

**PUBLIC OPINION & COMMUNICATION (3 CREDITS)**

COMMUNICATION 4820

AU 2019

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Office hours: 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Mondays, and by appointment, including Apple Messages, Skype or Zoom.

Classroom: Room 106 Journalism

Class time: 12:40 to 1:35 p.m. Tuesdays & Thursdays

Textbook:

Berinsky, Adam J. (2016). *New directions in public opinion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York: Routledge.

Note that there are paperback and electronic Kindle editions of this book available at a somewhat reduced cost. An electronic edition that you can download or read online is also available at through OSU Libraries.

Course format and expectations:

This is a hybrid course that is comprised of online learning, (lectures, readings and videos) as well as twice-weekly classroom sessions. The two-day, two-hour format means that you will be expected to keep up with a considerable amount of content outside of class. This will require discipline on your end. All your exams, quizzes and other assignments will be completed online, and all the teaching materials are provided online on Carmen. The classroom sessions will supplement your learning, as I will provide further explanation of the material, and also challenge you in intelligently discussing complex concepts with your peers in-person.

To succeed in this hybrid course, it is essential that you have regular and reliable online access. I will from time to time post announcements, and/or send out individual and class emails with updated information about the class. This means you should regularly (that is, daily) check Carmen and your university email.

Course goals:

This course will help you better understand public opinion – what it is, how it is measured and used by governments, businesses and scholars, what are its key ingredients, how it is can be changed, and how it shapes media coverage of politics, governance and public policy. My approach is communication-based, but I also draw on literature from some other social science disciplines to help explain the key issues and examples.

We will be studying the nature and history of public opinion, ways it is measured through survey research and other means, and its relationship to communication and governance. The theoretical meaning of public opinion is quite broad and diverse, but public opinion usually is measured and studied by representative population surveys.

We will consider carefully the relationships among public opinion and various forms of communication. This includes interpersonal conversations among friends and family, but also mass communication, newer forms of Interactive Communication Technologies (ICTs), and social media. Of particular interest are newer forms of public opinion and public deliberation, often called “public consultation.” This includes such innovations as Deliberative Polling and related ideas and technologies. Public consultation goes beyond public opinion – it attempts to measure informed opinion, or opinions that are formed after one has had an opportunity to learn about a topic and discuss it with others. Such consultation is now widely used in a range of situations in which the mature, informed opinions of people are needed to inform decision-making and public choice.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the class you should develop a clear understanding of the key theoretical issues involved in the study of public opinion, the strengths and weaknesses of the main methods used in measuring public opinion in populations. We also consider public consultation, and to appreciate the significant new opportunities that arise from new forms of assessment of quality public opinion.

Specifically, you will:

1. Understand the key role of public opinion and public affairs communication within democratic society.
2. Learn to use the Total Survey Error approach to evaluate surveys and learn the difference between good quality polls and surveys and others.
3. Understand the major differences between the study of public opinion and “public consultation,” and be able to judge when is each approach is most appropriate.
4. Learn to differentiate genuine expressions of grass roots [bottom up] public opinion from fake [top down] expressions purchased by corporations or other interest groups.
5. Understand the contribution of social movements and political leaders to the ways that communication influences public perceptions and misperceptions of key social and political issues.

**Course Requirements:**

Attendance:

The hybrid format of this course means you have to be responsible for self-study of more material than in a normal lecture-discussion course. But please note that

*attendance is required at all class sessions.* I will take attendance at every class session. This is designed to encourage you to participate actively in order to get maximum benefit from the course. Evidence clearly shows that students who come to class regularly and are prepared to engage in discussion learn more and generally do better in the class. This means you will need to come to the class, stay for the entire period, and be prepared for it by reading the assigned materials in advance. This is very important. Please make an effort to be on time for the class. Class is not the time to catch up on texts, social media, Twitter, Instagram, etc. You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet at each class meeting. Do not sign in for another person. This can be treated as an instance of academic misconduct.

Required readings:

Some weeks have supplemental required readings. These can be accessed on the university's learning management system, Carmen.

Web site:

Carmen will be used for distributing and maintaining records and documents such as the syllabus, assignments announcements, handouts, grades and other useful web-links and materials. All papers will be uploaded to Carmen, and all tests and quizzes will be administered on Carmen as well. Access this from on or off campus by pointing to <https://carmen.osu.edu>. All papers should be turned in to the appropriate dropbox.

Quizzes and exams:

We will have five quizzes, a midterm and a final exam. These will be conducted online using Carmen's quiz function and will deal with the readings and lecture materials.

