

PUBLIC OPINION
PSCI 345-001
Spring 2014
2:00-3:15 PM T/Th
BA 257

Professor: Dr. Jangsup Choi
E-mail: Jangsup.Choi@tamuc.edu
Office: Social Science Building 161
Phone: (903) 886-5314 (office)
Office hours: 12:30-2:00 T/Th; 3:15-5:15 T

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of public opinion in the United States including the sources and characteristics of political opinions, the role of the media in shaping opinion, and the impact of opinion on elections and public policy. Methods used in conducting polls are examined and applied.

This course examines sources and distribution of public opinion, measurement of public opinion, relationships between public opinion and public policy, institutions linking public opinion to government decisions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course

1. Students will understand the conceptualization and measurement of public opinion.
2. Students will evaluate political science theories of how people form opinions and translate opinions into answers to survey questions.
3. Students will assess the significance of social class, race and ethnicity, religion, and ideology in explaining political attitudes and beliefs.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. 2011. *American Public Opinion* (8th edition). Boston, MA: Longman (ISBN: 978-0-205-74543-2).

Asher, Herbert. 2011. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know* (8th edition). Washington, DC: CQ Press (ISBN: 978-1-60426-606-1).

Additional readings may be supplied on the web or in class.

CLASSROOM CIVILITY

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment which is conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from using electronic devices, challenging instructor's authority, eating or drinking in class, coming in late or leaving early, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping or engaging in any other form of

distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class. No student should expect to raise his or her hand more than three times during any class period. This policy is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate. To this effect, no student will be allowed to “dominate” any class period.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Switch off (or mute) personal electronic devices (cell phones, smartphones, iPads, iPods, mp3 players, and any kind) during class. If any of these devices are present in class, you will be asked to store them or leave the class immediately. Also tape recorders, camera and video phones, and all other visual and auditory recording or retention devices, are strictly prohibited in this class. Please do not bring or use those devices.

You may only use the laptop to take notes in a word processing program. No surfing or instant messages are allowed. Any student who uses the laptop for any purpose other than taking notes will not be allowed to use that laptop in this course for the rest of the term.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. For example, forgetting to cite an author and page number with a quote is plagiarism, as is direct copying and pasting from a website. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and notification to the Dean of Students. Plagiarism is often a result of improper citation and/or acknowledgement of sources; therefore, we will be going over plagiarism in class so you can avoid common pitfalls (and an F!). If a student needs additional assistance, please consult me during my office hours.

CLASS FORMAT

Class sessions will consist of a mix of lecture, full-class and small-group discussion, and in-class exercises and simulations. In order to participate fully in each class session and to get the most out of the course that you can, you should:

1. Read the assigned materials before class,
2. Attend class ready to engage the material,
3. Participate in classroom discussions and activities, and
4. Read the assigned materials again after class.

GRADING

The final grade will be determined on the following basis:

Requirement	Percentage
Attendance/Participation	10%
Class Activity	15%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Research Paper	30%

Grading Scale

Standard	Grade	Points
Excellent	A	100-90
Good	B	89.9-80
Average	C	79.9-70
Below Average	D	69.9-60
Unacceptable	F	59.9-0

I will do my best to help students with any other needs they may have. Do not wait until the end of the semester to see assistance as that will be too late to make a difference. In all cases, it is necessary for the student to discuss their concerns with me as soon as possible after the concern develops. There is little that can be done at the end of the semester to compensate for earlier difficulties.

Note: I am not responsible for your scholarships, academic eligibility in extracurricular activities, or graduation eligibility. Do not come to me pleading that you “need” or “have to” get a certain grade. The grade you earn is the grade you will get. Under no circumstance will I arbitrarily change a grade, so do not ask. NO exceptions! Also, there will be NO extra project for this class regardless of the situation. Also, I am not allowed to dispense or discuss grades over the phone or via email, but grades will be posted on the class web.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION

“Eighty five percent of success is merely showing up.” — Woody Allen —

Attendance is mandatory. Class attendance is crucial to your understanding of the concepts, issues, processes and not all of them will be covered in the assigned texts. Attendance is part of the course experience the same as lectures, texts, exams, and other course elements. Attending class can only help your grade so I strongly suggest you show up to class on a regular class.

Class attendance/participation counts 10% toward your final grade. Roll will be taken regularly. Repeated absence will be detrimental to your final grade, as will repeated tardiness, which is disruptive to your classmates. Students sleeping, talking, text messaging or otherwise not paying attention in class will be marked absent. Students who arrive late or leave early will be counted as absences.

Consistent with University policies and procedures, students who are absent for more than 4 class meetings will be administratively dropped from the class. There will be no “excused” absences aside for official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

There will be several class activities. Students should complete these activities. More specific information will be provided later.

EXAMINATIONS

There will be three exams. There is not a final exam in this course. The exams will combine short-answer and essay questions. The exams will cover material from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussion. The exams will always include material from the readings that have not been discussed in lectures. Bring bluebooks. Store all materials beneath your seat during the exam. Once the first exam is turned in, no more exams will be distributed so show up on time.

