

**Political Science 342**  
**Public Opinion and Political Behavior**  
**Spring, 2005**

**Instructor:** Geoff Peterson  
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**Course Description:** The focus of this course will be on the political attitudes and behavior patterns of the American public. We will explore the nature of public opinion, the processes by which we gain our political beliefs, and how those beliefs alter our behavior in the political arena. We will consider a variety of theoretical frameworks through which we can view opinion and behavior throughout the course. We will also examine the methods through which we measure opinion.

Since much of the course will revolve around political attitudes and issues of measurement, we will spend some time examining and constructing public opinion data. Part of your assignment for the course will be to participate in the design and implementation of a survey for the city of Eau Claire. More details on this will be provided later in the semester.

Finally, we will examine the racial divisions present in public opinion. Given the dramatic results of the recent election, it seems both timely and necessary to discuss the impact of racial differences on political attitudes and behavior.

The course is designed to be a discussion course. While there will be days that I will lecture, the primary driving force of the class will be your involvement. For that reason, it is vitally important that you keep up with the readings as they are assigned.

**Textbooks:**

*Required Texts:*

Erikson & Tedin. American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact.--RENTAL  
Flanigan & Zingale. Political Behavior of the American Electorate.  
Kinder & Sanders . Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals.

*Optional Text:*

Scott, G. & Garrison, S. The Political Science Writer's Manual.

There are three required texts for the course and one optional text. I highly recommend the Scott & Garrison text if you do not already have a copy, but it is not mandatory. All of the readings are listed in the semester outline at the end of the syllabus. Additional readings may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. You are expected to come to class with the readings completed.

**Course Requirements:** There are three basic requirements for the course: two exams, one book review, and a research project. The grade breakdown is as follows:

Examinations	40%
Book Review	10%
Research Project	30%
In-Class Discussion	10%
Survey Work	10%

The examinations will be entirely essay questions. The examinations are NOT comprehensive. The dates are listed on the semester outline. The instructor reserves the right to change the dates and content as needed for the course. Make-up examinations will be long essay exams given at the discretion of the instructor. Attendance is mandatory for the scheduled exams. Make-up exams will NOT be given unless you contact the instructor prior to the regularly scheduled time AND only if inability to take the exam on time is for good reason. Keep in mind that oversleeping, hangovers, and forgetfulness NOT valid reasons. If a genuine emergency prevented prior contact, see, call or e-mail the instructor as soon as possible after the exam. Failure to take an exam will result in zero points on that exam.

A list of possible books for the book review is attached at the end of the syllabus. The book review should be 4-6 pages long. You cannot simply do a summary of the book--your review must include a critique of the material. Books other than those on the list can be used with the approval of the instructor. **The book review is due APRIL 4<sup>th</sup> at the start of class.**

Everyone in the class will be required to complete a major research paper. The paper will be an in-depth examination of some aspect of public opinion or political behavior. Possible topics include changes in public opinion on a particular issue over time, differences between various demographic groups, or type of participation. All papers will include at least some rudimentary statistical analysis. If you are not familiar with the statistical package SPSS, training will be provided before Spring Break. The resulting paper should be at least 15 pages long and properly documented with footnotes and bibliography. You must use the APSA documentation standard outlined the class handout. The deadlines for the paper are as follows:

Decide on Topic	<b>Feb. 4</b>
Last Day I will Read Rough Drafts	<b>April 29</b>
Final Paper Due	<b>May 13</b>

The survey project will involve designing and implementing a telephone survey in the Eau Claire area. The class will work as groups to design various parts of the survey, and all members of the class will be responsible for collecting 10 completed phone responses. More details will be provided later in the semester.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class, but no formal attendance will be taken. Be warned, however, that failure to attend will result in discussion. In addition, a substantial portion of the exams will be based on material covered ONLY in the classroom. Consistent failure to attend will lower your grade dramatically. You are responsible for ALL information covered in lecture, including changes in the reading assignments, changes in test dates, and in-class homework assignments.

**Students With Disabilities:** Any student who has a disability that will in any way impede his or her completion of the course needs to speak to the instructor as soon as possible about alternative arrangements. All possible arrangements will be made to accommodate students in need of assistance.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** Do it and you fail the course. This should seem obvious, but it must be made clear--if you are caught, you are done. Cheating is defined as attempting to improve your grade through any method considered unethical by the university, including copying another student's test, bringing crib sheets for exams, writing notes on your hands or on the brim of your baseball cap, etc.

Plagiarism is defined as claiming any other author's intellectual work as your own. This can include copying parts of another written work and not giving the original author credit for it; using summaries of work written by others and claiming it as your own, etc. Plagiarism is NOT limited to copying another author's work word-for-word. If you use the author's IDEAS without giving the author credit for them, you are just as guilty as if you had Xeroxed the statements and put yourself down as author.

The instructor reserves the right to ask for any written assignment in electronic format. The submitted electronic version MUST be an exact match for the paper version. All papers may be submitted to turnitin.com and/or any other website addressing plagiarism issues. Failure to provide the electronic copy of any assignment is grounds for disciplinary action in the course.

## **STANDARDS FOR GRADING**

A: designates work of extra-ordinarily high quality; reflects thorough and comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; arguments are clearly organized with supporting ideas.

