

**Public Opinion
POS 4233
Spring 2009
Engr & Comp Sci 135 M
Charles Perry 422 W
6:25-7:40 p.m.**

Instructor:	Adrian U. Ang	TA:	Jung Taek Seo
Office:	DM 482C	Office:	DM 486A
Phone:	348.3297	Phone:	305.962.2906
Email:	adrian.ang@fiu.edu	Email:	jseo002@fiu.edu
Office hours:	M/W 10:30-12:00 or by appointment	Office hours:	W/F 1:00-2:30 PM or by appointment

Email contacts should be used only for questions that can be responded to briefly. Something requiring a long answer should be addressed during class, office hours, or during a special appointment.

NB: This syllabus and schedule are subject to change at any time. If changes occur, the syllabus will be changed on Blackboard and announcements will be made in class.

Course Description: This course explores the structure and dynamics of American public opinion, providing a broad-based introduction to the forces that shape citizens' social and political attitudes in the contemporary United States.

There are three distinct aspects to the course.

First, we will focus our analysis in three major areas: definitions of public opinion and theories of opinion formation, how public opinion is influenced, and how it in turn influences governmental policies.

Second, you will learn (or relearn) some basic data analysis, how to use the SPSS data analysis program, and how to present the results of your quantitative analysis. You will develop your data analytic skills through laboratory sessions and three papers that you will write during the semester.

Third and finally, you will put this analytic expertise to work by conducting independent analyses of survey data related to public opinion, which will be written up in three separate papers. You will use the General Social for 2006 (*aka* "GSS 2006") or the 2004 American National Election Study Survey (*aka* "NES 2004"). GSS is a national social indicator survey conducted every other year (or so) with a sample size that varies from as few as 1500 to over 4000. It has been conducted at least every other year since 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The NES survey is the most recent of a series of surveys of every national election going back to 1948. It was conducted through the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. The datasets and related codebooks will be on the Blackboard site. **You should copy them to a flashdrive rather than attempt to download them at each use.**

Course Materials:

Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley. 2008. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Herbert B. Asher. 2007. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 7th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Course Requirements: Examinations, Papers, and Grades

Grades are determined by your performance on three examinations and three papers. There will be NO extra credit assignments offered. Each exam contributes 15 percent of the final grade. The first two papers contribute 15 percent to your grade. The last paper contributes 25 percent to the final grade. In summary

Exam One:	15%
Exam Two:	15%
Exam Three:	15%
Paper One:	15%
Paper Two:	15%
Paper Three:	<u>25%</u>
	100%

Exams

Examinations are drawn equally from the readings and the lectures.

NB: If you miss an exam, you **MUST** have one of the following: A) a note from a doctor proving you were too ill on the day of the exam to take it; or B) a copy of an obituary, in the unfortunate case you have to attend a funeral. **NO OTHER EXCUSES FOR MISSING AN EXAM WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Note this well! *Anyone who cannot take the exams at the scheduled time and place should not enroll in the course.* Do yourself a favor by rereading the previous sentence. You will not be excused because your brother/sister is getting married and you need to leave for that event. Special family holidays that require you to leave campus early to meet them will also not provide an excused absence.

There are no reasons that will permit a make-up examination. If you miss an examination the exam portion of the grade will be determined by upweighting the remaining examinations, but only after you present an acceptable reason for missing the examination. I am the sole judge of what constitutes an acceptable reason for missing an examination (see above). If your reason for missing the examination is not acceptable, you will receive a zero for that exam and that will be included in the calculation of the examination portion of the grade. Needless to note, but I will – just to emphasize it, a zero will have a very negative effect on the final grade. If you miss two examinations, expect a failing grade for the final grade.

If the class doesn't meet your expectations, you should drop promptly. This is not a passive learning class. You are expected to put what you learn to work by doing analyses of survey data. Paying attention, asking questions, and understanding the material is essential. You cannot cram and be successful, or probably even pass.

Academic Dishonesty

The purpose of this university is to create and disseminate knowledge. Academic dishonesty undermines the most fundamental activity of the university, and it is a basic offense. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating or knowingly assisting an act of cheating by another; or submitting any written material as one's work when it has been prepared by or copied from another. A student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty has failed to satisfy a basic performance requirement for this course. The offender should expect disciplinary action. The grade for the course will certainly be affected up to, and including a failing grade for an assignment, examination, or the course. Further, the Provost's office will be notified. University action should be expected. *When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, consult with me.*

Special Accommodations

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and need assistance, notify the Disability Resource Center (GC 190, 348-3532) and me immediately. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

Grades will be assigned as follows –

Below 60.00	= F
60.01 to 63.00	= D-
63.01 to 66.99	= D
67.00 to 69.99	= D+
70.00 to 73.00	= C-
73.01 to 76.99	= C

77.00 to 79.99	= C+
80.00 to 83.00	= B-
83.01 to 86.99	= B
87.00 to 89.99	= B+
90.00 to 93.00	= A-
93.01 to 100.00	= A

Please note from this scale that there will be no “rounding up” of grades.

READINGS, LECTURES, AND ATTENDANCE

It is extremely important that you complete each day’s reading assignment prior to class and that you attend class regularly. Without the background provided by the daily readings, you will find it difficult to keep up with the lectures. In addition, much material that is covered in the readings will not be duplicated in the lectures and vice versa. As noted above, examination questions will be drawn from material in both the assigned readings and lectures.

