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Course:

Political Science POS 3204: Public Opinion & Electoral Behavior
Start Date: June 21, 2021, | End Date: July 30, 2021

Class and Office Hours:

This is an online class; therefore, you can go at your own pace. Nonetheless, note that **every week there will be deadlines to meet.** Plan your work around these due dates; this is essential for your success in this class.

Due to COVID-19, **office hours are by appointment only.** Please contact me via email if you would like to schedule a virtual meeting. **We can meet using Zoom.** I will try to get back to you within 48 hours to either confirm the date of our meeting—in case you have suggested one—or to suggest an alternative time and day. I am here to help you, so if you need help with anything related to this class, please make sure to reach out.

Please note that this is an asynchronous class. Thus, there will be no live sessions. Video lectures are meant to reinforce to be a compliment to help you recall and remember the essential points about the material you will read in the class. Meanwhile, class discussions are designed to be the place where you will have the opportunity to analyze and think more in-depth about the readings. That said, there will be weekly optional Zoom sessions every Monday, starting on the second week of the Summer term. These sessions are an opportunity to discuss any of the topics we have covered during the week prior to the meeting.

Course Description:

Prerequisite: POS 1041 or instructor permission.

This course is framed around a series of timely questions and long-standing puzzles in political behavior research. By the end of the course, students will have developed tentative answers to these questions:

- What is public opinion and how do we measure it?
- How much do citizens know about politics? Is low political knowledge a problem for democracy?
- Do your parents give you your political views? What about your professors? What about your genes?
- What is the nature of human judgment and decision-making?
- Why is it so hard to change minds?
- “Liberals, conservatives, moderates, and extremists?” What the heck does “ideology” mean?
- How do our group identities shape our political views?
- Why are Democrats and Republicans entrenched in their partisanship?

- Who participates, and why?
- How do people make decisions in non-presidential elections?
- Do campaigns actually affect election outcomes?
- Political polarization: What is it? How bad is it? Is it even real?
- How powerful is the mass media?
- How have new forms of media affected politics?
- (How) does public opinion affect public policy?
- How could American democracy be made more responsive to public opinion-and should it be?

Course Goals:

At the completion of this course, in addition to being able to answer the guiding questions above, students will be able to:

- i. Read social science articles confidently, summarizing research questions and key findings- and relating those findings to current events.
- ii. Explain how public opinion is measured.
- iii. Write high-quality survey questions following those principles.
- iv. Interpret polling (and other) data presented in tables, figures, etc.
- v. Be savvy consumers of political information acquired from the media, family, friends, colleagues, and campaigns.
- vi. Understand how human nature conditions political behavior.

Course Materials:

There is one required textbook for this course. It is available for purchase at the FSU bookstore or your favorite online retailer. This book can be bought or rented as an eTextbook for those who prefer this type of media. Older editions of the textbook may also be acceptable, although the chapter order and content may vary slightly.

Berinsky, Adam J. 2020– editor. *New Directions in Public Opinion*. Third edition. Routledge. ISBN 978-1-138-48356-9

All other reading materials will be posted on Canvas. Please see the week-by-week course schedule listed at the end of this syllabus for the schedule of required readings. All readings should be completed prior to participating in online discussions, taking quizzes and exams. The schedule of readings is subject to change with advance notice.

Earning your grade:

Please read this and the following section carefully. Registration in this course implies that you agree with all elements of evaluation herein described. Though I reserve the right to modify this syllabus with advance notice to students, I will not do so with respect to the fundamental parameters of student evaluation and grading.

In order to accomplish the above-stated course goals and ensure your success in the course, I strongly encourage you to do the following (at a minimum):

- Complete all readings **in advance of completing any graded activities**. These **reading assignments are required**, not optional. Your **participation in discussion boards** is essential for getting a good grade.
- Take advantage of the online resources available to you through the textbook website. I will share video lectures, brief texts, and other materials to aid with your learning process. These materials are not a substitute for the readings; however, they can be valuable complements for developing a better understanding of the course material.
- **Contact your instructor early** on if you have questions or concerns about course materials, course expectations, or your grade. Schedule an online meeting by sending an email to jirigoyen@fsu.edu. **If you find yourself thinking about emailing me on or after the final week to discuss your grade, this means that you are contacting me several weeks too late.**
Do not make your grade hinge solely on the result of your final paper.
- **Engage with the material** and participate in Canvas discussion boards.
- **When participating in Canvas discussions, or any other class interaction, refrain from negative participation, defined as behavior that is disrespectful to other students or the instructor.**