B: designates work of high quality; reflects a clearly organized but less than comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; presents organized arguments that are supported by ideas.

C: Designates work which meets the minimal requirements of the assignment; written work reflects adequate organization and development of ideas, but arguments are communicated in a superficial or simplistic manner.

D: Designates work of poor quality which meets the minimum requirements of the assignment, but demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, and spelling; treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic; may indicate that the student has not read assignments thoroughly.

F: Designates work of poor quality that does not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment or task; fails to reflect an understanding of the issues at hand; fails to present organized arguments or fails to adequately support arguments with ideas; or which is not handed in on time.



## READINGS

E=Erikson & Tedlin . American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact.

F=Flanigan & Zingale. Political Behavior of the American Electorate.

K=Kinder & Sanders. Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals.

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
1/26	Introductions	
1/28	The Cultural Basis For Politics	F Ch. 1
1/31	Defining Public Opinion	E Ch. 1
2/2-2/9	Measuring Public Opinion	E Ch. 2
2/11	Individual & Group Opinions	E Ch. 3 & 4
2/14-2/18	Political Socialization	E Ch. 5
2/21-2/23	Support for Democracy	E Ch. 6
2/25-2/28	Political Behavior In Historical Context	F Ch. 2
3/2-3/9	Partisanship as the Basis for Politics	F Ch. 3-5
<b>3/11</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</b>	
<b>3/14-3/18</b>	<b>SPSS Orientation Classes</b>	
3/30-4/1	Survey Design Sessions	
4/4-4/6	Elections	E Ch.9, F. Ch. 8
4/8	No Class	
4/11	Overview of Group Opinion & Issues	E Ch. 7, F Ch. 6
4/13-4/15	Race and Public Opinion-An Overview	K Ch. 1-3
4/18-4/20	Threat and Prejudice	K Ch. 4-5
4/22-4/25	Race in Elections--Still An Issue?	K Ch. 7-9
4/27-4/29	Beyond Black and White--Other Racial Issues	TBA
5/2-5/6	The Media and Public Opinion	E Ch. 8
5/9-5/11	Non-Traditional Behavior	TBA
5/13	The Impact of Opinion	E Ch. 11

FINAL EXAM—3 PM, Wednesday May 18<sup>th</sup>

## Possible Books

Andrain, Charles F. & Apter, David Ernest. Political Protest And Social Change: Analyzing Politics.

Asher, Herbert B. Polling And The Public : What Every Citizen Should Know.

Brehm, John. The Phantom Respondents : Opinion Surveys And Political Representation.

Burnheim, John. Is Democracy Possible? : The Alternative To Electoral Politics.

Burrell, Barbara C., Public Opinion, The First Ladyship, And Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Cantril, Albert Hadley, The Opinion Connection : Polling, Politics, And The Press.

Carmines, Edward G. & Stimson, James A. Issue Evolution : Race And The Transformation Of American Politics.

Chisman, Forrest P. Attitude Psychology And The Study Of Public Opinion.

Crespi, Irving. The Public Opinion Process : How The People Speak.

Ginsberg, Benjamin. The Captive Public : How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power.

Glasser, Theodore Lewis. & Salmon, Charles T. Public Opinion And The Communication Of Consent.

Guinier, Lani. The Tyranny Of The Majority : Fundamental Fairness In Representative Democracy.

Herbst, Susan. Numbered Voices : How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics.

Huckfeldt, R. Robert. & Kohfeld, C. W. Race And The Decline Of Class In American Politics.

Keith, Bruce E. The Myth Of The Independent Voter

Kull, Steven. & Destler, I. M. Misreading The Public : The Myth Of A New Isolationism.

Lavrakas, Paul J. & Holley, Jack K. Polling And Presidential Election Coverage.

Mann, Thomas E. & Orren, Gary R. Media Polls In American Politics.

Mitchell, Susan. American Attitudes : Who Thinks What About The Issues That Shape Our Lives.

Moore, David W. The Superpollsters : How They Measure And Manipulate Public Opinion In America.

Muller, Edward N. Aggressive Political Participation.

Mutz, Diana Carole., Sniderman, Paul M., Brody, Richard A. Political Persuasion And Attitude Change.

Nagel, Jack H. Participation.

Nieburg, H. L. Public Opinion, Tracking And Targeting .

Nye, Joseph S., Zelikow, Philip, King, David C. Why People Don't Trust Government.

Peterson, Steven A. Political Behavior : Patterns In Everyday Life.

Piven, Frances Fox & Cloward, Richard A. Why Americans Don't Vote.

Reeves, Keith. Voting Hopes Or Fears? : White Voters, Black Candidates & Racial Politics In America.

Scheele, Paul E., "We Get What We Vote For-- Or Do We?" : The Impact Of Elections On Governing.

Sears, David O., Sidanius, Jim., Bobo, Lawrence. Racialized Politics : The Debate About Racism In America.

Stanley, Harold W. Voter Mobilization And The Politics Of Race : The South And Universal Suffrage, 1952-1984.

Teixeira, Ruy A. The Disappearing American Voter

Verba, Sidney. & Pye, Lucian W. The Citizen And Politics : A Comparative Perspective.

Wanta, Wayne. The Public And The National Agenda : How People Learn About Important Issues.

Zaller, John. The Nature And Origins Of Mass Opinion.