

[POLI 350] PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICS
FALL 2023

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to provide an introductory understanding of how political attitudes develop within a democratic context. Special attention will be paid to the examination of those factors which help to mold public opinion and ideological assimilation, as well as the political consequences of opinion formation. A significant portion of the course will be devoted to examining the role political discourse plays in public opinion formation. To this end, discourses will be critically examined and deconstructed.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ❑ exposure to the theories underpinning public opinion formation
- ❑ identify how ideology shapes the development of political worldviews
- ❑ learn how to place political speech within its appropriate textual, discursive, and social context
- ❑ expand mental-library of political science concepts
- ❑ enhance critical thinking, reading comprehension, and writing skills

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Students are not required to purchase any books for this course. All readings will be provided by the instructor through Blackboard. Course readings will consist of sections from academic texts, government webpages, and journal articles.

GRADING SCALE AND BREAKDOWN

A: 90-100; B+: 87-89; B: 80-86; C+: 77-79; C: 70-76; D+: 67-69; D: 60-66; F: <= 59

Quizzes: There will be a total of 5 quizzes designed to test your knowledge of the course material represented in the readings and lectures. Each quiz will consist of a total of 8 questions and up to 2 bonus questions. Answers can be as long as you feel is necessary to fully answer each question, but a single short paragraph each should be sufficient in most cases. Each of your answers will be assessed for accuracy as follows:

0 points: No answer, or answer is irrelevant to the question.

0.5 points: A genuine attempt to answer the questions was made, and there is evidence of knowledge about the material, but the answer is still fundamentally incorrect.

1 point: Question is answered correctly.

In the final week of the course, there will be two extra credit group-work opportunities (worth 4 points each). **40 Points**

Exam 1: You will be assigned an essay question from the first third of the course. Your essay must be a minimum of three double-spaced pages (see formatting guidelines), is take-home, and is open notes. Answers should reflect an understanding of both the lectures and the required reading. **20 Points**

Exam 2: You will be assigned an essay question from the second third of the course. Your essay must be a minimum of three double-spaced pages (see formatting guidelines), is take-home, and is open notes. Answers should reflect an understanding of both the lectures and the required reading. **20 Points**

Exam 3: You will perform a critical discourse analysis of a brief text of your choosing (instructor will provide options) using the methodology utilized throughout the final portion of the course. Your analysis must be a minimum of three double-spaced pages, is take-home, and is open notes. **20 Points**

Attendance: While there is no penalty for missing a lecture class, you will be awarded 0.5 points to your quiz grade for that quiz period for every lecture you attend for a maximum possible total of 2.5 points (out of the 8 total). These points are not carried over to future quizzes. If you are unable to attend class during a quiz day, please provide me with a legitimate, written excuse — such as a doctor's note affirming your absence — and we can arrange to schedule a make-up quiz consisting of different questions.

CLASS POLICIES

- Laptops are perfectly acceptable in all contexts **except** during quizzes.
- Mobile phones may be visible **except** during quizzes.
- Headphones should be removed at all times. It's not a good idea to listen to music during a lecture, and more importantly, it could be distracting to your fellow students.
- Slides will not be posted.** It's expected that students are actively listening and taking notes. If anything needs to be repeated, please raise your hand and let me know. This policy may be waived for students with a documented accommodation.
- Persistent talking, whispering or any disruptive attitude means no credit for attendance.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are an individual that needs or may at some point need accommodations to participate fully in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. Additionally, please make arrangements with the Student Disability Resource Center. For addi-

tional information, please refer to the following webpage:

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_disability_resource_center/

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is paramount in this course, and no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Specifically, plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any work that is plagiarized will receive a 0. Cheating, likewise, will not be tolerated. In the context of this course, this could mean looking at notes during quizzes or copying or paraphrasing another classmate's quiz or exam answers. Electronics use during quizzes will be assumed to be an attempt to cheat. Any students caught cheating will receive a 0 for the assignment, and depending on severity, may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

For a detailed description of the University's policy on what kind of actions constitute a form of academic dishonesty and may be subject to sanction, please refer to the University Honor Code:

<http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf>

STUDENT CONDUCT

This is a political science course. Consequently, the material covered may at times provoke disagreement. At all times, please be attentive to the values you've committed to upholding as a student of the University of South Carolina:

The community of scholars at the University of South Carolina is dedicated to personal and academic excellence. Choosing to join the community obligates each member to the Carolinian Creed. Academic dialogue and civil discourse are the cornerstone of the educational system and crucial to individual growth. Students are encouraged to practice personal and academic integrity, respect the rights and dignity of all persons, respect the rights and property of others, discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions, and demonstrate concern for others, their feelings, and their need for conditions which support their work and development.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-2: Democracy and Public Opinion - An Introduction

1/8 Syllabus Review and Course Overview

1/10 Polarization of Opinion at the Founding and Today

1/12 NO CLASS — Instructor Away, but take the anonymous Pew Research Center's political typology quiz posted on Blackboard. Next, submit a response on the Blackboard assignments tab for quiz credit. (easy 100%!)

1/15 NO CLASS — MLK Day

1/17 Democracy: What is it? Has the USA Achieved it?

1/19 Quiz 1

Readings:

Heltzel, G., Laurin, K. (2020). Polarization in America: Two possible futures. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 179-184.

