Overview

- *Surveys produce just what democracy is supposed to produce*—equal representation of all citizens. *The sample survey is rigorously egalitarian; it is designed so that each citizen has an equal chance to participate and an equal voice when participating* (Verba 1996, 3).

- *Many Americans* do not know much about political issues; their votes are often not closely related to their expressed issue positions, and those positions are often changeable and inconsistent almost to the vanishing point (Glynn et al. 2004, 345–346).

- *In a representative democracy there is some prospect*—no sure thing—that public opinion matters for the formation of public policy. *Take that away and the study of opinion becomes as interesting as cataloguing buttons. Representation, that is, is the justification for the study of public opinion, the only one that matters. It is finding the Holy Grail, demonstrating the process of representation, that makes the otherwise tedious collection and analysis of survey results come alive with meaning* (Stimson 1995, 180).

The above quotes help to illustrate the disparate viewpoints political scientists have regarding public opinion in the United States. This course is designed to expose you to the broad range of research about the origins, nature, and influence of public opinion. You will also gain the skills necessary to collect and analyze original public opinion data.
Objectives:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- compare and contrast the major theories in political science regarding the origins, composition, and influence of public opinion in the United States.

- use surveys, focus groups, interviews, or content analysis to conduct original public opinion research.

- write an advanced level political science research paper that incorporates the analysis of data.

Texts


Office Hours

- Wed. 2:00–4:00pm and by appointment


Evaluation

Your performance in this class will be assessed by your class participation, midterm exams, and a research paper which incorporates original public opinion data. Class participation includes being on time and attending all classes and sections. Each component of your grade will be weighted as follows:
Readings and Assignments

I have listed the assigned readings below. Complete the day’s reading before coming to class. Readings followed by (BB) are available on blackboard. I may assign additional readings throughout the course.

- **Week 1**
  - Tues. 1/20: Class Introduction
  - Th. 1/22: Defining Public Opinion
    * Glynn et al. Ch.1 & Ch.2

- **Week 2**
  - Tues. 1/29: Measuring Public Opinion I
    * Glynn et al. Ch. 3
    * Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen. 1996. *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*. Ch.2 & Ch.3 (BB)
  - Th. 1/31: NO CLASS (Presentation at McGill University)

- **Week 3**
  - Tues. 2/5: Measuring Public Opinion II
- Th. 2/7: Psychological Perspectives
  * Glynn et al. Ch. 4

- Week 4
  - Tues. 2/12: Stereotyping, Social Norms, and Public Opinion
    * Glynn et al. Ch. 5
    * Example Experiment: Mirya R. Holman, Jennifer L. Merolla, & Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2010. “Gender Stereotypes in Contexts of Terror Threat.” (BB)
  - Th. 2/14: Human Subjects Research
    * The Belmont Report

- Week 5
  - Tues. 2/19: Perception and Opinion Formation
    * Glynn et al. Ch. 6
  - Th. 2/21: Midterm 1

- Week 6
  - Tues. 2/26: Economic Approaches
    * Glynn et al. Ch. 7
  - Th. 2/28: Public Opinion and Democratic Competence
    * Glynn et al. Ch. 8
    * Research Proposal Due

- Week 7
  - Tues. 3/5: Political Communication
    * Glynn et al. Ch.10 (pgs. 405–448)
  - Thurs. 3/7: Media Influence
    * Iyengar & Kinder. 1987 News that Matters. Ch.3, 7 & 8 (BB)

• Week 8
  – Tues. 3/12: Issue Evolution
    * Tides of Consent Ch.3
    * Levendusky, Matthew. 2009. The Partisan Sort, Ch.3 (BB)
  – Th. 3/14: Partisan Polarization
    – Who Gets Represented? Chs. 3 & 4

• SPRING BREAK

• Week 9
  – Tues. 3/26: Public Opinion & Representation
    * Glynn et al. Ch. 9
  – Th. 3/28: What Citizens Want
    * Tides of Consent 12–22; 30–57
    * Who Gets Represented? Ch.1

• Week 10
  – Tues. 4/1: Whose preferences do policymakers represent? I
    * Who Gets Represented? pgs.163-165, Chs.6, 7, & 8
  – Th. 4/4: Whose preferences do policymakers represent? II
    * Who Gets Represented? Chs. 9,10,11,12 & Epilogue
    - Nate Silver: Friday, April 5 at 1:30pm

• Week 11
  – Tues. 4/9: Midterm 2
  – Th. 4/9: NO CLASS (Midwest Political Science Association)

• Week 12
  – Tues. 4/16: Public Opinion and the Legal System
    * The Decline of the Death Penalty, Chs.1–3
– Th. 4/18: Public Opinion and the Legal System
  * The Decline of the Death Penalty, Chs.4–5

• Week 13
  – Tues. 4/23: Public Opinion and the Legal System
    * The Decline of the Death Penalty, Chs.6–8
  – Th. 4/25: Public Opinion and the Legal System
    * Incarceration Nation Ch.1

• Week 14
  – Tues. 4/30: Election Campaigns
    * Tides of Consent, Chs.4 & 6
    * Glynn et al. Pages 448–471
  – Th. 5/2: Vote Choice and the Fundamentals
    * Gelman & King. 1993. “Why are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls So Variable When Votes are so Predictable?” Abstract & Pages 433–448 (BB)

• Friday, May 10, 2:00pm - Research Paper Due

**Students with Disabilities**

Please give me your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that I have adequate time to arrange your approved academic modifications. Meeting with me in my office hours will help ensure confidentiality. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and/or SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu. If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

**Academic Integrity**

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity (http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work.
Turnitin Policy

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.
References