Weekly Quizzes – 25% (Five quizzes, 5% each)

Each week you are responsible for completing a multiple-choice quiz over the assigned material (**five quizzes in total, there will not be a quiz on the final week**). The quizzes will cover information contained in the course lectures and assigned readings. You are allowed multiple attempts to complete the quizzes within the period that they are open; your final quiz score will be the average of your quiz attempts. Each weekly quiz will become available **Monday at 00:00 AM** and will close **Sunday at 11:59 PM**. PLEASE NOTE There will be NO makeups given for weekly quizzes. If you are concerned about your ability to complete a quiz on time, please reach out to me as soon as possible.

Discussion Board Assignments – 25% (Five discussion assignments, 5% each)

There will be **five discussion board activities, each worth 5% of your final grade**. These discussions will require you to answer a discussion question, in addition to replying to at least one response from another classmate. **Discussion posts should be completed by Sunday 11:59 PM of the week in which the subject of the discussion was introduced. Replies to discussion posts can be submitted until Tuesday 11:59 PM of the week after that in which the subject of the discussion was introduced.**

Team Video Presentation of an Academic Article – 10%

There is a **team presentation of an academic article selected from those that are listed in the final week of the semester in this syllabus**. If two teams select the same paper, the first team that sent its preferred paper to present will have priority. This assignment consists of a video with a slideshow presentation. **The team presentation is due on Friday of the fifth week of this Summer C term, which is July 23 by 11:59 PM.**

Data Literacy Assignment – 20% (Project in groups of two)

Throughout the course we will discuss the use of surveys and polling to measure and analyze public opinion, and the Data Literacy Assignment (DLA) is an opportunity for you to apply the concepts we cover. The basic premise of the assignment is that you will assume the role of a

campaign strategist assisting a fictional candidate for office in the 2022 congressional elections. Your task will be to identify an issue to advise your candidate to focus on during their campaign, guided by district demographic information and recent public opinion polls.

The assignment is comprised of three parts. For the first part, you will identify the congressional district your fictional candidate is running in and provide relevant demographic information about that district. **Part 1 will be due Tuesday, July 06th by 11:59 pm.** For the second part, you will research and identify recent public opinion polls related to a specific issue of your choice and summarize their findings. **Part 2 will be due Sunday, July 18th by 11:59 pm.**

For the final part of the assignment, you will draft a report identifying the issue you have chosen to focus on, describing an approach the candidate should take towards the issue based on the polls you have previously researched, and creating original polling questions to supplement your findings. Your report may be submitted in either a written or presentation-style format. **Part 3 will be due Sunday, July 25th by 11:59 pm.** Further information and directions, rubrics, and examples of past DLA submissions will be distributed on Canvas during the end the of first week of class.

Final Exam – 20%

You will have one exam in this course that will address broad course themes and be conducted in an essay format. Students will have **72-hours** to answer two of several potential prompts which will be distributed on Canvas. Each of the prompts will require students to take and defend a position on a topic that we have covered in the course, providing justification and evidence for their answers based on course readings and presentations. The nature of the course discussion sections will be such that they encourage students to start getting in the practice of identifying and evaluating multiple sides of an argument so as to come to an informed opinion, which will be a key component to success on the exam. Again, understanding that students will vary in their past exposure to this type of exam format, I will provide specific instructions and examples of well-written essay responses to help students prepare. **Your final exam will be distributed Wednesday, July 28th at noon (12:00 PM) and will be due Saturday, July 31st at noon (12:00 PM).**

The following are the **scheduled deadlines** for the activities described above, along with the first-day attendance activity:

First-day attendance Canvas discussion activity: complete by Wednesday, June 23, 2021, 11:59 PM.

Note that if you do not submit this activity, you will be dropped from the class automatically.

The last day to withdraw from this course and have fees adjusted is Thursday, June 24, 2021.

First Canvas discussion activity: submit post by Sunday, June 27, 2021, 11:59 PM, and reply by Tuesday, June 29, 2021, 11:59 PM.

First Quiz: complete by **Sunday, June 27, 2021, 11:59 PM.**

Second Canvas discussion activity: submit post by Tuesday, July 6, 2021, 11:59 PM, and reply by Tuesday, July 8, 2021, 11:59 PM (these dates are shifted due to 4th of July holiday).

