

**Communication 4820**  
**Public Opinion and Communication**  
**The Ohio State University**  
**Spring 2020**

**Course Instructor:** Professor Jason C. Coronel, Ph.D.

**Email:** [coronel.4@osu.edu](mailto:coronel.4@osu.edu)

**Office hours:** Tuesdays 4:30 to 5:30 pm and by appointment

**Office Location:** Derby Hall 3127

**Course location:** Journalism Building 216

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

### **Course Description**

Why do some people support the death penalty while others do not? Should we treat all opinions equally? Can we really trust polls? What role, if any, should polls play in a democratic society? Are your attitudes the product of your life experiences or are they “hard wired” at birth? Do you possess beliefs that you’re not even consciously aware of? How can we work within a democratic system to translate people’s beliefs into actual laws? 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 learn how to translate public opinion into actual laws through the process of direct democracy.

### **Required Materials**

All required readings are posted on Carmen as pdf files. You will need a laptop for many of the in-class activities.

### **Course Format**

The course is composed of lecture sessions, group work (both inside and outside of class), and individual in-class activities. During lecture, I will discuss 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**

Exams will assess your knowledge of all aspects of the course.

*Exam 1* (20 points)

*Exam 2* (20 points)

As this is a hybrid course, there will be a **significant** amount of group work that you are required to complete outside of class. This group work is a semester-long project that will culminate in a proposal to change some part of Ohio law. You will learn how you, as a Ohio resident, can get proposed laws on the ballot on Election Day through the process of direct democratic elections.

*Assignments 1 to 5:* (50 points)

*Deliberative Polling Group Presentation: (20 points)*

You are allowed one unexcused absence throughout the semester.

*Class attendance: (20 points)*

**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.

### **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 without consent of the instructor.

**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 130 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)

**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)

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

**Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Semester-Long Group Project</b>
<b>January 7</b>	First Day		Meet with group members, in class
<b>January 14</b>	Public Opinion and Democracy	Price - Public opinion in political theories	Assignment 1 assigned
<b>January 21</b>	Survey Research, Polls, and Political Knowledge	Hillygus - The challenges of survey research	Assignment 2 assigned
<b>January 28</b>	Attitudes: Social Sources	Heatherington - Partisanship and polarization	Assignment 3 assigned
<b>February 4</b>	Attitudes: Biological Sources	Hibbing - Biological underpinnings of public opinion	Groups meets in class
<b>February 11</b>	Exam 1		Groups meet with professor outside class
<b>February 18</b>	Attitudes: Non-conscious sources	Banaji - The psychology of implicit intergroup bias	Groups meet with professor outside class
<b>February 25</b>	Public Opinion and Direct Democracy in practice in the US	Reilly - Direct democracy and political comprehension, Reilly - Theoretical foundations, Reilly - Impact of language on participation	Groups meet with professor outside class
<b>March 3</b>	Direct Democracy Continued and Deliberative Democracy	Lewis - Direct democracy and threat of tyranny, Lewis - Direct democracy and ant minority policies, Lewis - Direct democracy and pro-minority policies, Fishkin - Deliberative polling and public opinion	Assignment 4 assigned
<b>March 10</b>	<b>Spring Break/No Classes</b>		
<b>March 17</b>	Exam 2		Groups meet with professor outside class
<b>March 24</b>	Deliberative Polling: Groups 1 and 2		Groups meet with professor outside class
<b>March 31</b>	Deliberative Polling: Groups 3 and 4		Groups meet with professor outside class
<b>April 7</b>	Deliberative Polling: Groups 5 and 6		
<b>April 14</b>	Final Group Meetings and Backup Day		Presentations of change.org petition

<b>April 22</b>	Finals week: Group letter to Attorney General due		
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