Dahl, R. A. (2008). Polyarchy: Participation and opposition. Yale university press.
ch 1 only

Weeks 3-4: Shaping Public Opinion Pt 1

- 1/22 Defining Public Opinion**
- 1/24 Shaping Public Opinion: The Media Pt 1**
- 1/26 Shaping Public Opinion: The Media Pt 2**
- 1/29 Shaping Public Opinion: Interest Groups Pt 1**
- 1/31 Shaping Public Opinion: Interest Groups Pt 2**
- 2/2 Quiz 2**

Readings:

Clawson, R. A., Oxley, Z. M. (2020). Public opinion: Democratic ideals, democratic practice. CQ Press. ***Chapter 1***

Moy, P., Tewksbury, D., Rinke, E. M. (2016). Agenda setting, priming, and framing. The international encyclopedia of communication theory and philosophy, 1-13.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2015/04/13/americas-lobbying-addiction/>

Weeks 5-6: Shaping Public Opinion Pt 2

- 2/5 Shaping Public Opinion: Political Campaigns Pt 1**
- 2/7 Shaping Public Opinion: Political Campaigns Pt 2**
- 2/9 Shaping Public Opinion: Electoral Institutions Pt 1**
- 2/12 Shaping Public Opinion: Electoral Institutions Pt 2**
- 2/14 Shaping Public Opinion: Economic Institutions**
- 2/16 Quiz 3**

Readings:

Jacobson, G. C. (2015). How do campaigns matter?. Annual Review of Political Science, 18, 31-47.

Go through this webpage and interact with its features: <https://ncase.me/ballot/>. Be able to describe them.

Lindblom, C. E. (1982). The market as prison. The Journal of Politics, 44(2), 324-336.

Week 7: Exam 1 Week

- 2/19 Exam Review Day - Come Ready to Discuss/Ask Questions**
- 2/21 Exam 1 Available- No Class, done remotely, due by start of class on 2/26**
- 2/23 No class - continue working on your exam. I will be holding office hours during our regular class time.**

Readings: None!

Weeks 8-10: Examining Ideology (and Spring Break)

- 2/26 What is Ideology? Pt 1**
- 2/28 What is Ideology? Pt 2**
- 3/1 Ideology and U.S. Public Opinion Pt 1**
- 3/4 SPRING BREAK - No Class**
- 3/6 SPRING BREAK - No Class**
- 3/8 SPRING BREAK - No Class**
- 3/11 Ideology and U.S. Public Opinion Pt 2**
- 3/13 Critique of Ideology**
- 3/15 Quiz 4**

Readings:

Knight, K. (2006). Transformations of the Concept of Ideology in the Twentieth Century. *American Political Science Review*, 100(4), 619-626.

Clawson, R. A., Oxley, Z. M. (2020). *Public opinion: Democratic ideals, democratic practice*. CQ Press. ***Chapter 5***

Althusser, L. (1971). *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)*. ***Only important to read pages 134-148*** ***Difficult Reading, focus on understanding the concepts of ideological and repressive state apparatuses (ISA/RSA)***

Weeks 11 - 12: Ideology and Public Opinion

- 3/18 Institutions vs Psychology in Public Opinion Formation Pt 1**
- 3/20 Institutions vs Psychology in Public Opinion Formation Pt 2**
- 3/22 Socialization and Generational Effects**
- 3/25 Public Opinion and Policy**
- 3/27 Is Ideology Losing its Hold?**
- 3/29 Quiz 5**

Readings:

Clawson, R. A., Oxley, Z. M. (2020). *Public opinion: Democratic ideals, democratic practice*. CQ Press. ***Chapter 4***

Clawson, R. A., Oxley, Z. M. (2020). *Public opinion: Democratic ideals, democratic practice*. CQ Press. ***Chapter 2***

Clawson, R. A., Oxley, Z. M. (2020). *Public opinion: Democratic ideals, democratic practice*. CQ Press. ***Chapter 12***

Clawson, R. A., Oxley, Z. M. (2020). *Public opinion: Democratic ideals, democratic*

practice. CQ Press. ***Chapter 11***

Week 13: Exam 2 Week

- 4/1 Exam Review Day - Come Ready to Discuss/Ask Questions**
- 4/3 Exam 2 Available- No Class, done remotely, due by start of class on 4/8**
- 4/5 No class - continue working on your exam.**

Weeks 14-15: Examining the Power of Discourse

- 4/8 Discourse and Subject Position**
- 4/10 Common Sense and Presupposition in Opinion Formation Pt 1**
- 4/12 Common Sense and Presupposition in Opinion Formation Pt 2**
- 4/15 Discourse Analysis Overview**
- 4/17 Discourse Analysis Application Pt 1 (+Extra Credit Group Work)**
- 4/19 Discourse Analysis Application Pt 2 (+Extra Credit Group Work)**

Readings:

Pain, P., & Masullo Chen, G. (2019). The president is in: Public opinion and the presidential use of Twitter. *Social Media+ Society*, 5(2), 2056305119855143.

Fairclough, N. (2015). Language and power Third edition. Milton Park, Adingdon, Oxon: Routledge. ***Chapter 4***

Cummings, S., De Haan, L., Seferiadis, A. A. (2020). How to use critical discourse analysis for policy analysis: a guideline for policymakers and other professionals. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, 15(1), 99-108.

Week 16: Exam 3 Week

- 4/22 Discourse Analysis Review Day + More Practice**
- 4/24 Exam 3 (Discourse Analysis) Available- Due by 4/29 at 10:00 AM**

NOTE: The above actual dates may be modified due to the requirements of the class. Also, the indicated dates may be moved backward or forward depending on class progress. **Exact dates and instructions will be announced on course webpage.**