Response papers:

Each of you will pick four week's readings and prepare essays dealing with the themes contained in those readings or other materials, e.g. videos. Each paper should be around 500 words (about one page, single-spaced). You will sign up for due dates for the essays, and they should be uploaded to Carmen before the start of class for the week you are writing about. I want your reactions to the course materials – not the lectures or class discussions – so the idea is that you write these before hearing the lectures or classroom discussion.

In preparing the essay, first consider ALL the material that is assigned for the given week, that is, read any articles or chapters assigned, watch any films, etc., and think about a crosscutting theme that runs through these materials. In your essay, provide a concise description of the theme, and explain it. Offer your reaction to the theme. It is also very important to write absolutely accurate, factual information.

The best essays will articulate a point of view with respect to the materials and then use facts from the materials to support this argument. These papers should *not* be a summary of the main points. I am more interested in your reaction to the information.

This might involve the usefulness of the information, the level of interest you have in it, anything that you found particularly surprising or disappointing, etc.

Note that although these essays are short, they should contain the elements of any well-written essay: A good, creative title, strong lead, and good introduction, transitions and conclusion. A specific grading rubric will be placed on Carmen. Check that for the specific quality criteria for which points are assigned.

Grades:

The OSU “standard scheme” of points grading as implemented by Carmen is used and I will try to keep the grades on Carmen’s grade book. Here is the OSU “standard scheme”: 93 - 100 (A), 90 - 92.99 (A-), 87 - 89.99 (B+), 83 - 86.99 (B), 80 - 82.99 (B-), 77 - 79.99 (C+), 73 - 76.99 (C), 70 - 72.99 (C-), 67 - 69.99 (D+), 60 - 66.99 (D), Below 60 (E). Note that there is *no rounding* in the points system.

The following are the components of your grade for the term:

Quizzes: (5@5 points each).....	25%
One-page papers: (3@5 points each).....	15%
Midterm Exam: .....	25%
Final Exam: .....	25%
<u>Participation and pop up assignments: .....</u>	<u>10%</u>
TOTAL.....	100%

Your grade will be determined according to your performance on these items. There will be no opportunities to re-take exams, redo assignments, or complete additional or extra credit work.

Quizzes must be taken within the designated days/times. These time frames are very generous. No early or late exams are allowed except in the case of an illness or family emergency. In the rare event that an illness or emergency arises, it is your responsibility to inform me *prior* to the scheduled exam time, and provide me with appropriate written documentation as needed.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**E-mail and Carmen**

Throughout the semester, expect to receive e-mails from me regarding the course. As such, it is important that you check your OSU e-mail account regularly and make sure that course e-mails are not going to your junk folder.

All e-mail is automatically sent to students’ osu.edu accounts. Therefore, you must regularly check your OSU e-mail. You should always use your OSU e-mail to contact me.

All readings for the course will be available on Carmen or through OSU Libraries.

**IMPORTANT:** If you discover any broken links or other issues in our course content, please let me know immediately.

To succeed in this hybrid course, which is largely online, it is essential that you have regular and reliable online access. I will post announcements and/or send out individual and class e-mails with updated information about the class. Consequently you should regularly (*i.e., daily*) check Carmen.

### **Late Work**

Computer and/or system problems do NOT excuse late work or missed quizzes or exams.

If you wait until the last minute to submit assignments, you are taking a huge risk. Computer, internet, and life-related problems happen every day, and they are almost always unexpected and seemingly beyond one's control. Be prepared by completing your assignments early. In general, you should prepare your work *ahead* of deadline. Penalties will apply to all late work unless *advance* arrangements have been made with me.

Deadline extensions will be considered only for those who immediately provide written documentation of severe illness, death in the immediate family, or official OSU-related business.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

#### **Academic Misconduct**

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/>

While many people associate academic misconduct with "cheating," the term encompasses a wider scope of student behaviors which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Violation of course rules;
- Violation of program regulations;
- Knowingly providing or receiving information during a course exam or program assignment;

- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during a course exam or program assignment;
- Knowingly providing or using assistance in the laboratory, on field work, or on a course assignment, unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor or, where appropriate, a project/research supervisor;
- Submission of work not performed in a course: This includes (but is not limited to) instances where a student fabricates and/or falsifies information for an academic assignment. It also includes instances where a student submits data or information (such as a term paper) from one course to satisfy the requirements of another course, unless submission of such work is permitted by the instructor;
- Submitting plagiarized work for a course/program assignment;
- Serving as or asking another student to serve as a substitute while taking an exam.

