

Communication 4820
Public Opinion and Communication
The Ohio State University
Fall 2018

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 4:00 to 5:00 pm and by appointment

Office Location: Derby Hall 3127

Course location: Journalism Building 360

Course time: Tuesday, 9:10 am-11:00 am

Course Description

Why should we care about the public's opinion? What role, if any, should public opinion play in a democratic society? Should we treat all opinions equally? This course attempts to answer these and many other questions by providing a broad overview of the historical, philosophical, and social scientific approaches to the study of public opinion.

Course Objectives

(1) To become familiar with the normative, historical, and social scientific perspectives on public opinion (2) To help students understand the actual and potential role that public opinion plays in a democratic society.

Required Materials

All required readings will be posted on Carmen. You will need a laptop for some of the in-class activities.

Course Format

The course is composed of lecture sessions, group presentations, and in-class activities. *During lecture, I will discuss a large amount of information that go beyond the assigned readings (such information will also appear in the exams).* Thus, it is important that you attend each session and take good notes.

Course Requirements

(1) *Exam 1 (20 pts.), Exam 2 (20 pts.), and Exam 3 (50)*. Exams will assess your knowledge of all aspects of the course.

(2) *Problem Sets (60 pts.)*. There will be several in-class problem sets throughout the course. You will do these problem sets as a group. Every member of the group will receive the same grade. Your lowest grade will be dropped. If you miss class, you will not be allowed to re-take a missed problem set.

READ CAREFULLY: Make-up tests and problem sets will only be given when the student provides an appropriate justification for missing the scheduled exam/problem set. Make-up exams/problem sets will be arranged for university-excused or unavoidable circumstances only (e.g., deaths, personal/family illness and emergencies) with written verification. The written verification must have the contact information of someone who can verify your reasons for missing an exam/problem set. **Furthermore, it must be provided to me within 48 hours after the missed class (by 11:30 am the immediate Thursday after the missed class)**. Appropriate justification depends on each case and will be decided by Dr. Coronel. The instructor also reserves the right to withhold the exam if a student arrives more than 15 minutes late on exam days (i.e., he/she will receive a zero on the exam). If the student arrives after the first person has completed/left the exam, the student will not be allowed to take that exam and will receive an automatic zero.

(3) *Group Presentations (50 pts.)*. Depending on the class size, you will be part of a 4 to 6 person group. Every member of the group will receive the same grade. Every member of the group will be required to deliver some aspect of the presentation. The group will also be required to meet with me (2 times) prior to the date of the presentation in order to discuss the content of the presentation. If the group fails to meet with me, the entire group will lose 10 points.

As this is a hybrid course, your group presentations will require a significant time commitment outside of class. You need to (1) understand the relevant concepts (2) coordinate with your group in order to create a coherent and high quality presentation. Most of you will only have one week from the time we cover the relevant concepts (that you will be required to present) to the date of your group presentation.

Furthermore, if a member of the group misses the group presentation due to an excused absence (the written verification must have the contact information of someone who can verify your reasons for missing an exam), he or she will be required to present the entire group presentation to me in order to receive the group's grade. Otherwise, this person will receive zero points.

Policies and Procedures

Students are expected to act responsibly and abide by the following policies:

Laptops, cell-phones, and recording devices. All cell phones must be silenced during class. Students must refrain from reading the newspaper, texting, listening to headphones, e-mailing, or using the Internet during class unless it is part of the lecture. Students may be asked to leave class for such behaviors.

Laptops and other electronic devices are allowed in class. However, they must only be used for taking down notes. If a student is using an electronic device for something other than class-related activities and it is distracting to me, I will kick the student out of class.

Any form of audio or video recording is not allowed in class. Students are also not permitted to take pictures of the projection screen. The instructor does not give permission for the lecture sessions to be recorded (in either an

audio or video format).

Slides on Carmen. PowerPoint slides will be posted on Carmen. However, you need contextual information provided during lecture in order to understand the content on the slides. Students, therefore, need to take good notes during lectures.

Academic misconduct. Academic misconduct will not be tolerated on any occasion. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

Treating Every Member of the Class with Respect

Treatment of all students with respect regardless of race, gender or gender identification, sexual orientation, or other characteristics is a priority in this class. If issues arise with other students, or if you have concerns about the ways in which I may have expressed myself in these regards, please let me know. In this class, you will also have the chance to indicate the name that you prefer to be called and, if you choose, to identify pronouns with which you would like to be addressed. Please let me know during office hours or by email. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

Finally, we will discuss scientific studies that generated a great deal of attention from the mainstream media (e.g., New York Times). When we discuss a specific study, it is important to keep in mind that your opinions/arguments about the study should focus on the scientific merits of the study. In addition, if you disagree with another student’s opinion about a study, you should direct your comments at the claims/arguments (***do not*** attack the student’s character etc.).

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

Graduating Seniors and Other Students. Graduating seniors (and other students) who “need” this course to graduate should work especially hard to ensure that they will pass this course. To be fair to all students in the class, there will *not* be opportunities for students to re-take exams or re-complete assignments in order to raise their grades. *It is the student’s responsibility* to ensure that he or she receives a passing final grade by working diligently and responsibly throughout the semester. *Exceptions will not be made.*

Grading Scheme. At the end of the course, dividing your total number of points by 200 will yield your final course grade percentage. Letter grades will be assigned using the following grading scheme. **THERE WILL BE NO ROUNDING UP OF GRADES.**

93 - 100 (A)
90 - 92.9 (A-)
87 - 89.9 (B+)
83 - 86.9 (B)
80 - 82.9 (B-)
77 - 79.9 (C+)
73 - 76.9 (C)
70 - 72.9 (C-)
67 - 69.9 (D+)
60 - 66.9 (D)
Below 60 (E)

By staying enrolled in this class, the student agrees to abide by the policies described in the syllabus.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Lecture Topic	Readings	Presentation
August 21	Introduction to the course		
August 28	What is public opinion? What role should public opinion play in a Democracy?	Glynn et al Chapter 1	
September 4	How should we measure public opinion?	Glynn Chapter 3	
September 11	Should we treat all opinions equally? What is the role of knowledge in public opinion?	Brennan Chapter 2, Somin Articles	
September 18	Deliberative Democracy	Chapters 1 and 6 Neblo	Public opinion about what constitutes an American
September 25	exam 1		
October 2	Deliberative Poll		Deliberative Poll
October 9	Where do opinions come from? (Part 1)	Buchen, Edsall, and Judis	Public opinion on same- sex marriage
October 16	Where do opinions come from? (Part 2)	Mooney	Public opinion on immigration
October 23	Where do opinions come from? (Part 3)	Berinsky Chapter 6 and 7	Public opinion on climate change
October 30	exam 2		
November 6	Numerical information and public opinion part 1		
November 13	Numerical information and public opinion part 2		Public opinion on Russian interference in the 2016 election
November 20	Documentary		
November 27	Other democratic systems and public opinion		Public opinion on the institution of democracy
December 4	exam 3		