While attendance at lectures is not mandatory, regular attendance is encouraged. The lectures are an important aid for understanding the theories and concepts addressed in the course.

CLASS RULES AND NORMS

1. **Be punctual.** This class is scheduled from 6:25 p.m. until 7:40 p.m. We will begin promptly and will generally go for the entire 75 minutes. I expect you to be in your seats and ready to begin at 6:25 p.m., and to give me your undivided attention for the entire time. This means no rustling of papers, packing up, etc. early!

2. **Be considerate of your classmates.** Students should refrain from unnecessary chattering, whispering, comings-and-going, note passing etc. Any student whose behavior proves distracting to me or the class will be asked to leave the class.

3. **Electronic devices.** Every student has the right to listen to lectures undistracted by electronic devices such as cellular phones, PDAs, laptop computers, and related devices. Likewise I expect the same courtesy with respect to my ability to present lectures. To ensure that electronic devices do not distract the class, and to facilitate, rather than impede, learning, their use in this class is subject to the following rules:

A. Cellular phones, pagers, PDAs, iPods/MP3 players, etc. – Have no place in the classroom, and they may not be used during lecture for any reason. Please turn off these devices or set them to silent ring before the class begins. Class distractions such as ringing cellular phones, sending/answering SMS, etc., will be penalized in the following manner. The first infraction will incur no penalty. Each subsequent infraction will increase the length of the subsequent examination by one question.

B. Laptop computers – Laptop computers are welcome in the classroom for note taking purposes only, and may not be used for any other application. Web surfing, instant messaging, email, and other non-class related computer activities are not permitted during lecture. If a student uses their laptop for any reason other than note-taking (e.g., checking email, surfing the internet, playing a game, etc.), the entire class will be told to shut down their computers. If this happens three times, all computers will be banned from the classroom.

N.B. I do not think that typing class notes on a computer is a good idea. Note taking is not the same as dictation, and taking effective notes is a skill that must be learned and practiced. I recommend that you take notes the old fashioned way, using pen and paper, and then summarize/rephrase the lecture notes in a manner that makes the most sense to you. In the long-run you will learn more, and develop a skill that is more useful than learning to type quickly.

4. **There are no lecture notes for the course.** If, for any reason, you are unable to attend class it is *your responsibility* to obtain notes, etc., *from your classmates*. Further, if you did not attend class please do not ask your instructor if you “missed anything important.” ALL lectures are important!

Important Dates

- January 12 - Last day to complete late registration.
- Drop/Add Period ends; last day to drop courses or withdraw from the University without incurring financial liability.
- Last day to change grading option.
- January 19 Monday - Martin Luther King Holiday (University Closed).
- January 30 - Last day to withdraw from the University with a 25% refund of tuition.
- February 27 - Last day to drop a course with a DR grade.
- Last day to withdraw from the University with a WI grade.
- March 16 – 21 - Spring Break.
- March 23 - Classes resume
- April 20 - 25 - Final week of the semester - modified class schedule: Final exams and other course assessment activities are scheduled during this week.

Course Outline and List of Readings (subject to adjustment at the discretion of the instructor)

Week One (Jan. 5-7)

Course introduction: Public Opinion and American Democracy
Reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter One; Asher, Chapter One

Week Two (Jan. 12-14)

Polling: The Scientific Assessment of Public Opinion
Reading: Asher, Chapters Three, Four, and Five

Weeks Three (Jan. 19-21)

Political Socialization and Political Learning
Reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter Two

Week Four (Jan. 26-28)

Microlevel Opinion and the Psychology of Opinion Holding Versus Macrolevel Opinion and the Flow of Political Sentiment
Reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapters Four and Seven

Week Five (Feb. 2-4)

Liberal-Conservative Ideology and the Organization of Opinions
Reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter Five; Asher, Chapter Two

Week Six (Feb. 9-11)

Liberal-Conservative Ideology and the Organization of Opinions Continued
Party Identification
Reading: See Week Five

Note: Exam One is on Wednesday, February 11

Week Seven (Feb. 16-18)

Party Identification Continued
Socioeconomic Class and Political Opinions

Reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter Six

Note: Paper One is due on February 18 at the beginning of class

Week Eight (Feb. 23-25)

Socioeconomic Class and Political Opinions Continued
Race, Gender, and Political Opinions

Week Nine (March 2-4)

Race, Gender and Political Opinions Continued
Age and Political Opinions

Week Ten (March 9-11)

Age and Political Opinions Continued

Note: Exam Two is on Wednesday, March 13

Week Eleven (March 16-20)

SPRING BREAK – No Class

Week Twelve (March 23-25)

Religion and Political Opinions
Geography and Political Opinions

Note: Paper Two is due on March 25 at the beginning of class

Week Thirteen (March 30-April 1)

The American Voter Model of Elections: Candidates, Issues, and the Vote

Week Fourteen (April 6-8)

Issue and the Parties: Issue Ownership

Reading: John R. Petrocik, et. al. 2004. "Issue Ownership and Presidential Campaigning, 1952-2000."
Political Science Quarterly (Winter). Blackboard

Week Fifteen (April 13-15)

Impact of Public Opinion: The Public and Its Elected Leaders

Reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter Ten, Eleven, and Twelve; Asher, Chapter Nine

Note: Paper Three due on April 15 at the beginning of class

Week Sixteen (April 20-25)

Exam 3 - TBA