### **Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities**

#### **Requesting accommodations**

**The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu) ; 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu) ; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.**

#### **Technology Use and General Politeness**

This is a hybrid course which is largely based online. Accordingly, our classroom meetings should be focused on lessons and discussion—not for texting, web browsing, e-mailing, etc. Technology use such as noisy cell phones, Internet shopping, and text messaging at your desk are a distraction to the me and your fellow students. Please be respectful of those around you by turning off or silencing your phone and putting it away before class.

Laptops and other portable electronic devices should NOT be used in the classroom unless explicitly required as part of the day's topic. This is becoming standard practice in

courses in our department by most every instructor. Violation of this policy may result in the student being asked to leave the classroom.

Notes may be taken with paper and pen, or on an iPad or other tablet. Not only is this courteous for those around you who are spending their time and money in the classroom without being distracted by those around them, it is also beneficial for you as a student. Here's why:

Although laptops or tablets can be used for productive purposes in a classroom, it is my observation (reinforced by growing academic research) that they primarily serve as distractions—to those who use them, those nearby, and the person leading the class. Although some might argue that laptops are beneficial for taking notes, considerable scientific research demonstrates that using laptops for note taking impedes learning compared to paper and pen note taking. If you'd like to read a brief summary of just some of the evidence, check out the *Scientific American* article "A Learning Secret: Don't Take Notes with a Laptop":

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>

To maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning during the discussion-based classroom meetings of this hybrid course, please be courteous to other members of the class and treat them with the dignity and respect that you expect from others.

**Disruptions:** Disruptions and distractions (including talking during lecture; text messaging or other phone or computer use), threatening behavior, and negative participation (e.g., use of inappropriate language or derogatory speech) will not be tolerated. Any student who engages in such behavior may be asked to leave class, and be reported to the Dean of Students and/or University Police. Cell phones are considered a disruption. Turn your cell phone off completely before the start of class. Not just the ringer—completely off. If you object to these policies or do not feel that you can adhere to them, please do not enroll in this class.

**Attendance while having flu and other flu-like illnesses:**

You should not attend class while ill with influenza. Flu shots are readily available and they can be helpful in preventing the most severe flu. Students with flu-like symptoms will be asked to leave class. The illness and self-isolation period will usually be about a week. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the flu to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite a flu-induced absence. If you are absent due to the flu, you will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. Completion of all assignments and exams assures the greatest chance for students to develop heightened understanding and content mastery. The opportunity to complete all assignments and exams supports the university's desire to enable students to make responsible situational decisions,

including the decision to avoid spreading a contagious virus to other students, staff, and faculty, without endangering their academic work. Students with the flu do not need to provide a physician's certification of illness. However, ill students should inform their teachers (but not through personal contact in which there is a risk of exposing others to the virus) as soon as possible that they are absent because of the flu.

### **Diversity**

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our school, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

### **Title IX**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

### **Student Academic Services**

Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

### **Student Services**

The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

### **Copyright Disclaimer**

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

### **Mental Health Statement**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to

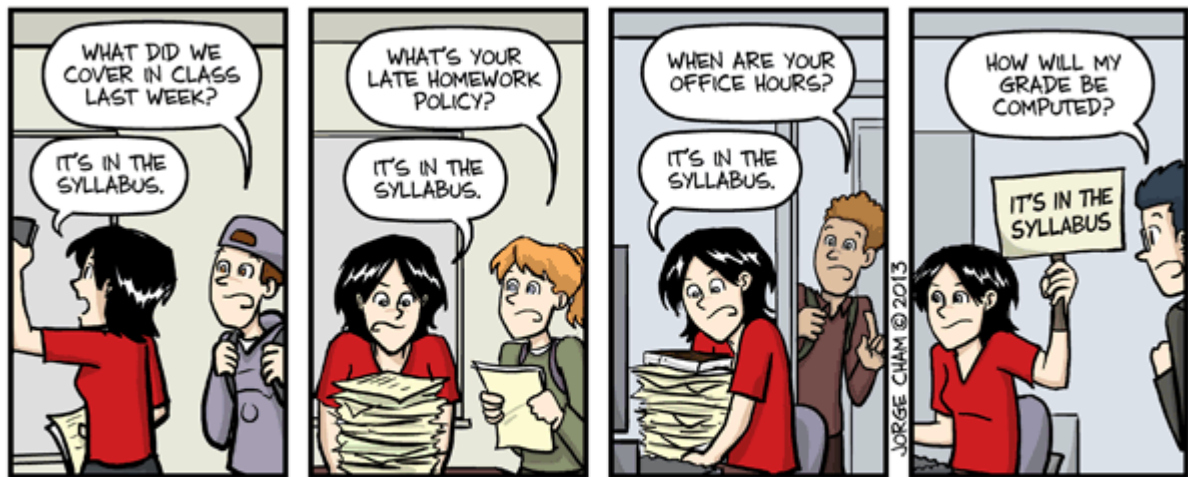


participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**Read this syllabus carefully. By remaining enrolled in the class, you have accepted the conditions and requirements of the course.**