Second Quiz: complete by **Tuesday, July 6, 2021, 11:59 PM.**

Data Literacy Assignment Part 1: submit by Tuesday, July 6, 2021 by 11:59 pm.

Third Canvas discussion activity: submit post by Sunday, July 11, 2021, 11:59 PM, and reply by Tuesday, July 13, 2021, 11:59 PM.

Third Quiz: complete by **Sunday, July 11, 2021, 11:59 PM.**

Fourth Canvas discussion activity: submit post by Sunday, July 18, 2021, 11:59 PM, and reply by Tuesday, July 20, 2021, 11:59 PM.

Fourth Quiz: complete by **Sunday, July 18, 2021, 11:59 PM.**

Data Literacy Assignment Part 2: submit by Sunday, July 18, 2021 by 11:59 pm.

Team Video Presentation: Friday, July 23, 2021, 11:59 PM.

Fifth Canvas discussion activity: submit post by Sunday, July 25, 2021, 11:59 PM, and reply by Tuesday, July 27, 2021, 11:59 PM.

Fifth Quiz: complete by **Sunday, July 25, 2021, 11:59 PM.**

Data Literacy Assignment Part 3: submit by Sunday, July 25, 2021 by 11:59 pm.

Final exam: Distributed on Wednesday, July 28; due on Saturday, July 31, 11:59 PM.

You can work at your own pace, as long as you meet these deadlines. **Thus, there will be no make up assignments.** Note that, as per the Florida State University Attendance Policy, **excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities.** **Thus, these are the only reasons for which an assignment would be accepted after its scheduled due date. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.** Please note that per university policy, missing class assignments for work-related activities is not considered a valid excuse. If you cannot structure your employment schedule to accommodate this class, you should not enroll in the first place.

Arrangement for make-up assignments and exams need to be addressed within one week of the activity's due date; it is the student's responsibility to verify if any activities were missed. Once this one-week period has passed, there will be no other opportunities to make up the work.

Make up exams may take the form of comprehensive essay questions to cover the portion of the material that the original exam covered. Incompletes will not be considered except under

extraordinary circumstances, at the discretion of the instructor, and in consultation with the Dean of Students or the Dean of the School of Social Sciences.

No extra credit opportunities will be granted to individual students. There are no exceptions, nor is there room to negotiate. The instructor reserves the right to offer extra credit opportunities to all students as a way for everyone to improve their grade, at his discretion. This will likely take the form of some extra activity or extra quiz.

While I had been flexible due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the past, you should have adapted to this new learning experience by now. Thus, **do not assume I will make exceptions to any of the conditions laid out on this syllabus.** This does not mean that you cannot reach out to me should an emergency arise; on the contrary, this should be interpreted as an invitation to reach out and let me know as soon as possible if you need a special consideration. Just do not assume that you will get those considerations if you do not ask for them in a timely manner.

Grading Policy:

If you are concerned about your grade or your performance in the class, please schedule a meeting with me as soon as possible. There are very few course-related challenges that we cannot overcome, provided you make an effort to address the issue promptly. Waiting until the end of the spring term leaves us limited opportunities to devise an appropriate plan of corrective action.

I take your grades very seriously and make every effort to grade your exams and assignments in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. As such, **I expect that you approach grade appeals courteously and professionally. If you consider that I have made a gross mistake in grading any exam or quiz, you should address your concerns directly to me within five days of receiving the grade.** When making a petition about your grade, **I expect you to substantiate any claim you make, be respectful, and avoid the frivolous pursuit of extra points.** If asked to reconsider a student's grade on an exam or quiz, I reserve the right to re-grade the exam or quiz in its entirety. The more general rule also applies to overall course grade appeals.

Finally, note that I adhere to the following number-to-letter grade conversion chart for all exams, quizzes, and final grades:

	87-89=B+	77-79=C+	67-69=D+
93 or above=A*	83-86=B	73-76=C	63-66=D
90-92=A-	80-82=B-	70-72=C-	60-62=D-

*An A is the highest grade you can earn in this class

I reserve the right to deduct points for negative participation, defined as discussion behavior, which is disrespectful to other students or the instructor. Examples of this may include, but are not limited to, using foul language in a discussion post or attacking a classmate personally (as opposed to discussing her or his argument) during a discussion. These points will be deducted from your activities/quizzes score.