After each exam full grade information will be posted on the class web. This information will be updated after each exam and immediately before the final exam period. It is each student's responsibility to check this grade information after each exam and notify the instructor if s/he believes it contains any errors. Errors can be corrected if brought to the instructor's attention promptly. Do not wait weeks or until the end of the semester to discover or mention errors. By then it is probably too late.

MAKEUP EXAMS

I expect that students will take exams on the day that they are given. If you have a legitimate reason for missing an exam (e.g. severe illness or injury requiring professional medical care, participation in official university activities) AND you have supporting documentation for your absence, then you may request taking the make-up exam. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements to take a make-up exam within two days of the date the exam was missed. If you have an excuse that is documented and have been verified by me and do miss the exam, all make up exams will be held at my office at 5 pm, April 29. In addition, students will not be permitted to make up more than one exam on this day. Make-up exams will be in a complete essay format.

RESEARCH PAPER

A major portion of this class will be the completion of a research paper. This research paper requires students to analyze public opinion data and attempt to answer a question related to salient public opinion.

The research proposal should be one page in length and due by 11 am, Wednesday, March 5. A research paper should be 9-10 pages in length (A paper should not exceed 12 pages) and it is due by 11 am, Monday, May 5. A good paper will include an introduction, thesis statement, and a conclusion. A handout with details on the research paper will be distributed later.

STUDENT CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

I expect all students to maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty which is discussed in Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12 Academic Honesty. "Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material."

Academic dishonesty affects all individuals at the University and accordingly will not be tolerated. For this class, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant penalties.

Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Failure to comply with the commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Because this is a web-enhanced course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

Regular access to a good quality computer

Regular, high-quality Internet access, specifically, a high-speed internet connection, not dial-up or a cellular phone. Students should use the eCollege tutorial to test the quality and speed of their browser and ensure that it is compatible with the system. Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.

Access and Navigation

Student will access this course using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students can access their online courses using through the myLeo portal or directly from the URL <http://online.tamuc.edu>. In order to login, students will need both their CWID and password to access the myLeo site. If you do not know what your CWID or password is, please contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000 or by e-mail, helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

eCollege Student Technical Support

Technical support for eCollege is provided around the clock (24 hours a day/7 days a week) so if students experience technical issues with the class page itself they should contact the student help desk for assistance. Students can access support through one of three following methods:

1. Chat support: Students can access real-time chat support from within the course page by clicking on “Tech Support” in the tool bar and then clicking on “Chat Online.”
2. Phone: Students can access phone support by calling the toll free phone number for eCollege, 1-866-656-5511.
3. E- mail: Student can request assistance by e-mail eCollege directly at helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. Please note that you might not receive a response for 24 hours if you use the e-mail option.

eCollege also has extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the ‘Help’ button on the toolbar.

INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT COMMUNICATION: OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

The best way to contact me is to stop by my office during office hours or to schedule an appointment. Outside of class email is also the dominant means of communication between the instructor and students. The instructor can usually be reached by email with little difficulty. Due to the vast increase in spam email, any email sent to me **MUST** include a subject line such as “PSCI 345” identifying it as class related. Without such a subject line, it is likely to be deleted without being read.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Students are responsible for reading assigned chapters before the class covers them.

This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses.

Jan. 14

Introduction, Overview, and Organizational Meeting

Part I: The Nature of Public Opinion

Jan. 16, 21, & 23

Introduction to Public Opinion (Erikson & Tedin Ch. 1)

Jan. 28 & 30

Practice of Survey Research

Feb. 4 & 6

Polling and Data Analysis (Erikson & Tedin Ch. 2; Asher Ch. 1)

Feb. 11 & 13

Micro-level Opinion (Erikson & Tedin Ch. 3)

Feb. 18 & 20

Macro-level Opinion (Erikson & Tedin Ch. 4)

Feb. 25

Exam 1

Part II: Measuring Public Opinion

- Feb. 27 & March 4
Population and Sample (Asher Ch. 4; Erikson & Tedin Ch. 2)
- March 5
Due Research Proposal
- March 6
Question Types and Wording (Asher Ch. 3; Erikson & Tedin Ch. 2)
- March 11 & 13
Spring Break
- March 18
Interviewing Techniques (Asher Ch. 5)
- March 20 & 25
Analyzing and Interpreting Polls (Asher Ch. 8)
- March 27
Exam 2

Part III: Differences in Public Opinion

- April 1 & 3
Political Socialization and Democratic Stability (Erikson & Tedin Chs. 5-6)
- April 8 & 10
Group Differences in Opinions (Erikson & Tedin Ch. 7)
- April 15 & 17
Public Opinion and Democracy (Erikson & Tedin Chs. 9-11; Asher Chs. 7 & 9)
(Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Political Science Association)
- April 22
Exam 3
- April 24, 29 & May 1
Research Presentation
- May 5
Due Research Paper

IMPORTANT DATES

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Feb. 25 (Tue) | Exam 1 |
| March 5 (Wed) | Due Research Proposal |
| March 27 (Thr) | Exam 2 |
| April 22 (Thr) | Exam 3 |
| May 5 (Mon) | Due Research Paper |