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

## **COMMUNICATION 4820: PUBLIC OPINION & COMMUNICATION**

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS (SUBJECT TO REVISION AND ADDITIONS)

### **Week 1, August 20, 22**

Topics: Course, instructor and student introductions; Basic concepts and resources for studying public opinion

Berinsky, Introduction, pp. 1-17. [Library and Carmen]

Rakich, N. (2019). The public blamed Trump for the shutdown – But that might be changing. January 4. Fivethirtyeight.com [Carmen]

See Assignment 1 on Carmen's Assignment Tab. Please complete this before class and upload it to the appropriate dropbox.

### **Week 2, August 27, 29**

Topic: Meaning of public opinion

Tilly, C. (1983). Speaking your mind without elections, surveys or social movements. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47, 461-478. [Carmen]

Berinsky, Chapter 1: Herbst, S., History and meaning of public opinion, pp. 21-33. [Library or Carmen]

### **Week 3, September 3, 5**

Topic: Enduring problems of public opinion

Berinsky, Chapter 3: Gilens, M., Two-thirds full? Citizen competence and democratic governance, pp. 54-78. [Library or Carmen]

Quiz 1 online on Carmen's quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until September 10, at 11 a.m.

### **Week 4, September 10, 12**

Topic: Surveys for measuring public opinion

Berinsky, Chapter 2: Hillygus, D.S., The practice of survey research, pp. 34-53. [Library or Carmen]

Silver, N. (2018). Which pollsters to trust in 2018. May 31. Fivethirtyeight.com [Carmen]

### **Week 5, September 17, 19**

Topics: The Total Survey Error Approach; Can “big data” replace surveys?

Weisberg, H. (2016). Total Survey Error. *Oxford Handbook of Polling and Polling Methods*. [Carmen]

Kaiser Family Foundation (2018). *Topline: Health Care Tracking Poll*, November. [Carmen]

Mahrt, M. (2018). Big Data. In P. Napoli (Ed.), *Mediated Communication: Handbooks of Communication Science* (pp. 627-641). Berlin and Boston: DeGruyter Mouton. [Carmen]

Quiz 2 online on Carmen’s quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, September 24, at 11 a.m.

### **Week 6, September 24, 26**

Topics: Citizen competence and democracy: Issues in public judgment.

Hochschild, J. & Einstein, K.L. (2014). ‘It isn’t what we don’t know that gives us trouble, it’s what we know that ain’t so’: Misinformation and democratic politics. *British Journal of Political Science* 45, 467-475.

Nyhan, B. (2010). Why the death panel myth wouldn’t die: Misinformation in the health care reform debate. *The Forum*, 8,1, Article 5. [Carmen]

Quiz 3 online on Carmen’s quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, September 26, at 11 a.m.

### **Week 7, October 1, 3**

Topics: Public consultation: Deliberative Polls and related technologies for public engagement

Hammonds, K.H. (2018). Confronting the narrative of brokenness. How the news could reduce polarization and repair our social fabric. *Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)*. [Carmen]

Fishkin, J. & Farrar, C. (2005). Deliberative polling: From experiment to community resource. In J. Gastil & P. Levine (Eds.), *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (pp. 68-79). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Carmen]

Europe in one room: An experiment in democracy (Video Resource) Access from ODEE Secured Media Library. [Go.osu.edu/SecuredMediaLibrary](http://Go.osu.edu/SecuredMediaLibrary)

Participatory Budgeting is Democratizing Fund Allocation in Brooklyn. Bric TV.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2nhVXX3nVU>

Recommended:

Leininger, M. (2018). *Infogagement: Citizenship and democracy in the age of connection*. Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE).

Public Agenda. (2016). *Public spending, by the people: Participatory budgeting in the United States and Canada in 2014-15*. Yankelovich Center for Public Judgment and Kettering Foundation.