Email Policy:

Though I strive to give all students my personal attention, I am responsible for many of you each semester. As such, it is much easier for me to help you if you include your **first and last name and course information in the subject line** of your email.

When I receive your email, I will make every effort to respond promptly, usually within 48 hours. Though you may receive a reply sooner than that, you should not expect an immediate response. Please treat all email correspondences with your instructor as you would treat any other professional exchange. Accordingly, I expect emails to be respectful and polite to use correct grammar and complete sentences. I reserve the right to summarily delete rude, disrespectful, and/or poorly written emails without reply, or disregard questions that may be answered by revisiting this document.

Please utilize office hours and your syllabus to answer any doubts you may have proactively. Finally, **I may contact you via your FSU designated email address via Canvas, so please see to it that your account is set up such that you are able to receive these emails.**

Academic Honor Policy:

The Florida State University, Academic Honor Policy, outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.)

Academic Accommodations:

In keeping with the Americans With Disabilities Act and University policy, students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. **This should be done during the first week of class.** This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

Final Note on Grading Protocol:

By emailing me at the end of the semester to ask me to reconsider some component of your borderline grade, you are suggesting 1) that I am responsible for the grade you have earned; and 2) that I have not given the course or my students sufficient consideration in my preparation of the syllabus, lectures, slides, quizzes, activities, readings, study guides, and exams, among other things. I assure you, and the aforementioned course policies should make clear that both of these assertions are categorically untrue. In light of the considerable time and effort I invest in course design and preparation, I find the second suggestion particularly offensive.

Syllabus Change Policy:

Except for changes that substantially affect the implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course. It is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. I will provide you with advance notice in class and via your University registered email contact in the case of schedule changes.

Course Schedule:

Week 1. What is Public Opinion and how do we measure it? How much do people know about politics?

Assigned Readings:

- Syllabus
- Textbook: Introduction and Overview
- Textbook: Chapters 1 and 2 (The Practice of Survey Research: Changes and Challenges; Citizen Competence and Democratic Governance).
- A primer on reading academic articles: “How to Read and Understand a Scientific Paper” (Raff).
- Short academic article: “10 Things Political Scientists Know that You Don’t” (Noel).

Recommended Readings:

- Book excerpt from *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Zaller)
- Academic article: “Shortcuts vs. Encyclopedias” (Lupia)

FIRST-DAY ATTENDANCE CANVAS DISCUSSION ACTIVITY by Wednesday, June 23, 2021.

QUIZ 1, Monday, June 21-Sunday, June 27.

DISCUSSION BOARD ACTIVITY 1 (Post June 27, reply June 29).

Week 2. Where do our political views come from? What is the nature of human reasoning? How do we come to the decisions that we do?

Assigned Readings:

- Textbook: Chapters 8-9 (Worldview Politics; No Longer “Beyond our Scope”: The Biological and Non-Conscious Underpinnings of Public Opinion).

- **Mass media article:** “Do Children Just Take Their Parents’ Political Beliefs? It’s Not That Simple” (Patterson).
- **Mass media article:** “This Article Won’t Change Your Mind” (Beck).
- **Academic article:** “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs” (Taber and Lodge).

Recommended Readings:

- **Academic article:** “Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice” (Quattrone and Tversky).

QUIZ 2, Monday, June 28-Tuesday, July 6.

DATA LITERACY ASSIGNMENT PART 1 Tuesday, July 06 by 11:59 pm.

DISCUSSION BOARD ACTIVITY 2 (Post July 6, reply July 8).

Week 3. How are our political beliefs organized? What do we mean by ideology? What are the roots of party identification?

Assigned Readings:

- **Textbook:** Chapters 3-4 (Ideology and Public Opinion; Affective Polarization or Hostility Across the Party Divide: An Overview).
- **Mass media article:** “Social Liberals Nearly Tie Social Conservatives in the U.S.” (Gallup).
- **Mass media article:** “Liberals eat here. Conservatives eat there.” (Wall Street Journal).
- **Book excerpt** from *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics* (Converse).

Recommended Readings:

- **Book excerpt** from *Ideology in America* (Ellis and Stimson).
- **Academic article:** “Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq” (Gaines et al.).

QUIZ 3, Monday, July 5-Sunday, July 11.

