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Course Description
This course introduces the structure and dynamics of public opinion and political participation in the United States. Students are expected to learn what public opinion is, how it is measured, where it comes from, how it influences electoral and policy outcomes, and how people voice their opinion through political participation. The course is also structured to improve students’ skill to analyze public opinion data using statistical techniques. What you learn in this course will allow you to become an informed participant in political discussion and debates in your life.

Assignments and Grading
Homework (20% of your grade, 5% for each of the four assignments): Students will be asked to complete one or more exercises. Each assignment will include one or more problems that focus on major concepts introduced in the course or on statistical exercises using SPSS. Assignments will be given only in class and at least one week in advance of the due date. You must turn in your assignments on time, as I will not accept late assignments except for a very special situation. I will not accept your assignments emailed to me or left in my office/mailbox except for a special situation. If a student does not turn in an assignment on time, s/he will receive a zero for the assignment.

Short Research Papers (40% of your grade, 20% for each paper): Students design and implement two short research projects. Both papers require students to conduct some empirical analysis using public opinion data. The first paper focuses on the formation of citizens’ political attitudes or vote choice. The second paper involves an analysis of citizen participation in politics. Results of your research will be reported in a paper with fewer than 5 pages. The first paper is due on Wednesday, March 24, 3pm. The second paper is due on Wednesday, April 28, 3pm. Details will be provided on a separate assignment handout. Note
that I do not accept late papers except for a very special situation and that I will not accept your papers emailed to me or left in my office/mailbox except for a special situation.

**Exams** (40% of your grade, 20% for each exam): Two exams will be given to students. Exams include short essays on topics learned in the course. The midterm exam will be held in class on Wednesday, March 10. The final exam will be held on Monday, May 10, 10:30-12:30.

**Assigned Readings**
The required texts for this course are


Additional reading materials are distributed in class or available on [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org). You are expected to have read assigned chapters and articles before you come to class. Should class have to be canceled due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, the material scheduled for the missed class will be covered the next time the class meets.

**Attendance and Participation**
Attendance and participation will not directly be a part of your grade. But I expect that you will attend all class meetings. Much of what I cover in class may not be in the readings, so it is important to come to class, take notes, and ask questions about materials you do not understand.

**Students with Disabilities Statement**
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 believe you need additional information, please see the attached paper.

**Plagiarism Statement**
As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please see the attached paper.
Copyright Statement
The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

Course Schedule
Below is a tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments for the course. If schedule changes become necessary, I will make an announcement in class.

Introduction
Week 1 (1/20): Introduction
  • No reading

The Nature of Public Opinion
Week 2 (1/25 and 1/27): What is Public Opinion?
  • E&T Chapters 1 and 4

Week 3 (2/1 and 2/3): Polling; Research Question and Hypothesis
  • E&T Chapter 2

Week 4 (2/8 and 2/10): Microlevel Opinion
  • E&T Chapter 3
  • Lab session, Wednesday, 2/10

The Formation of Public Opinion
Week 5 (2/15 and 2/17): Group Differences in Public Opinion I
  • E&T Chapter 6
  • Lab session, Wednesday, 2/17
Week 6 (2/22 and 2/24): Group Differences in Public Opinion II

- E&T Chapter 6
- Lab session, Wednesday, 2/24

Week 7 (3/1 and 3/3): Mass Media and Public Opinion

- E&T Chapter 8

Week 8 (3/8 and 3/10): Exam Week

- Study day, Monday, 3/8
- In-class exam, Wednesday, 3/10

Week 9 (3/15 and 3/17): Spring Break

- No class

Political Participation

Week 10 (3/22 and 3/24): Political Participation I

- First research paper due, Wednesday, 3/24 at 3pm

Week 11 (3/29 and 3/31): Political Participation II

Week 12 (4/5 and 4/7): Political Participation III

- Wattenberg Chapters 1-8.

The Impact of Public Opinion

Week 13 (4/12 and 4/14): Elections

- E&T Chapter 9


- E&T Chapters 10 and 11.

Week 15 (4/26 and 4/28): Research Week

- Lab session, Monday, 4/26
- Second research paper due, Wednesday, 4/28, at 3pm

Week 16 (5/3 and 5/5): Pre-Final Week

- Review session, Monday, 5/3
- Study day, Wednesday, 5/5

Week 17 (5/10): Exam Week

- Final exam, Monday, 5/10, 10:30-12:30