88.

\*Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Selected chapters.

\*Huddy, Leonie, Lilliana Mason, and Lene Aarøe. 2015. "Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity." *The American Political Science Review* 109 (1): 1–17.

\*Lerman, Amy E., Meredith Sadin, and Samuel Trachtman. 2017. "Policy Uptake as Political Behavior: Evidence from the Affordable Care Act." *The American Political Science Review* 111 (4): 755–70.

\*Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Selected chapters.

## **February 25: Polarization, Motivated Reasoning and Perceptual Biases Research proposal due**

\*Abramowitz, Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics* 70 (2): 542-56.

\*Ahler, Douglas J. 2014. "Self-fulfilling Misperceptions of Public Polarization." *Journal of Politics* 76 (3): 607-20.

\*Fiorina, Morris P., with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope. 2006. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Pearson Longman. Selected chapters.

\*Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3): 755-69.

## **March 4: Religion and the "Culture Wars"**

\*Layman, Geoffrey C. 1997. "Religion and Political Behavior in the United States: The Impact of Beliefs, Affiliations, and Commitment from 1980-1994." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61 (2): 288-316.

\*Margolis, Michele. 2018. "How Politics Affects Religion: Partisanship, Socialization, and Religiosity in America." *Journal of Politics* 80 (1): 30-43.

## **March 11: Affective Polarization in American Politics**

\*Edsall, Thomas. "What if All Politics is National?" *The New York Times*. September 19, 2015.

\*Iyengar, Shanto, and Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lekles. 2012. "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (5): 405-31.

\*Mason, Lilliana. 2015. "'I Disrespectfully Agree': The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(1): 128-45.

**March 18: Spring break (no class)!**



**March 25: Midterm examination!**

**April 1: Race and American Public Opinion**  
**Research paper rough draft due**

Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 7, pp. 193-98.

\*Hajnal, Zoltan and Michael Rivera. 2014. "Immigration, Latinos, and White Partisan Politics: The New Democratic Defection." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (4): 773-89.

\*Scott, Jamil and Adam M. Enders. 2018. "The Increasing Racialization of American Electoral Politics, 1988-2016." *American Politics Research*. Forthcoming.

\*Tesler, Michael. 2012. "The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Race and Racial Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3): 690-704.

**April 8: Class and Gender in American Public Opinion**

Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 7, pp. 212-16.

\*Bauer, Nicole. 2015. "Emotional, Sensitive, and Unfit for Office? Gender Stereotype Activation and Support Female Candidates." *Political Psychology* 36 (6): 691-708.

\*Holman, Mirya and Eric C. Cassese. 2018. "Party and Gender Stereotypes in Campaign Attacks." *Political Behavior* 40 (3): 785-807.

\*Page, Benjamin I. Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans." *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (1): 51-73.

### **April 15: Retrospective Voting, Issue Voting and Issue Salience in American Politics**

\*Mullinix, Kevin J. 2016. "Partisanship and Preference Formation: Competing Motivations, Elite Polarization, and Issue Importance." *Political Behavior* 38 (2): 383- 411.

\*Nadeau, Richard, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck. 2001. "National Economic Voting in U.S. Presidential Elections." *Journal of Politics* 63 (1): 159-81.

\*Tausanovitch, Chris and Christopher Warshaw. 2018. "Does the Ideological Proximity Between Candidates and Voters Affect Voting in U.S. House Elections?" *Political Behavior* 40(1): 223–245

### **April 22: Political Responsiveness to Public Opinion**

Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 10.

\*Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (3): 564-81.

\*Stimson, James. *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Selected chapters.

### **April 29: Media and Public Opinion**

#### **Final exam review**

\*Jacoby, William G. 2000. "Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (4): 750-67.

TBD

**Final examination: TBD.**

**Final research paper draft due date: The final paper is due electronically via the course website no later than Saturday, May 11, 2019, at 5:00 p.m. I will not accept emailed or hard copies of the final paper.**