Midterm exam begins Thursday online at Carmen. The exam window will remain open until Tuesday, October 8 at 11 a.m.

### **Week 8, October 8, 10**

Topics: Case Study: US demographic changes and public opinion about immigration.

Berinsky, Chapter 13: Schildkraut, D.J. Ambivalence in American public opinion about immigration, pp. 278-298. [Library or Carmen]

Berinsky, Chapter 14: Barreto, M.A. & Parker, C.S., Public opinion and reactionary movements: From the Klan to the Tea Party, pp. 299-317. [Library or Carmen]

Vespa, J., Armstrong, D.M., Medina, L. (2018, March). Demographic turning points for the United States: Population projections for 2020 to 2060. *Current Population Reports*, P25-1144, US Census Bureau. Washington, DC. [Carmen]

Tobar, H. (2019). Hollywood's obsession with cartels. *New York Times*. January 6. [Carmen]

Frontline: Anatomy of an exodus. [Slideshow] <http://apps.frontline.org/anatomy-of-an-exodus/#1>

Recommended:

Freeman, G.P. (2008). Politics and mass immigration. In R. E. Goodin & C. Tilly (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (pp. 636-647). New York: Oxford University Press. [Carmen]

October 10 is Autumn Break. No classes.

**Week 9, October 15, 17**

Topics: Belief systems/Ideology: How are issues connected to each other?

Berinsky, Chapter 4: Federico, C.M., The structure, foundations and expression of ideology, pp. 81-103. [Library or Carmen]

Berinsky, Chapter 7: Hetherington, M., Partisanship and polarization in contemporary politics, pp. 146-164. [Library or Carmen]

**Week 10, October 22, 24**

Topics: Defining and framing public issues.

Berinsky, Ch. 16: Campbell, A.L. & Rigby, E., Public opinion and public policy, pp. 332-354. [Library or Carmen]

Goode, E. & Nachman, B. (1994). Moral panics: Culture, politics and social construction. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 20, 149-71. [Carmen]

**Week 11, October 29, 31**

Topics: Bringing issues to the attention of the public.

Boydston, A.E., et al. (2014). Two faces of media attention: Media storm versus non-storm coverage. *Political Communication*, 41, 509-531. [Carmen]

Aaron Huey: America's native prisoners of war. TED Talk.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/aaron\\_huey#t-1594](https://www.ted.com/talks/aaron_huey#t-1594)

Quiz 4 online on Carmen quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, November 5, at 11 a.m.

**Week 12, November 5, 7**

Topics: Understanding the nature of public issue campaigns: Changing media, changing institutions.

Berinsky, Chapter 15, Baum, M., Media, public opinion and presidential leadership, pp. 318-331. [Carmen]

Drezner, D.W. (2017). *The ideas industry*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 5: This is not your father's think tank, pp. 123-145. [Carmen]

**Week 13, November 12, 14**

Topics: Fake public opinion expression: Astroturf vs. grassroots opinion and activism

Walker, E.T. & Rea, C. (2014). The political mobilization of firms and industries. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40, 281-304. [Carmen]

*Hot Coffee* (Video Resource) Access from ODEE Secured Media Library.  
Go.osu.edu/SecuredMediaLibrary

Quiz 5 online on Carmen's quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, November 19, at 11 a.m.

**Week 14, November 19, 21**

Topics: Campaigns, difference and inequality: Knowledge Gap and Digital Divide

Berinsky, Chapter 12: Sides, J. & Haselwerdt, J., Campaigns and elections, pp. 261-277. [Carmen or Library]

Frankel, L.L. & Hillygus, D.S. (2014). Niche communication in political campaigns. *Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. [Carmen]

Fuentes-Bautista, M. & Olson, C. (2018). Digital divide. In P. Napoli (Ed.), *Mediated Communication: Handbooks of Communication Science* (pp. 513-533). Berlin and Boston: DeGruyter Mouton. [Carmen]

**Week 15, November 26, 28**

Topics: Gender issues in public opinion research.

Berinsky, Chapter 6: Burns, N., et al., The politics of gender, pp. 124-145. [Library or Carmen]

November 28 is Thanksgiving. No classes. University is closed.

**Week 16, December 3. [Final class day.]**

Topics: Race, ethnicity and public opinion.

Berinsky, Chapter 5: Czaja, E., et al., Race, ethnicity and the group basis of public opinion, pp. 104-123. [Library or Carmen]

Please be sure to complete your online SEI (course/instructor evaluation).

**Week 17, Final take-home exam due Tuesday, December 10, at 2 p.m.**