DISCUSSION BOARD ACTIVITY 3 (Post July 11, reply July 13).

Week 4. How do the groups we belong to shape our political behavior? Who participates in politics and why? Why is everyone talking about polarization?

Assigned Readings:

- **Textbook:** Chapters 5, 6 and 7 (Racial Attitudes and American Politics; Race, Ethnicity, and Public Opinion; Categorical Politics in Action: Gender and the 2016 Presidential Election).
- **Academic article:** “Self-Fulfilling Misperceptions of Public Polarization” (Ahler).
- **A primer on group conflict theories:** Chapter 1 from *Us Against Them* (Kinder and Kam).

Recommended Readings:

- **Mass media article:** “For Every 10 U.S. Adults, Six Vote and Four Don’t. What Separates Them?” (New York Times).
- **Academic article:** “Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-scale Field Experiment” (Gerber, Green, and Larimer).
- **Academic article:** “Americans, Not Partisans: Can Priming American National Identity Reduce Affective Polarization?” (Levendusky).

QUIZ 4, Monday, July 12-Sunday, July 18.

DATA LITERACY ASSIGNMENT PART 2 Sunday, July 18 by 11:59 pm.

DISCUSSION BOARD ACTIVITY 4 (Post July 18, reply July 20).

Week 5. How does the external political environment shape public opinion and electoral behavior? Do campaigns actually matter? Does the media tell us what to think?

Assigned Readings:

- **Textbook: Chapters 11, 12 and 13 (The “Daily Them”: Hybridity, Political Polarization and Presidential Leadership in a Digital Media Age; How People Learn About Politics: Navigating the Information Environment; Campaigns and Elections).**
- **Mass media article: “Why the White Working Class Votes Against Itself” (Rampell)**
- **Academic article: “Substituting the End for the Whole: Why Voters Respond Primarily to the Election-Year Economy” (Healy and Lenz)**

Recommended Readings:

- **Mass media article: “Why only red-state voters get asked this question” (McKissen)**
- **Academic article: “How Large and Long-lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment” (Gerber, Gimpel, Green and Shaw)**
- **Academic article: “Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public” (Gilliam and Iyengar)**

TEAM VIDEO PRESENTATION, Friday, July 23, 2021, 11:59 PM.

QUIZ 5, Monday, July 19-Sunday, July 25.

DATA LITERACY ASSIGNMENT PART 3 Sunday, July 25 by 11:59 pm.

DISCUSSION BOARD ACTIVITY 5 (Post July 25 reply July 27).

Week 6. How responsive is the U.S. political system to public opinion?

- **Textbook: Chapter 16 (Public Opinion and Public Policy).**
- **Academic article: “Dynamic Representation” (Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson).**

Recommended Readings:

- **Academic article: “The Democratic Deficit in the States” (Lax and Phillips).**

FINAL EXAM, Distributed on July 27, due by July 31, 11:59 AM.

For the Team Video Presentations you can choose from the following articles:

- Ahler, Douglas J. 2014. “Self-Fulfilling Misperceptions of Public Polarization.” *The Journal of Politics* 76(3): 607–20.
- Gaines, Brian J., et al. 2007. “Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq.” *The Journal of Politics* 69(4): 957–74.
- Gerber, Alan S., James G. Gimpel, Donald P. Green, and Daron R. Shaw. 2011. “How Large and Long-Lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment.” *The American Political Science Review* 105(1): 135–50.
- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. “Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment.” *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33–48.
- Gilliam, Franklin D., and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. “Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 560.
- Healy, Andrew, and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2014. “Substituting the End for the Whole: Why Voters Respond Primarily to the Election-Year Economy” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(1): 31–47.
- Lax, Jeffrey R., and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. “The Democratic Deficit in the States.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1): 148–66.
- Levendusky, Matthew S. 2018. “Americans, Not Partisans: Can Priming American National Identity Reduce Affective Polarization?” *The Journal of Politics* 80(1): 59–70.
- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. “Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections.” *American Political Science Review* 88(1): 63–76.
- Quattrone, George A, and Amos Tversky. 1988. “Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice.” *The American Political Science Review* 82(3): 719-736.
- Stimson, James A., Michael B. Mackuen, Robert S. Erikson. 1995. “Dynamic Representation.” *American Political Science Review* 89(3): 543-565.
- Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755-769.